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Think Outside the Jack-O'-Lantern: *Five Ways to Use All Your Pumpkins*

Carving jack-o'-lanterns is an obvious way to use the pumpkins you get at the patch this month—but don't stop there. Pumpkins are a versatile gourd that you can have all kinds of fun with. Here are five other ways to take advantage of this seasonal favorite.

1. Carve a cooler. Throwing a party? Slice off the top third of a large pumpkin. Scoop out the insides, smear Vaseline on the inside of the pumpkin and cover it with plastic wrap. Fill it with ice and the beverages of your choice.

2. Feed the birds. Add a seasonal touch to your yard by creating a pumpkin bird feeder. Simply cut off the top, scoop out the insides, and drill holes and insert sticks for perches. To hang your bird feeder, place a fence staple in the bottom and hang with twine or rope.

3. Make your own pumpkin purée. Skip the canned stuff and try this: Cut your pumpkin down the middle, then scoop out the guts and seeds. Place your pumpkin cut-side down in a baking dish with a cup of water and bake for about 90 minutes or until the flesh is tender. Scoop out the flesh and purée in a food processor. You can use the purée for everything from pies to pancakes, even cocktails.

4. Feed your skin. Pumpkins are rich in zinc and vitamins A, C and E, which makes it good for your skin. For an easy DIY face mask, mix

five teaspoons of pumpkin purée with three teaspoons of brown sugar (a natural exfoliant) and add a splash of milk. Mix it together and apply to your face, avoiding the eye area. Leave on for up to 20 minutes and rinse.

5. Roast the seeds. Separate the seeds from the guts, rinse thoroughly, coat with oil and popcorn salt, then bake in a single layer. Pumpkin seeds can be used as a crunchy outer layer of candied apples, an addition to brownies or even garnishes for salads.

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From the desk of Dave Baker

Sometimes I save things that I feel might be helpful to read in the future.

This week I found an article from 2003 that I had saved. The article was by a guy named George “Grif” Griffin and it was about business cards. It might be easy to look back at an article that old and think that it might not be relevant for today, but after reading it, I knew why I had saved it.

The whole premise of the article was that while business cards might seem like an insignificant part of a marketing strategy, they actually can be one of the most important aspects of advertising you can invest in.

Sometimes it might seem like a do-it-yourself option for business cards is the way to go, but Grif strongly advises against it.

“When you factor in the cost of the ink, the cost of the printer, the paper, and the time spent setting up and printing a short run of business cards it can cost much more than ordering 500 or 1000 cards from a professional printing company who would give you a better quality card at a much less expensive price.”

Many times the do-it-yourself type of business card also produces a low quality product that doesn't communicate the professional look that should be presented. A poor quality card reflects poorly on that company, even if they do quality work. It's important to tell your story and a good card can speak volumes about the attention to detail you may or may not have as a business.

Another conversation I had with a friend a few weeks ago illustrates why business cards are really the best method of advertising. He said that he and his family had started a lawn mowing business as a way for his kids to earn some money during the summer months. He spent big bucks advertising in newspapers, phone books, Google and Facebook sponsored ads and even email marketing, but it didn't increase their business one bit. The only thing that did move the needle for them was face to face contacts and referrals from other customers. When they could get in front of a customer, prove themselves reliable and leave a few business cards with the homeowner, they would get referrals from that customer and the business grew.

The face to face contact and professionally printed business cards were all they really needed to gain new business and even to get their existing customers to help refer them to new clients.

It's October and we're nearing the close of another year. It's really a great time to re-evaluate the needs of your business. Do you need to attract new customers before the end of the year? Studies have shown that it takes an average of 6 points of contact before someone will consider making a change to do business with someone new. That alone means that it might take a good six weeks before a prospect becomes a new customer. It's like the old saying that states: The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is today. The same is true for sales. If you start today you might have some fruit to enjoy by the first of the year. We can help with that. If you need business cards give us a call, or shoot us a message. We're here for you!

Dave

All Eyes on You How to Create a Killer Trade Show Booth



Got a trade show coming up? Your booth is your platform for engaging with your audience in the offline world—you know, where people get to interact without some form of a screen between them. Treat it as you would your storefront—with attention to detail, a welcoming vibe and plenty of energy. Here are five ways to grab attention:

- 1 Use bright colors.** You'll need to stand out in the sea of booths. One way to do that is with bright colors in your booth design. Try neon lights and clear signage to attract attention.
- 2 Be approachable.** Manning a booth means being personable, friendly and ready to interact with prospects at all times. Creative promotional items help as well. People love swag.
- 3 Throw a contest.** No matter what your budget is, a contest or promotion is a great way to generate interest and possible leads. You can use your own products or services as the prize if you want—just be sure your entry form includes an email address field.
- 4 Use social media.** Plan to engage with visitors via social media with a unique hashtag, live podcasts or special incentives for visitors who visit your booth. Integrate social media with your booth for a fun and engaging campaign.
- 5 Hire booth staff who care.** This goes without saying, but your booth should always be staffed with people who have a vested interest in your company and who genuinely care about its success. As important as your trade show materials are, your efforts will fall flat if your booth staff isn't friendly and engaging.

FIVE IDEAS FOR COOLER COMPANY SWAG

- 1 A DIGITAL DOWNLOAD**
Like an app or an e-book.
- 2 SMALL GADGETS OR GAMES**
Fidget spinners and (more practically) pop sockets are two that come to mind.
- 3 SMALL POCKET TOOLS**
You can find all sorts of Swiss army knife-like tools that serve several purposes in one cool little gadget.
- 4 PLAYING CARDS**
Everyone needs a deck that actually has all 52.
- 5 LUGGAGE TAGS**
An especially good choice if your company has anything to do with travel.

Three Ways to Make Direct Mail Marketing Work Harder for You

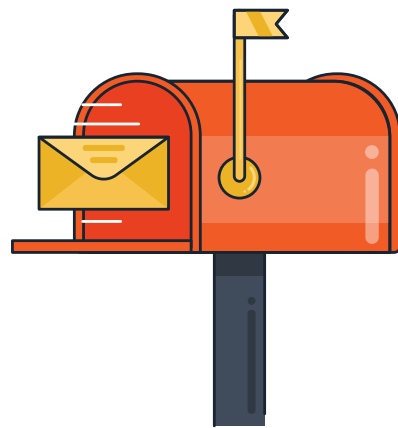
According to the U.S. Postal Service, 98% of people check their mail on a daily basis. The great news about that is, mailboxes don't have a spam filter or delete button—so chances are good that your recipient will actually read your message.

If you want to actually elicit a response, though, you'll need to be a little more strategic. Try these three ways to make direct mail more effective for your brand or business.

1>> Use multi-channel integration. Don't let your direct mail do all the heavy lifting; pair it with other marketing tools to get the biggest bang for your buck. Direct mail and email work particularly well together. For example: Send an email to your audience a few days after they receive a postcard, reminding them of your mailer. Or send an email telling them to watch for an exclusive offer in their mailbox a few days before mailing it. Either way, it works best to integrate your marketing channels.

2>> Personalize, personalize, personalize. Would you be happy if someone grilled you a steak even though you're a vegetarian? You'd rather have a portobello. Nobody will bother to read or respond to mail that doesn't seem relevant to them. Your prospects have different interests and needs, so it's more effective to break them into subgroups. This allows you to write focused messaging. The more personalized, the more likely a response.

3>> Give them options in your call to action. Some people hate talking on the phone, so provide an email address or a landing page they can visit to get more info. Others want an immediate response, so they'll be happiest with a phone number. Convenience is key—the easier you make it for people to act, the better your response rate. Integrate social media with your booth for a fun and engaging campaign.



How to Tell Your Brand's Story Better

Want to capture some hearts—and more sales? Become a storyteller. It's one of the best ways to engage with the potential customers who visit your company's website and social media to learn more about your brand. Strategic storytelling can help businesses create quality marketing content, strengthen brand loyalty and boost conversions.

The most successful brands balance emotion with information in their marketing messages, knowing that most purchasing decisions are made with a combination of the two. A great story is easy to understand and motivates customers to act in ways that data cannot.

Whether you use photos, a blog post, videos or direct mail, connecting with your audience is crucial. Advertising has moved well beyond talking at prospects to engaging with them on a two-way street. Here are four ways to tell your brand's story more effectively and win over more prospects.

Have a crystal-clear vision.

What is your company and brand all about? How do you define your values and what do you promise your customers? Before you can tell an effective brand story, you first have to have a clear picture of who you are and what you deliver. Do your internal work first.

Use words that emotionally connect your audience to your brand.

Try to stay away from industry jargon and use words and pictures that appeal to people's hearts and emotions. A good test: When you write the story or view the video, does it make you feel something? That's a good indication it will do the same for your audience.

Tap into influencers to help tell your story.

Influencer marketing is rising in the ranks of effective marketing tools, especially as consumers look to peer reviews and social

media posts more than traditional advertising channels these days. Tap into influencers in your space and partner with them to help tell your brand story—it'll provide credibility you can't get on your own.

Keep it short.

If you're speaking, you should be able to tell a great story in two minutes or less. When writing, keep your story to around 500 words. Videos—shoot for 60 seconds max. Research shows that around 30 seconds is the sweet spot.

BONUS TIP: Don't worry about being repetitive. Telling the same story or message in multiple spots helps your message and your brand stick, and that's when people start to remember your company and the difference it makes.



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