



What Does Your Sign Say About You?

Making a good impression outside your store is like wowing someone on a first date: crucial to getting that coveted repeat visit!

By Trynka Shineman

When thinking about small business marketing, the standard means of promotion such as newspaper ads and postcard mailings most often come to mind. While these “tried and true” methods can be effective, they are not the most cost efficient for a business just getting off the ground. Local newspaper ads don’t draw very much attention for their size, and it is difficult to stand out. Filming a television ad can be very costly, and a poorly made one can make your business appear unprofessional. Small businesses need to immediately gain visibility and build brand recognition in the minds of consumers...but how? This can be achieved quickly and easily: Through the use of effective signage. By putting a company name, logo and contact information on things like window decals, car-door



This sign has it all: a streetside presence, familiar logo, listed specials and a great showcase of product offerings — beautiful landscaping!



Mahoney's Garden Center in Massachusetts' location along a major suburban thoroughfare — and well-placed sign — helps increase its visibility to potential customers.

magnets and lawn signs, customers are quickly introduced to your business for a very small investment. But how and where you use these various products is paramount to success.

Location, Location, Location

A prime retail location can make all the difference for a new business. Being in a high-traffic area almost guarantees that people will be drawn into your store and, at the very least, aware of the products or services you provide. Of course, these locations come with a price — which often excludes a small business. But this doesn't mean that a business in a less-traveled area is out of luck.

Building familiarity with a

target market is as simple as displaying your company's name, logo and message near a busy road. A professional and durable way to do this is with customizable lawn signs that are now on the market, and very cost effective. Many retailers offer these at low prices,

so any small business can get 10 for well under \$100. Keep the sign simple so people can understand what you are advertising as they are passing. Using your logo and message on the sign will also help to build your brand. Someone may not be in need of your services

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DeWayne's Home & Garden Showplace, located just off a highway in Selma, N.C., uses a tall, extremely large sign to attract shoppers.

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now, but they will be more likely to remember you in the future if they are continually exposed to your offerings. Holding specials or sales on a regular basis gives you another great reason to draw people into your store. Displaying

bright signs advertising the sale at the nearest busy intersection grabs people's attention and alerts them of the event.

For service-based businesses who are often at different locations around town, a lawn sign is a must-

have. Displaying your sign at a job site advertises your business to your target market. Oftentimes, you can enter into an agreement with a customer to display your lawn sign in exchange for discounts on products or services. If one person

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needs a landscaping company, more often than not, their neighbors will as well. The lawn sign will give an idea of what service you provide and hopefully encourage a customer to contact you. For a landscaping business or painter,

these signs allow potential clients to see firsthand the level of service you provide, which is extremely valuable. Always be sure to include a phone number and website on the signs so customers can contact you or get more information.

Moving Advertisement

Think about the amount of time you spend in the car and all the people and places you encounter even while just running errands on a Saturday. Now imagine if you could tell each one of those people



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Displaying a creative, recognizable logo — or even using a font people associate with you — can go a long way in driving traffic to your store.

Be sure to keep your message simple so potential customers can tell what your business is and the service you provide.

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about your business and give them your contact information. The truth is, a car can actually be a moving billboard for your company. Car-door magnets can be personalized for your business and placed on either the door or back of your car. This allows everyone in your path to be exposed to your company and contact information for a minimal cost. Again, retailers are making these products readily available, many offering them for as little as \$10.

It is also a good idea to invest in smaller window decals. These can be placed in your own car windows, as well as your shop's window. They can inform people walking or driving by of unique sales, discounts or specials you are running. They can be used as a moving or stationary advertisement, and another way to increase awareness about what your business is offering. These small, simple marketing materials can turn into major visibility for your company.

Again, be sure to keep your message simple so potential customers can easily tell what your business is, the service you provide and how they can contact you. Having a good logo is also essential, especially when using it on signs. Your logo is the image of your business,

so keep it professional and make sure it reflects what your company does. Using the logo on all forms of signage will strengthen your brand and help people to remember the service you provide.

Think Outside the Box

A small marketing budget can seem like a curse for a company just getting started. In reality, this shouldn't hold you back; it just forces you to be more creative. Using signage in different ways can help set you apart from the pack when used in unique ways. Some trial and error may be involved, but always be sure to ask your customers how they heard of you so you can get direct feedback on what works the best for your company.

Trynka Shineman is chief marketing officer of VistaPrint, a small-business marketing company. For more information, visit www.vistaprint.com.

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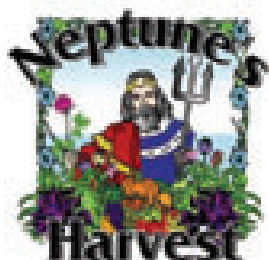
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