

# **PROMOTE LIKE A SHOWMAN!**

**Marketing In Today's Economy  
Back To The Basics**

BY JAMIE MACVICAR





**A marketer recently wrote, “In the age of Facebook and Twitter the winners will be those who know how to work the phone.” In today’s soft economy that’s a perfect segue to the perennial question that is more important than ever. How do I maximize my marketing and advertising dollars, and how do I close the sale?**

**T**he advance men for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus have for years exercised an extraordinary talent. And it isn’t their media buying expertise; though in that regard they are savvy. Nor is it their advertising’s creative impact; though their illustrated posters are considered works of art. Their genius has been how much exposure they’d get for free — air time and space that wouldn’t cost a dime. A Ringling promoter once exclaimed, “If I have a \$30,000 budget, by the time I am through I’ll have \$300,000 worth of exposure. They did this two ways:

- First, by the use of three chips: cash, trade and promotion. Both the media and the circus have something that costs them nothing that they both want to get rid of. In the case of the circus it is unsold seats, and in the media’s case it is unsold time or space.

An advance man’s approach to a local radio station would typically be, “I’ll give you \$5,000 for 10 spots a day to run in drive time over two weeks. In addition I will trade you 400 tickets — good for Mondays through Thursdays — for another 10 spots a day for two weeks. And I’d like to do a co-promotion (perhaps our king and queen promotion; whereby, teachers submit the names of outstanding students) where you give the tickets away over the air for another 10 spots a day the preceding two weeks.”

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- The second approach didn't cost the circus *anything*. A company such as Safeway with a large advertising budget would be pitched on a circus tie-in. The advance man might give the grocery chain 2,000 discount tickets good for weekday matinees and evenings. Safeway would be given a special "Safeway Night at the Circus" enhanced by their own Honorary Ringmaster and VIP seats. In turn the circus and the full dates of its engagement would be announced in all of Safeway's advertising and in-store promotions. This would go on for a month as Safeway stuffs the coupons in each family's bag.

It's a win-win for everyone! With the discount coupons Safeway attracts new customers. Families that might not be able to afford the full-priced ticket receive a healthy discount. And the circus, only too happy to receive 70 percent of the ticket price (plus concession sales) for a weekday show, gets an unimaginable amount of free advertising and exposure.

With variations on these themes and a grab-bag of promotional ideas these trade-outs and tie-ins would be repeated all over town for what amounted to a short-term market saturation. In compliance with accounting rules, and some creative thinking, any business today could increase their advertising exposure through similar strategies.

### Back to the Basics

Still, the advance men knew that nothing comes from nothing. Somebody has to act, and the most successful business people, from P.T. Barnum to Steve Jobs, have realized that, in the end, somebody has to sell something to someone. In fact, probably 80 percent of the most productive and consequential time that a marketing executive will spend will be in one-on-one personal sales.

Rarely will an e-mail, a Twitter, or a brochure make a sale, but personal, congenial, professional contact often does. Unfortunately, with the modern-day computer, a certain impersonalized distance has developed in the business world; a distance that could be mitigated by picking up the phone and making a sales call, the old-fashioned way.

Prospect calling isn't easy, though. By nature, we all want to feel accepted, and rejection is a part of any sales effort. That same trepidation can lead to inactivity, or wasted, unproductive time behind the computer. So here is how you can make it easier:

- Find your rhythm, your highest positive energy of the day. For me it's mornings from 8 a.m. until noon. I am fearless. At 9 a.m. I'd call Vladimir Putin and pitch an idea! But my confidence fades in the afternoon. So it's mornings that I make my sales calls. No interruptions. I then schedule my presentations for the afternoons, leaving my mornings free — for more sales calls.

- Smile when you speak into the phone. It will show in your voice.

- Today's selling is far more consultative. Your first call isn't meant to sell anything. It's to open a dialogue, and get an appointment.

- Use referrals, no matter how obscure. The prospect is more likely to listen when you start by saying, "So-and-so spoke highly of you and suggested that I give you a call."

- Sell like to like. People are more receptive when they hear that a company or someone they know has done a similar tie-in or promotion.

- And most important of all, focus almost solely on their "needs," not yours, and more often than not you will close the sale.

In summary, there are numerous win-win alliances that can multiply your advertising dollars. However, we mustn't forget that all things start from actions — actions worthy of P.T. Barnum that emanate from the heart of a good salesperson. 📞



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