

“Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense.”
Gertrude Stein, American writer (1874-1946)



Local area marketing

Local area marketing can provide a strong return on a business' marketing investment.

We have already talked about defining your target market; now it is time to break that group down even further to focus specifically on your local area. First you should define your local area. Is it the local community? Your local football club? Your suburb, state or country? Or people who work in your local area but may live somewhere else? Knowing this can assist you in your media choices. For example, if local residents are in your target area, community newspapers may work. However, if it is people who

work, but don't live, in your local area then transit media and radio may work better. Let's discuss some media channels that can specifically target your local area.

Community newspapers

Most major Australian cities have a community newspaper and many also have regular street-press or free newspapers covering art, music, museums, area events, movie times and local community happenings. Keep your eye out for these and make sure you consider them when planning your print advertising campaign.

Classified advertising or advertising features in your local newspaper are another option. You should contact your local paper for rates and readership figures. Frequency of your ad can be important in your local newspaper because you are more likely to be competing directly with other local businesses than you might in a national magazine. Perhaps consider committing to a regular spot in the early general news section of the paper so potential customers can become familiar with your brand and positioning, and know where to find you when they need your service. Some papers will run an advertising feature to complement a theme. For example, many local papers have a feature each week on real estate. If you sell home furnishings, or home finance, you might consider buying ad space in the feature.

Another suggestion for local advertising is advertorial – this is paid advertising written more like an editorial piece, or article. These usually allow for more information than a traditional advertisement.

A good way to track reach and measure the success of your ad is to ask the reader to bring a copy of the ad with them to redeem a special offer.

Go Get Car Share is a car share service for people who want the convenience of using a car without owning one. The business started in Sydney in 2003 with three cars and has expanded to a fleet of more than 35 cars operating across Sydney and Melbourne. Go Get Car Share's success is based on delivering quality service to their members, ensuring they keep coming back and spreading the word to their friends and colleagues. Go Get Car Share has tried a number of traditional advertising techniques but have found the best results have come from local area

marketing campaigns. These have included using local newspapers to generate publicity, advertising on community radio, negotiating in-kind sponsorship with local community newspapers and transport groups, as well as being present at festivals and cultural events. “We have endeavoured to develop strong links with the communities we operate within by supporting local causes our members are passionate about. This is at the heart of why we exist and continues to generate positive word of mouth for us.”

Nic Lowe, Director, Go Get Car Share

Shop fronts

Posters are particularly effective in your shop front. The key point here is to always keep them fresh. When your promotion is finished, take down the relevant posters. (More on outdoor advertising in chapter 19).

Local newsletters

Take advantage of newsletters circulating in your local area to publicise your news or event. These newsletters (online or print) generally have the advantage of wide distribution and they are usually very cost effective. These newsletters are usually put out by the following people:

- Local business network organisations
- Local councils
- Local members of parliament.

Local television

Small businesses using television as part of their local advertising campaign should consider using visuals relevant to the local community and scripts that describe your business commitment to the local area. A few ideas:

- Mention your actual address
- Name the areas you service
- Mention your location in reference to other land marks if necessary
- Mention your years in business servicing the local community
- Have an offer specifically for local residents
- If you are well known in the community, consider being the spokesperson.

Website content

You should provide details of your business’ local community activity on your website. Does your business sponsor the local football club? Do you run a work experience program for local schools? Are you a proud supporter of the local childcare centre? Make sure your community is aware of the support you provide, as this may prompt them to support you. If you do support affiliations in your community, ask them to put your logo or web link on their website too. A map on your website can demonstrate your local presence. You can buy a link to your local map through whereis.com. People can also see if there is an ATM nearby or parking facilities which might add to their positive experience, and therefore increased goodwill for your business.

Local search marketing

Is your website listed by your location and the local market it serves? Are the keywords and descriptions supplied to the search engines likely to be used by those people searching for a business like yours in a specific area, such as ‘lawyer in Shepparton’ or ‘builder in Orange’? If your keywords include plumber and plumbing, but don’t cover dripping tap, you may be missing out on some potential business – try to imagine all the possible ways people would search for your business, or a business like yours, on the internet. (More on this in chapter 16.)

You should also consider advertising or listing on websites that list local events and businesses such as yours. For example, if your business is an entertainment venue you should consider a listing on www.citysearch.com.au.

Local area mail drops

Local mail drops can be very effective and inexpensive. They are delivered to homes and businesses in your selected area so can be very targeted. They don’t have to be too fancy so can be affordable. They don’t have to be personalised so your chance of offending the home, or business, owner with an out-of-date mailing list, or incorrect spelling, can be reduced. The

key with this marketing method is to deliver them regularly; don't do it just once. For example, a new retail business in the area might repeat the mail drop every two weeks for three months. The other key is to ensure it is clear that you are local and perhaps make an offer that's only relevant to local residents and businesses. If you don't achieve a positive response, then change the headline or change the copy and test again.

For your first direct mail drop, you may want to consider testing responses in one suburb before rolling out your offer to ten suburbs. This will help minimise your risk and can allow you to plan for any additional stock or staff that you may need to handle the response. You can deliver the mail drop yourself or find out if there is a supplier in the area who can do this for you – some of these are listed later in the resource guide. They normally charge by postcode or a set price per 1,000 delivered.

Local outdoor signage

It is important to let your local potential customers know where you are and what you have to offer. If you are a retailer in a shopping strip, or centre, you should try to secure long-term access to any outdoor signage within close proximity to your business. (More on outdoor advertising in chapter 19.) Another option is to gain access to a shopping centre display, or promotional booth, central to foot traffic, and in close proximity to your business. These usually need to be organised in advance with shopping centre management, and you should be careful to abide by all their guidelines. Your display should be professional and appealing to your target audience. You might consider employing professional promotional staff to attract people to your display. Your promotion should encourage people to visit your business for more information. It is best to have an expiry time or date on promotional offers to create a sense of urgency and help manage promotional budgets – if you don't put an expiry date on your promotion, you may have to honour the promotion for the unforeseeable future, which makes budgeting difficult.

Cinema advertising

Cinema advertising appears to have become less popular in the past few years, perhaps due to increases in other new media. However, for local area marketing for the small business owner it can be worthwhile.

If you have an entertainment or food and beverage business within close proximity to a cinema, then advertising before the movies may prove to be effective. One way to measure this is to track the peak times for your business and see if they correlate with cinema screening times. Another option that may appeal to some businesses is a joint promotion with the local cinema – for example, offering a discounted meal to anyone who visits the cinema.

Local directories

People using local directories are generally more likely to be buyers, not browsers, ie, if they are looking in a local directory, then they are usually ready to buy. Research tells us directory advertising is the place we often turn when we have already made a decision and we are ready to buy. Known also as active advertising because it's where consumers turn when they have a need and the buyer is seeking the seller. The person looking in the directory has identified a need and has picked up the directory generally with intent to spend money.

The more local your business, the more relevant it is for you to appear prominently in your local directory. Keep in mind many people are keen to support their local community and may choose to shop locally for this reason. There's also the matter of convenience – few people would drive outside a 10km radius to buy a bunch of flowers unless all the local stores were closed or the person receiving the flowers lived a distance and there was a florist on the way to their house. When making larger purchase decisions people are more likely to travel further. Think of the last time you bought a car for example. You would probably visit several car yards and quite possibly travel a fair distance to find the right model/colour/price. When you need to have it serviced however, the convenience of dropping your car off and collecting locally would likely play a part of your decision making. So you'd possibly turn to your local directory to

find a service centre. Also consider whether your business attracts people to you, or if you tend to go to your customers. If someone is coming to mow your lawns you are unlikely to fuss about where they're coming from because it doesn't affect you (unless the cost of petrol pushes the prices up), but if you have to drive a distance to have your teeth cleaned you might reconsider your choice of dentist for a local and more convenient option. More on directory advertising in chapter 14.

Voice

Mobile phones are everywhere today. Often they are one of the most convenient options available when potential customers are searching for a business or service. A listing in the White Pages® or the Yellow™ directory also provides access to customers looking for you on Telstra's Directory Assistance, and Sensis' 1234 where relevant. Like search engine marketing, on 1234 you can also choose to pay a fee to ensure you are among the first listed when your keywords are selected by the consumer. Think about how a potential customer would try to find your business, as customers may think of your business in different ways. For example, if you are a dance school and want to maximise your chance of being found, you might want to think about purchasing keywords for 'dance schools', 'ballet schools' and 'ballet teachers' rather than just 'dance school'. Check with your advertising provider how many keywords you are allowed to have. For example, a priority listing on 1234 will allow you a minimum of three keywords and a maximum of 50; these can be crucial in finding a business. The purpose of keywords is to improve the search relevancy so consumers can quickly and easily find the product or service they are looking for. For example, a consumer looking for an Indian restaurant offering take-away and accepting credit cards will not find you in their search results if you don't have these keywords and they specify them in their search. Only the businesses with either or both of these are likely to be given priority preference. The same rules apply for search engine marketing.

Harpers Waste Management is a small business in Coburg which uses 1234 text advertising under multiple related categories. This means if someone asks for 'garden equipment' or 'plumbing supplies', by paying for text space on related advertising, Harpers Waste Management can be confident potential customers

can find them easily even though they may be looking for a business to provide a different product or service. "1234 gives us the opportunity to put our name in front of people who might not have thought about the fact they need a rubbish removalist. When they realise they are going to need help removing waste after they have called a plumber or builder, we are more likely to be top of mind."

Robin Reiger, managing director, Harpers Waste Management Pty Ltd

Proximity alerts

Being able to make permission-based offers via the mobile phone to a specific target market such as 18–25 year olds within a 5km radius is already possible in other parts of the world. Imagine receiving a message: "Hi Rob, I have been notified that you are nearby. Do you want to meet for a coffee?"

Be ready to take advantage of these local marketing options if and when they become available in your local area.

Local promotions

Local promotions can be very targeted and can be based on:

- **Buying behaviour** – for example, a café owner might offer a 50% discount on fresh muffins when a large coffee is purchased between 10.00-11.00am, and a discount of 50% on an apple slice when a large coffee is purchased between 3.00-4.00pm
- **Spend** – for example, a furniture retailer might offer a \$50 gift voucher for purchases of more than \$500
- **Business trends** – for example, a movie cinema might offer a 'happy hour' every Tuesday to encourage sales on what is usually a slower day than others.

Shopping dockets

For both small and large businesses, the ability to target the right customers, at the right time, with the most relevant message, is vital. The ability to measure the effectiveness of your marketing activity, and experiment with different channels, is also important.

Shopping dockets can provide a cheap advertising channel for businesses trying to reach grocery buyers, but given the varied demographics of grocery buyers, they may not be an effective medium if you are trying to reach a specific group within this category. A more recent innovation in shopping dockets means they can be delivered at the retail point of sale and are therefore able to provide a more cost-effective advertising channel for businesses trying to reach different kinds of buyers. Greg Taylor from Docket Rocket has developed a marketing platform where retail transaction data is captured and used to deliver dynamically targeted offers and marketing messages at the point of sale (POS). He has developed an intelligent docket concept that changes the mechanics of the traditional pre-printed vouchers you may have seen last time you purchased something at the supermarket. Taylor's concept involves dynamically generating a docket as a result of a particular purchase. For example, when a customer in a bookstore buys a book on gardening, the docket generated might be a \$10 discount on outdoor furniture from another retailer, while the customer who purchases a book on horoscopes might be offered 20% off a second book on the same topic purchased the next time they shop – giving them an incentive to go back to that retailer and sooner than they otherwise might. The retailer providing the dockets can choose to make offers solely related to their own products and services, or to deliver offers for the products and services of other participating merchants and external advertisers.

Retail merchants who use shopper dockets can benefit in a number of ways:

- Through better understanding their customers' needs and providing relevant offers
- By increasing the potential sales value of each customer through making highly targeted offers
- By making offers that drive repeat business and shorter times between visits
- Through easy tracking of results.

Word of mouth

When starting out in business, word of mouth is one of the best techniques you can use. You can do this through letting your network of family, friends, neighbours and business associates know you have opened for business. Another way is through local community involvement. Make sure your business is involved in high-profile community activities and get people talking about your brand.

Some businesses rely heavily on word of mouth for the long term too. Trades are a good example. Think of the last time you needed a plumber, perhaps you asked a friend who recently had a blocked loo to recommend theirs?

Questbuild is a building and renovation business based in Bayswater, Victoria but do the majority of their work in Malvern, Victoria. "We have a great small team and can only manage a limited number of projects at a time. We find it easier if these projects are closely situated so our contractors and staff can move from one to the next whenever needed. Otherwise the travel time would mean fewer projects would be possible at any one time. When people are investing in their homes they also like to see our work and if they live in the area, they can inspect previous projects if the owners are willing. We find word of mouth invaluable – people see our signs in front of their neighbour's house and will ask after us. Obviously quality workmanship and good service are imperative if you want good word of mouth!"
Andrew Galbraith, general manager, Questbuild.