**Five online marketing strategies for a tight budget**

In a world where attention is currency, it's becoming increasingly more difficult to attract the eyes and ears of your target market. Not only are you up against larger companies with nicely funded marketing departments, you're also competing with social media and a multitude of other distractions for the attention of your prospects.

But that doesn't mean your marketing efforts have to cost a ton of money or be overly dramatic in order to stand out from the crowd! Here are five creative and inexpensive ways to market your agency in a digital world:

**1. Get endorsed by a local celebrity**

Many agency principals dream of having their product or service endorsed by a global celebrity. But instead of trying to get a superstar to support your agency, try seeking out a local celebrity instead.

Who exactly are local celebrities? These are people your local paper is writing about -- perhaps an "unsung hero" such as a teacher or a tenant who's doing something positive and newsworthy. Since they're in your neighbourhood, these people should be relatively easy to locate and contact by phone or e-mail. Let them know you'd like to send them a gift, namely your product or service.

The only catch: you'd like to follow up with them in a few days to get their honest feedback. Their responses can make for useful blog or marketing content.

**2. Create a LinkedIn group**

Not only is a LinkedIn group free to create, it can enable you to offer your professional network a vibrant, useful information resource all while driving traffic to your site and increasing sales. But don't use the platform to hard-sell to anyone.

It can take time and effort to get one going, but the goal should be to help provide resources and start discussions on topics that can benefit your community. Groups should also be a place for your members to network with other professionals online.

**3. Get published on niche blogs**

While it may be difficult to get on the front cover of a major magazine, you can create marketing opportunities by being featured in a popular niche blog. Identify three to five blogs that target your market then contact the creator and offer a few ideas of how you'd like to bring value to his or her readers. You can:

• Demonstrate goodwill by offering the owner of the niche blog a small amount of your product or service for free, which they can give away to their audience as a gift. This is different than a product review, which only offers information.

• Send ideas for blog posts you'd like to write and explain why they would be helpful for their readers.

• Ask if you can interview them for your site. This might entice the blog manager to promote your content since it highlights his or her business.

**4. Create videos for YouTube**

With more than 800 million unique visitors a month, YouTube can be a powerful platform for marketing a business online. To do so, go beyond simply posting random videos of your product or sharing your thoughts.

The marketing videos you create should include the following elements:

• A keyword-researched headline

• A clear editorial message (don't try to accomplish too much in one video)

• A call to action (tell the viewer to do something, such as subscribing to your channel)

While you can spend a small fortune on cameras, lighting equipment and editing software, the camera built into your smart phone should be able to capture suitable online video. As for editing, if you're on a Mac, for instance, you should already have iMovie in your applications. Even if you don't have a Mac you can find free software online or hire a professional editor on sites such as Fiverr.com, possibly for as little as $5 depending on the scope of the work.

**5. Write an e-book about the biggest issues in your industry**

No longer do you need a publishing company or thousands of dollars to get distribution for a book. Amazon, for instance, will let you upload a digital book for free, with a 33 percent take on every sale. The goal is not to make a profit from direct book sales but to use it as a lead generation tool, encouraging readers to opt into your website for further information.

Even time-strapped entrepreneurs who aren't great writers should consider this. You can search sites like Upwork to hire an affordable ghostwriter who can help you convert your blog posts or audio recordings into book format.

When it comes to marketing your book, set the price between $1 and $5 -- which makes it affordable – then use social media, video marketing and email list marketing to promote it. To generate more leads, keep in mind that Amazon allows prospective buyers of your book to take a sneak peek of the first few pages. Be sure to embed links into these early pages so you can capture leads from people who were interested but didn't wind up making a purchase.