

MARKETING FOR SURVIVAL

Many owner/managers look back with nostalgia on their early days in business: the excitement of developing that big idea, the adrenaline of closing that first deal, and the overwhelming sense of responsibility when you realise that you now have to deliver to your expectant customer.

But for most, that feeling is long gone, replaced by anxiety about the future, fuelled by news of businesses large and small going to the wall. Those that survive will be the ones that do something different; something that enables them to compete effectively, and that is sustainable in the long term.

The most successful small businesses make a virtue of being small. Somehow they manage to retain that sparkle which is often lost in more established organisations.

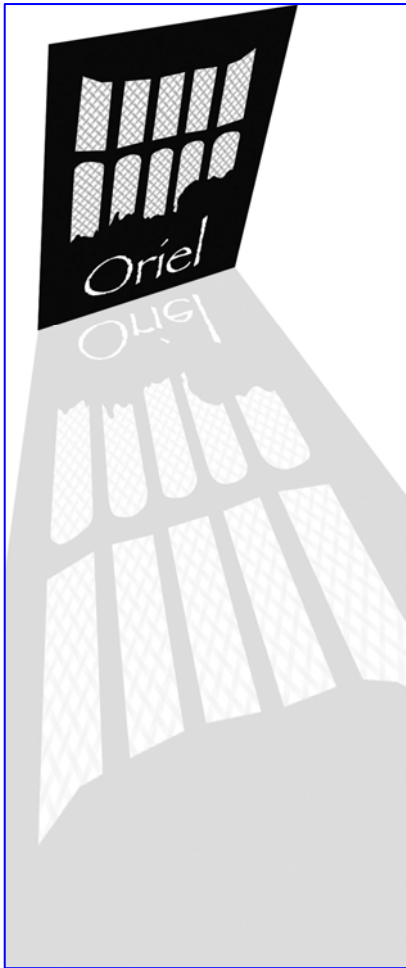
Wouldn't it be great if you could re-capture that early enthusiasm, whilst locking in the vital experience you've gained? What changes could that mean?

Capture the excitement

What have you got to offer? What is special about your product or service? Who will want to buy it? By asking these questions again, and honestly reviewing your current offering, you may find new markets, new benefits to publicise, or even new products to launch. If there are new ideas that have been simmering for a while, this is the time to get them out there.

Test and learn

In the early days, businesses are fanatical about pay back, particularly of their marketing expenditure. Every item of marketing activity must do a worthwhile job. This could be the time to move to email marketing, rather than traditional



sales letters, downloadable brochures, rather than glossy printed versions and a review of where and why you advertise. And if you can't tell what is working, try stopping each activity for a time and then ask your customers and staff if they've missed it. You may find that the innovative replacement is far more effective, and gives your business a more cutting edge appeal.

Creative solutions

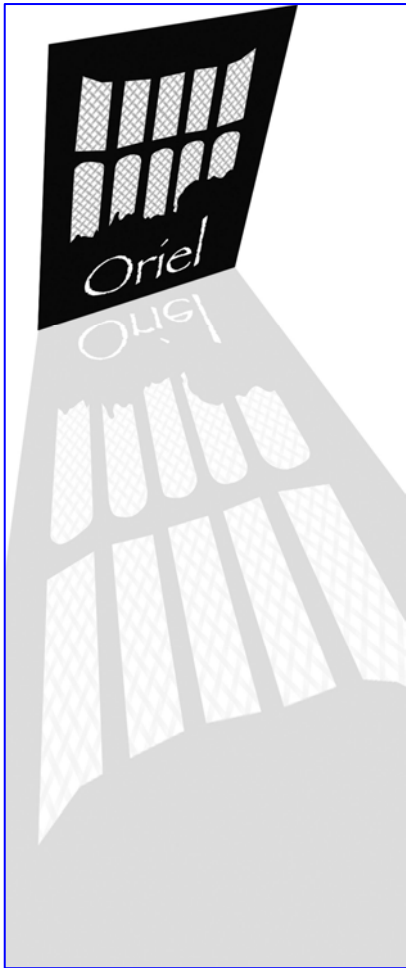
Talk to related businesses, which are offering services to the same group of customers. That could be as simple as reciprocal website links, supplying copy to each others customer newsletters, or even a joint loyalty scheme. By analysing logically what you can offer, and using your network of contacts, you may find the right answer on your doorstep.

Keep costs low

Every business starts on a shoestring, but most acquire overheads as they grow. If you were starting again, what would you really need? Can you be more innovative in structuring your team? Could flexible working reduce your office costs, and suit your business model? Do you need a different mix of skills? Cutting back may not be that painful, and you may find that as technology has changed there are savings to be made that actually improve your productivity.

Quality people

And perhaps the most important lesson is to source the best skills you can afford. This does not mean a high salary bill these days, as many companies buy in expertise in the form of freelancers, part time staff or specialist advisors for a very limited number of days per year. As the workforce becomes more fluid, there is a wealth of expertise which can be accessed in a variety of new ways.



Capture the moment

Offer something that makes the customer feel as though they are economising. Instead of a new kitchen, just replace all the cupboard doors. Instead of eating out, just buy a high quality ready meal. Instead of moving house, just install a home office in the garden. Each of these items could be marketed in a number of ways, and you need to find the one that is right for now.

So how does your business match up? Keep your product fresh and innovative, market it actively and cost effectively, and capture the moment. Take the opportunity to look at your business afresh, and fill it with enthusiasm, sparkle and excitement about the possibilities. Because doing business will never be the same again.

Oriel Marketing helps companies to market themselves professionally, especially in turbulent times. We specialise in developing new products for new markets, creating strategies to keep existing customers and acquire new ones, and we provide flexible marketing support to implement these plans.

**For further information
call Oriel Marketing on 01252 727625**

www.oriemarketing.com

© Oriel Marketing Ltd 2009