



Developing Your Start-Up's Ad Strategy

Your ad strategy should begin before you even put the "Open" sign in your window. Getting ready for customers starts with the decision that you're going to open up your own business. Gear up now to reap the rewards of success for the life of your business.

Develop Your Message

Know what you want to tell customers about your business. Let's say you want to open up a furniture store.

Do you want to be known as the discount furniture store or the upscale furniture store? Do you have a large inventory or select pieces?

Develop your message to help customers identify your business. A vital tool in developing your message will also come from your marketing plan.

Consistency in Look

The colors you choose, your logo and all of your materials should be consistent. Don't just choose red because it's your favorite color.

Take this major decision one step further. Companies spend a lot of time and money on developing their look. No matter what the size of your company, you should too.

McDonald's is known for its golden arches. Home Depot is known for its bright orange. You've got to think about how you will brand your company right from the start.

Your logo's look, the font size and type you use, even your slogan should be consistent from the business cards you have printed to the front door your customers will be opening.

Identify Your Competitors

What other businesses in your area will you be competing with for the customer's dollar? Identify those competitors and your differentiators.

What makes your company better? What makes their company better? Take your company's strong points and use them to attract customers. Take your company's weaker points and see how you can improve them to fill those gaps.

Even when your company takes off, continue to analyze your differentiators. There's always room for improvement and more sales as business evolves.

Know What's in a Name

You're opening your own gardening center. Why not call it Al's? That's your name after all and you've always wanted to have your own business named after yourself.

But who is Al? Carefully select a name for your company.

When people see the word "Al" on a sign, are they going to know who that is and what that company does? It takes a long time to establish a business and your company's name needs to identify what it is you do.

Al's Garden Center is an improvement. But if you really want to make an impact, choose something that's more direct. The Green Thumb. The Plant Place. Remember, you want your business to last for years to come and this decision is as important as naming your baby.

Take Wendy's, for example. Founder Dave Thomas wanted to name a restaurant after his daughter Wendy. But even today, when most consumers simply call the business Wendy's, the official logo still reads, "Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers."

Opening Your Doors

What's a good time to open your business? It depends on the type of product and service that you'll be selling.

Opening a garden center in the winter isn't going to bring in a lot of grand opening sales. Open your prom dress shop in the summer and you're going to miss out on that year's prom season.

Figure out what time of year to open your company that makes the most sense. You want to take advantage of the crowds for grand opening events and sales. Bottom line is, you wouldn't open a sled shop during beach season.