



Cross-Promote Your Business Through Partnering

Say the word "partnering" and company execs immediately tune you out. The term drums up notions of giving up your business goals or limiting your creative license. But in reality, becoming advertising partners with another company can be very beneficial for all parties.

Ford Motor Company is a prime example of partnering success. This time last year, Ford yanked \$100 million of their magazine ad dollars. Instead, they began the hunt for ad partners so they could tap into events, performances, sports outings and database marketing.

Their ultimate partnering strategy was announced recently. With the release of the 2001 Ford Escape came the My Dream Escape promotion. Ford partnered with 15 different publications to create two-page advertorials unique to that particular magazine.

Best of all, the magazines did all the work! Over 150 publications were asked to produce their own version of a "My Dream Escape" package. For instance, *Food & Wine* magazine proposed a dream package where the winner gets to spend a weekend learning cooking tips and secrets from a classically-trained chef. *Esquire* magazine places one lucky winner with a trip to a writer's workshop to develop their personal writing skills with a professional author.

Even cereal distributors are actively involved in partnering. When you purchase certain General Mills cereals, you instantly get a free full-version game on CD-ROM. But this CD contains advertising messages from Lightdog.com and Pfizer Animal Health. And the very first thing you hear is, "This CD is brought to you by General Mills, makers of your favorite cereals."

CVS and WebMD jumped on-board the partnering ship to raise money for the National Women's Cancer Research Alliance (NWCRA) in their fight against breast cancer. In turn, all ads mention both companies and both Web sites have prominently displayed links to the other through specially designed banners.

Blockbuster Video and Domino's Pizza also join forces for special offers. Order a pizza and receive Blockbuster coupons. Commercials mention both companies and show their logos.

You don't have to be a corporate giant to take advantage of partnering. Say you're a builder. If a business like Home Depot is coming to town, you may think they don't need your help.

But actually, this is the perfect time for your approach. Your construction workers are on-site building houses. You could display signs at these sites stating, "This house built with Home Depot products by Joe Smith Construction."

As an added bonus, your company and Home Depot could partner with a furniture store and offer X amount of furniture with the purchase of the house. The furniture store and Home Depot could have an in-store display, send out mailers or even shoot a commercial. All three businesses would be mentioned in all of these scenarios.

With a third partner, your sign could say, "Joe Smith Construction Built This Fine House With Home Depot Products. Purchase this house and receive \$5,000 in free furniture." Your logo as well as Home Depot and the furniture store would be featured on the sign.

A pet store could even team up with a veterinarian. Your promotion could be, "Take home any kitten or puppy and receive 25% off vaccinations. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)."

An automobile dealership could partner with an auto service center. Together, they could jointly produce a newsletter with tips on car care and feature info on current cars for sale. You could also have a page filled with coupons for an oil change, radiator flush, set of tires, etc. The auto dealer might want to consider special offers like no money down or no payments for 90 days.

The partnering possibilities are endless. You keep more of your ad dollars but get increased advertising exposure.

Partnering offers an excellent opportunity, regardless of how many years or even months you've been in business. With a little creativity and even less money, partnering can help establish your business and generate added revenue for your pockets.