

Start here: your marketing budget priority list

WOULDNT WE ALL love to have the advertising budgets and marketing teams of Nike or Apple? Unfortunately, that's not in the cards for most of us. Generally, small- and medium-sized business owners must prioritize their time and money. Are you wondering where to start, or whether you've covered the most important things? Here is my marketing priority list:

Website. If people hear about you, see one of your ads, or search for you online, they will go looking for your website. Websites convey legitimacy in a way little else can. If your website looks old or its content isn't kept up to date, your customers will notice. Pro tip: If at all possible, choose a site address that ends in ".com" and does not contain dashes.

Logo. Your logo is the visual basis for your brand. It sets the tone for your design look and feel, and a good logo will

be memorable and effective. A logo can't tell your whole story, but it's an important start. As long as your logo looks modern and professional, it will suffice.

Google business listing. Claim your official business listing on Google, which lets you input your contact information, locations (if you have multiple), and, importantly, your hours of business (including holiday hours). This doesn't cost money, but it does take time and patience.

Email marketing. As I've written in this column before, email marketing is still an important way to reach your customers. Cultivate an email list — a form on your website can help — and email your customers regularly. You can probably use a service for free, but even paid services aren't too expensive.

Professional design. This isn't a tactic, of course, but it is an expense. Hiring



Ian Doescher

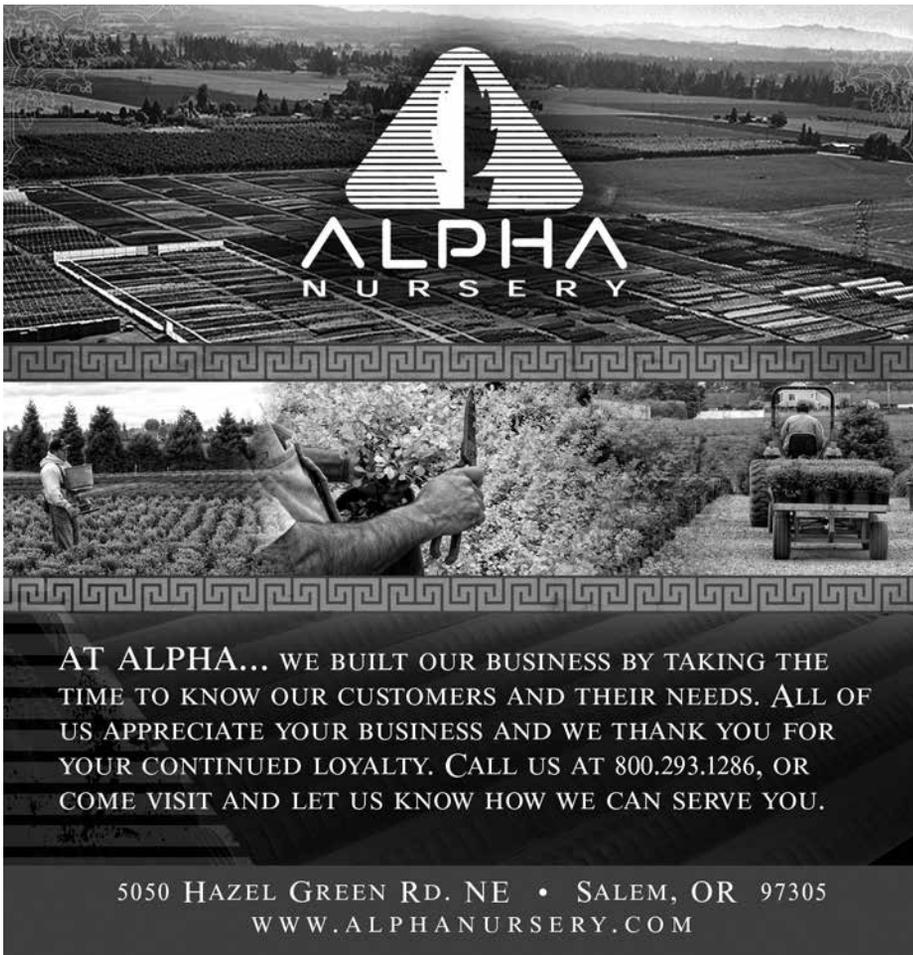
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a designer who can design things well is critical to making the remaining items on this list successful. Freelance designers are easy to find!

Signage. You may not think of this as marketing, but it is. When someone walks into your business, do they see signage that looks professional and well-branded, or a mishmash of printed and handwritten signs? What about the signage outside your business (particularly for retail businesses)? Are they eye-catching and on brand?

Product information. My sister- >>





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in-law is an organic farmer in Idaho. She recently showed me labels she designed herself to go on vegetable containers headed for the grocery stores in her area. I advised her to have them professionally designed. (The truth: Pivot's designers did them pro bono.) Your products should look just as sharp and professional — or more — as your competitors.'

Targeted digital advertising. Google search ads, Facebook sponsored posts, LinkedIn ads (particularly for B2B businesses), and so on are vital pieces of any marketing mix. These days, you should think about digital ads before you spend money on print. Digital includes Pandora or Spotify ads, which incorporate an audio component.

Print advertising. This is a big world, so it can be hard to navigate. Do the best you can to make sure your print advertising reaches your potential customers. If that means the local newspaper, okay. If it's an industry publication — like *Digger* magazine — go for it. If it's a billboard on a nearby road with heavy traffic, and you can afford it, more power to you. If it's the Yellow Pages ... no. I strongly advise you not to spend money on an ad in the Yellow Pages. Put that money toward digital ads.

Final random notes

The list above assumes, of course, that you already have a business name. (If not, that's #1!) Also, when it comes to advertising, it's ideal to mix digital and print to cover your bases.

There may be industry publications or local print pieces that you think your business should appear in for reasons beyond marketing. If so, let those take higher priority than other items. Generally speaking, though, the list above can help you prioritize where to put your budget, or maybe show you where your dollars can move from one place to another. Happy prioritizing! ☺



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