



K2 ENTERPRISES

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS

TECHNOLOGY + MARKETING = SUCCESS

Selling Your Services With Technology

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INTRODUCTION

In a slowing economy, many marketing experts suggest increasing investments in marketing efforts. For accountants, these efforts can pay dividends in retaining existing clients, expanding services provided to existing clients, and attracting new clients. To increase your return on marketing efforts, consider how utilizing technology can make your efforts more effective. This article focuses on utilizing technology in marketing efforts in two distinct ways – reaching prospects and enhancing the message delivered to prospects.

REACHING PROSPECTS WITH TECHNOLOGY

While it might seem trite to recommend establishing web sites to CPA firms, most web sites maintained by CPA firms are not very effective as marketing tools for the firms. Rather, they generally contain only static information such as names and phone numbers of firm members and staff. To be truly effective, web sites should offer interactivity to those who visit. For instance, interactive calculators for things such as loan amortization schedules, tax projections, and retirement planning are proven methods of causing existing clients to visit your site more often, while also attracting new visitors to your site. Also, be sure that your site has numerous links to other relevant sites. These links increase the likelihood that your site will show up higher in search engine results pages. Additionally, consider investing in search engine optimization efforts. Such efforts may result in a significant re-design of your site so as to enhance its relative position in search engine results. Finally, consider implementing two-way portals as either an integrated component of your web site or via a stand-alone application. Portals make it more convenient for your existing clients to communicate with you, making them more likely to seek additional services from your firm and become evangelists for your firms among their peers. Tool that might be useful in establishing portals include Microsoft's **Office Live Workspace** and **Windows SharePoint Services**; in addition, most major tax software and document management companies include portals in their service offerings.

Another proven means of using technology to reach prospects is via effective newsletters delivered as email messages. Newsletters providing timely, relevant, and useful content get read and often get forwarded to others. Numerous tools are available to assist in this effort, including **Constant Contact** and **Office Live Small Business**. The cost of delivering newsletters via email is virtually nothing and the returns can be outstanding.

ENHANCING THE MESSAGE DELIVERED TO PROSPECTS

In addition to reaching clients with technology, technology can also be very effective at enhancing the marketing message delivered to clients. From simple **PowerPoint** presentations to more robust proposals don't miss the chance to ensure that your proposals stand-out from those offered by your competitors. A simple example of this is the use of **Themes** in **Office 2007** to ensure that your Word

documents, Excel spreadsheets, and PowerPoint decks all have a consistent and professional look and feel across all Office documents.

At a bit higher level, providing detailed analytical reports can entice additional reports can entice existing business clients to engage your firm for additional services and can cause potential business clients to consider your proposal more seriously than those provided by other firms. Two outstanding resources for these analytics reports include **ProfitCents** and **The Business Analyst**. Both of these web-based offerings provide detailed analytical reports more efficiently and effectively than such reports could be developed in spreadsheet models; report outputs are presentation-quality and can be easily customized to meet specific firm criteria.

SUMMARY

Now is the time to increase, not decrease, your marketing efforts. As the economy regains its momentum, investments in effective marketing efforts will provide superior returns in both the short-run and long-term. As you are ramping up your marketing efforts, be sure to consider how utilizing technology will make these efforts more efficient and more effective.

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