

Nobody Celebrates Birthdays Alone!

Top Entrepreneurs Leverage Area Birthday Data to Bring in a Steady Stream of New Customers!

By Julie Escobar, Director of Corporate Marketing

In the fast paced world of restaurants, salons, boutiques and most service-oriented businesses—getting and keeping customer interest in the wake of our current economic downturn certainly has more than it's fair share of owners scratching their heads for solutions. Enter the “wonderful world” of birthday prospecting.

In terms of marketing muscle, it's no surprise that many entrepreneurs are taking their lead from none other than the Walt Disney Organization. Their “What Will You Celebrate?” campaign kicked into high gear in 2009 that starts with a free \$75+ park ticket and extends to celebration-oriented travel packages that include resort hotels, restaurants and shops. What have they gotten in return? Big business, busy turnstiles and a chance to bring entire families in for a “milestone celebration.” After all, as Chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Jay Rasulo quoted in the Orlando Sentinel, “Nobody celebrates their birthday by themselves!”

How does this big brand name strategy trickle down into smart business sense for the small to medium sized business owners? Simple, they start by learning from the leaders. What does Disney do almost better than anyone else? They understand people, celebrations and connectivity. Not bad cornerstones for a marketing plan – right?

“Right!” shared Jim Schimpf, Executive Director for Florida-based marketing leader, Opportunity Knocks. “Even in this economy, marketing relevance drives response for our customers – and there's not much more relevant to a consumer than their birthday!” Mr. Schimpf's company has fast-tracked birthday prospecting campaigns for a wide variety of businesses including some national favorites such as Hooters Brand Corporation, Roy's Restaurant and Aveda Salons – all to double digit response rates. “Within just five days of launching campaigns, I was seeing 6%, 11%, 17% and even results in the 20% range! Now with a national DM average in the sub ½ to 1% -- I knew we were on to something great for helping our clients bring new customers through their doors!”

Will it work for your business? Effective marketing, in any market, requires testing and measuring to be certain you're getting a good return on your investment. “The key is targeted demographics,” added Mr. Schimpf. “As a business owner, you have a pretty good idea of what your ‘best customer’ looks like. We've had the most success, and the best return on marketing dollar for our clients when we are able to work together to really define that demographic such as: professional woman in her 40s that lives within five miles, or married couple, with a household income over \$80,000, living within a three-mile radius. That way, we can tap national consumer databases with those specifics, add a birthday search and what clients come away with is a prospecting list of the consumers most likely to respond, custom-made for their organization. Once you've identified the best customers, it's simply a matter of tailoring your offer to produce the strongest response. The great thing about developing a marketing strategy with the capability to do short run promotions, is that you do have that ability to test different offers if you feel like you're not hitting it out of the park at any given time. Our system provides a report to the clients so they can see at a glance when people have clicked on their

personalized webpage to see the offer, make a reservation, or asked to be contacted. It's just a great way to measure response."

What should your offer include?

- "Free" is usually an effective motivator, especially in today's climate. Consider a free meal or appetizer to the birthday guest for restaurants, free side service for salons, free upgrade for hotels or airlines. When you consider most guests don't celebrate alone, it's a loss-leader that can pay off.
- Dollars off or a percentage off total purchase is another way to "gift" the birthday guest without costing a great deal.
- VIP Service is another great way to bring people in the door. Front-of-the-line, over-the-top, best-table-in-the-house type service for the birthday party guests at a nightclub, restaurant, salon, boutique, hotel, etc.

Whatever your business, there's never been a better time to get creative and pro-active in terms of your marketing. That's just ONE reason why so many are taking their cue from the creative genius of Disney's birthday promotions and reaping the benefits of growing their customer base one "guest" at a time!

Need more information on how to implement this strategy in YOUR business? Call Opportunity Knocks today to learn what's working and what's not, how to bring more customers through your doors each month and how tapping some Disney-like magic in your marketing might just be the solution for you!

Julie Escobar has more than 24 years experience in the sales, marketing and speaking industries, and is a contributing editor for several nationwide sales publications. **In her spotlight this month: Opportunity Knocks**, a Florida-based, Nationwide marketing organization which works hand-in-hand with customers and business leaders across North America to develop powerful, open-door, direct marketing solutions. With a dynamic direct response creative team and cutting edge industry technology, they consistently deliver high-impact, results-producing, AUTOMATED systems that meet and exceed entrepreneurs and business owner's expectations. To learn more about how your organization can leverage these direct response tools, grow your business and develop customers for life, contact them today. Visit them on the web at www.birthdayprospecting.com, www.oppknockspostcards.com or call them toll free at 1.800.287.5710. To reach Julie, call 1.866.405.3641 or email Julie.Escobar@prospectsplus.com.