

Small Business Tips & Advice

Small-Business Expert Points To Technology As Today's Tool For Creating Professional Marketing Materials ☺

(NAPSA)—Joanna Krotz, a widely published writer, columnist and former executive editor at a national magazine read by more than a million entrepreneurs, also runs her own small business called Muse2Muse Productions which develops editorial and marketing communications for Fortune 500 and other corporations.

Krotz has straightforward advice for companies that want to grow. "Get smart about marketing," she says. "It doesn't have to cost a bundle, but you do need to present an appropriate image. Customers can create an overall impression of the business based on the look and feel, logo and tag lines, layout and design of any communication or marketing materials the customer sees."

Krotz urges small businesses to answer key questions before launching marketing efforts:

- *How can a small business communicate with customers?* That depends on the kind of business it is. A retailer with weekly sales might send out fliers or discount coupons every Wednesday to attract traffic on Saturday. An accounting firm or medical practice would be better off producing high-quality newsletters a few times a year.

- *How does a small business build an identity?* First, by delivering satisfaction to customers and then by creating marketing materials that build on that trust. Be consistent across media channels. Put the logo or tag line on everything that goes out, including stationery, business cards, e-mail, brochures, postcards and posters.

- *How can a small business stand out?* Owners can boost their reputation by becoming an industry expert. The CEO can use a desktop publishing program to build a simple, good-looking media kit, including bio and credentials, company profile, photo and potential topics. The kit then goes out to a targeted list of conference planners and industry events.

- *How can a firm create loyal customers?* Identify and reward repeat customers. Send personalized postcards. Set up concierge services or a frequent-buyer club that offers discounts or rewards to members. Create an online channel with news and sales that only special customers can access.

One of the most effective ways to generate professional-quality materials is through a flexible, easy-to-use desktop publishing program. For example, Microsoft Publisher 2002 offers an efficient way to create high-quality materials such as newsletters, postcards, brochures, fliers, business cards, Web sites and more, without the expense and learning curve of programs created for professional designers.

Krotz says this is a great time for small businesses to play up their advantages. "Many consumers are reassured by doing business with small firms these days," says Krotz. "People like the idea of personally meeting the owner and knowing that he or she is accountable."

More information on Microsoft Publisher is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/publisher/>.