

Three Ways To Grow A Business In 2001

(NAPS)—By now, most people have already made their *personal* New Year's resolutions. Maybe they plan to lose weight, save money or visit an elderly aunt. All good intentions, but they leave out an important aspect of the coming year: business.

It's not too late to make New Year's resolutions for your business—and you don't have to go it alone. Various companies have launched "business services" centers designed to educate and empower business owners. These online centers offer innovative ideas, expert advice, business articles and affordable prices for a broad range of business needs.

To step up your 2001 sales and marketing efforts, the Staples.com Business Services Center (www.staples.com/businesssolutions) recommends these simple strategies:

Launch a direct mail campaign

Direct mail is a powerful advertising tool that generates big returns. According to the Direct Marketing Association, what some people call "junk mail" typically generates an \$11 return for every dollar spent. (Source: *The Economic Impact of Direct and Interactive Marketing on the U.S. Economy*, 1999.)

Dreading the thought of stuffing and licking envelopes? It's now possible to quickly customize marketing pieces online, get free customer/prospect names and preview the final piece before making a purchase. Some companies even print, stuff, address, stamp and mail your direct marketing campaign. Better still, you can send direct mail for as little as 99 cents a piece; conventional campaigns of fewer than 1,000 pieces typically run \$2.85 per piece. (Source: March 2000 study, ClickTactics.)

Get your name out there

Why not make gift-giving a



Online business services can be a great tool for helping a company grow.

year-round event? Thank current customers and attract new ones by handing out promotional goods stamped with your company's name and logo. Consider such customized items as golf balls, mugs, shirts, pens, mouse pads, stress balls or flashlights. Experts also recommend giving out products that relate to your business.

Look professional

To compete with the big guys, you need to look like a big guy. For example, add legitimacy to your company by investing in professional stationery and business cards.

You can order business cards, letterhead, envelopes, labels and memo pads right from your office desk. Upload your company's logo and choose from a variety of paper stocks, ink colors and template designs. Days later your order arrives on your doorstep; you'll have business cards in your pocket for impromptu networking and letterhead ready when you send contracts to new and existing customers.

No matter what business resolutions you make, be sure to set achievable goals and reasonable timelines.