

communication briefings™

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A monthly idea source for decision makers

August 1988

ISSN 0730-7799

Volume 7, Number 10

Books to Read —

Marketing on a Shoestring

What's the greatest marketing mistake smaller businesses make?

It's failing to clearly define the market to be served, says Jeffrey P. Davidson in his latest book, *Marketing on a Shoestring*.

Davidson poses this question to his readers: "If you were quizzed right now as to what business you are in or what your company is known for, what would the answer be?"

Get to know
the problems of
your market

A long, involved answer, he says, means "you haven't properly positioned your product and/or service."

Davidson warns that companies that cast too wide a net by trying to be something to everyone are bound to suffer. He urges readers to focus on key groups to profitably apply his shoestring marketing techniques.

He suggests that businesspeople make a list of their 10 best customers or clients and try to understand them by applying this checklist:

- **What do they read?** The local paper? Trade and professional journals and newsletters? Consumer magazines?
- **What do they attend?** National conventions and trade shows? Civic

and community events?

- **What do they respond to?** Phone calls? Letters? On-site visits? How did they first hear of you? Why have they stayed with you?

- **What must they overcome?** Get to know the problems of your target market. Find out how to gather information on your customers' problems.

Once you've answered these questions, he says, then you should "read what they read, attend what they attend, keep notes on their responses, and talk to them about their problems."

Throughout the 223-page softcover, Davidson offers a variety of low-cost marketing tips for businesses that can't afford large budgets. *Some examples:*

- **Become an active referral-seeker.** Build a solid relationship with customers and let them know up front you will be asking for referrals.

- **Get on the lunch and dinner circuit.** Find out what groups your customers belong to and join them.

- **Consider bartering,** especially in exchange for advertising. Smaller publications, such as shoppers guides, are often receptive.

- **Get quality marketing information** from customers by requesting they fill in an evaluation form that asks marketing questions in addition to the standard company-performance questions.

Source: Marketing on a Shoestring, by Jeffrey P. Davidson, John Wiley & Sons, 605 3rd Ave., New York, NY 10158—\$12.95.