

## **Think outside the box**

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***“One of the outstanding characteristics of true entrepreneurs is their ability to think extremely creatively. When circumstances demand it, they tackle challenges in highly innovative ways. There is an English expression that goes: “When the going gets tough, the tough gets going.”***

These are tough times for small and medium-sized business owners, but true entrepreneurs will survive because they possess special qualities to think bigger than the problem. When a company's sales and net profits are under pressure, some business owners tend to quickly cut essential operating costs such as marketing and advertising expenses. However, it is precisely in times of economic pressure, such as the current situation, that marketing and advertising should receive preferential attention in business. But it is not the time to stick with outdated marketing actions. It will yield the same unsatisfactory results.

Now is the time to be extremely creative. Move away from yesterday's-tired attempts to market the company's products and services, produce fresh new ways, and surprise the market!

Let us talk about creativity. Every person has a latent creative urge. In some people, it may come more easily to the surface than in others, but its presence in everyone is beyond doubt.

It is in the best interest of the business owner to develop the staff's creative thinking because it will serve the company well in the future.

Encourage them to produce innovative ideas. Create opportunities for them to suggest ways to cut operating costs, improve service, and market the business more effectively.

Marketing has many faces. In smaller businesses, it takes the form of promotions, sponsorships, networking, exhibitions, and daily good service where satisfied customers tell others about it.

Then there are, of course, advertisements in print media and on the radio, as well as brochures, pamphlets, billboards, and nameplates.

Business owners can confidently ask their customers to evaluate the company's advertisements based on the following questions:

- Does the advertisement succeed in capturing the attention of prospective customers or consumers?
- Does the advertisement offer a solution to a specific problem or need?
- Does it immediately pique interest to learn more about the products or the company?
- Does the advertisement create the desire to purchase?
- Will the advertisement prompt a prospective customer to act?

Creativity plays an extremely key role, of course, in the design of any printed advertisement. Do not hesitate to enlist the help of experts such as graphic designers, creative writers, or even advertising agencies.

Everyone competes for the attention of a highly bored consumer audience. Be assured that 'good enough' marketing is no longer good enough. Only highly innovative marketing will pull your company's value through the drift!

*\*Prof Du Plessis was the Director of the NWU Business School from 2003 to 2017.*