

Get Attention and Grow Your Business Without Actually Talking About It

Tell client stories, not yours.

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The world is a crowded place, filled with competitors all vying for attention. In many cases, it's hard to differentiate yourself from others in the same field doing the same thing.

What can you do as a business to stand out over your competitors? Most founders and CEOs I work with have tunnel vision and believe the only way they can stand out in a crowd is by trying to differentiate what they do. They think if they can somehow market themselves differently they will create a gap in the market or get a leg up over the competition, and then they can begin driving traffic to their business.

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But what if instead of trying to focus primarily on what your company does or the product/service it provides, companies started looking at other ways to acquire attention?

Most of the time, people don't actually care what you do. You can acquire attention by not even talking about your company. Attention – no matter what it is – as long as it's positive, is attention that will bring people in and let them take notice of what your company is doing. These are the things

that will get you the new client or customer and leave your competitors wondering why.

I hear it all the time. “We don’t have a story to tell. Nobody cares what we’re doing.” These are the clients who end up having the best stories to tell. It never fails.

Many clients of mine gained a ton of attention by talking about everything and anything but their product or service. This forced people to take notice of the company by bringing them in using different, sometimes unconventional ways. When you’re starting out, any positive attention is good attention, regardless of what it is.

Like I tell many clients of mine, unless you’ve cured cancer or you’re Google, a good percentage of the public is not going to think who you are and what you do is as cool as you think it is. That makes acquiring top tier attention very difficult, and it’s probably not going to happen overnight.

Here are a few ways to get attention without directly talking about what your business does.

Use your shiny toys.

Interesting perks and a cool workplace environment are like having shiny toys – use them to attract the masses. Instead of showing them one thing to distract from another, it’s quite the opposite. Show them the shiny thing to use as bait, and reel them in.

Think of the latest startup you saw on the news. Did they mention the perks? Dog lovers in San Diego love that a company leaves water bowls out and makes dog treats a part of their bar menu. Crazy employee benefits and workplace perks like breakfast/lunch/dinner catering, an encouraging culture, or company happy hours for good causes all attract people to what your company has going on without telling them about your

company. Perks not only keep people within a company, but they also encourage people outside the company with a good work-life balance and a positive perspective.

Mix personal and business.

Thought leadership is a great example of how you can use your personal experiences to create visibility so more people become familiar with you or your business. At the same time, this creates a credibility that will help your business thrive. This is my favorite area to dive into when coaching new clients.

Most CEOs and entrepreneurs have no idea that they can create value just by tying certain life experiences to a particular topic. Let's be honest, we're not talking about reinventing the wheel. Most articles offering tips, tricks or ideas have been covered ad nauseam. However, when you put your personal spin on it and bring people into your story, it will appeal to readers, and they will reward you for it. Mainly, because you provided a different perspective that caused them to reevaluate something they might already have known.

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For example, I want to hear about the CEO that redirected his life after a stroke at the age of 33, regardless of what he does for a living. I want to learn about immigrant entrepreneurs who are changing worldviews and using their talents to change the way we look at immigrants in the United States. I want to know about business passions that are difficult to fully grasp, like bitcoin.

Any positive attention can bring people in. And, in a saturated market where there are lots of options, it can be the difference between people choosing your service and the other five companies that do the same thing. People will

choose you because they know more about you. If you create positive attention elsewhere, from a psychological standpoint, people will pick that company because of the buzz surrounding it. Creating attention and news in different ways can only raise your social capital.

Talk about your cool clients.

Tell your clients' stories. Sometimes your clients have cooler stories to tell than you do. With their permission, of course, turn their stories into content that people can relate to. If your business is boring or isn't exactly turning heads, you have the opportunity to use your clients' stories to bridge the divide. Most will not balk at the opportunity to acquire added attention and will appreciate the gesture and be flattered that you think so highly of them. It's a win-win.

People love a good story. Highlight what others are doing and talk about how you work with them. Quick example. I had a client in the waste and recycling industry. Not exactly a head turner. They were doing great things, but it wasn't the sexiest topic in the world – we're talking recycling here, not the next iPhone. Knowing this, we came up with a plan to create some buzz by covering a retirement community who happened to be a customer of theirs. The community had an overwhelmingly large obsession with recycling and went all-out on Earth Day by decorating their golf carts, having recycling parties; it was amazing. A simple blog post that highlighted the communities' dedication to recycling garnered more attention than we could have ever imagined.

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Get creative with social media.

Post fun pics of employees. Animal pics. Team building pics. Retweet or share funny relevant posts. Do this to show people

a softer, more personal side of your business. That could be a small factor helping others pick you over someone else. You need to start shifting your mindset to, “What can I be doing to help someone pick me?” The customer needs your help. They want to pick you! So help them do it. Give them a reason.

Whether you’re a young company, brick-and-mortar, mom and pop, digital, whatever – if you’re looking to make a name for yourself and stand out from the crowd, it’s time to get creative.

Attention isn’t just for the big companies, the disrupters or gurus; there’s plenty of pie to go around for everyone.

With the breakneck speed of today’s media cycle, content is chewed up and spit out in record time. The need for content is great. Time to make some.

So, stop playing everybody else’s game, and start playing your own. There’s much less competition when you play to your strengths and use different methods than your competitors to get people to notice your company.

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