

When you're looking to add more oomph to your marketing, that's nearly always a consequence of something negative in the business such as cash flow, footfall tailing off and slowing sales. There are a number of low cost ways to add more impact to your marketing and you must always, always measure.

Review your products.

Before you decide whether to adapt your products or services, take a look at what you have. How well are you meeting the needs of existing customers? Which lines are selling well and which ought to be dropped?

Assess changes in your sector.

Tough times inspire ingenious thinking and there are bound to have been changes during the recession. Has technology has moved on? Have people changed their sales and marketing techniques? What new trends are emerging? Talk to customers and suppliers and subscribe to industry magazines and newsletters to find out what's going on in your sector.

Consider how you might expand your existing offer.

You don't need to make wholesale changes - it may just be a matter of tweaking what you have. One option is to introduce a premium range of products or services, for example, or or you could offer greater seasonal variation in what you sell? Perhaps you should think about complementary products or even diversifying into a new area.

Complement and diversify.

Many firms have survived the recession by offering related products and services or by diversifying into new areas: for example, garden centres selling household furniture; hairdressers offering beauty therapy; building firms providing DIY training; office-based firms renting desk

space to freelancers, and so on. If you plan to branch out, do your research first and don't stray far from your area of expertise.

Offer added value to customers.

If funds are tight, think about offering new added-value services rather than investing in fresh stock or equipment. For example, free local delivery, weekend opening, technical support, free returns or special offers exclusive to online customers won't cost the earth, but can strengthen loyalty and improve customer satisfaction.

Create new partnerships.

Opportunities to build new relationships often arise as markets change. Why not consider a joint venture or partnership with another business which serves a slightly different market? This could be mutually beneficial as the recovery takes hold and consumer confidence returns.

Reconsider the way you sell and who you sell to.

It may not be your product or service that is holding you back, but your approach to sales and marketing. Market pressure often inspires innovation - think about how the Nintendo Game Boy was rebranded for a more senior age group when other manufacturers introduced devices that were more appealing to the core games market. This clever move has extended its market reach and its longevity. Could your offer be repackaged for a completely new market?

Canvass customers and suppliers - ask them what they think.

Before making any proposed changes, find out whether your customers and suppliers think you're doing the right thing. If you need more stock, equipment or services, can you work out a deal with suppliers? Does your revamped offer actually meet customers' needs and would they be prepared to pay for it? Have a trial period and pay attention to feedback.

Open up new sales channels.

A key way to improve your offer without actually changing it is to make it easier and more convenient to find and to buy. If you can sell online, then do so; attend fairs and shows if appropriate; explore third party sales opportunities, such as retail outlets and even franchising; recruit a sales agent to investigate and open up new territories, including overseas. In short, explore the possibilities to reach the most customers in the most cost-effective ways.

Create an ongoing feedback process. However and wherever you sell, ensure your customers have the opportunity to rate and comment on the standards of your goods and services. Make sure you have a short customer satisfaction survey at the point of sale and make customers feel as comfortable as possible offering their opinion verbally. Listen and respond to feedback and use it to further improve your offer.