With so many internet companies out there vying to get into your town, this is the perfect time to market yourself as your town’s local sublimation expert. From small towns to large cities, there are lots of opportunities for your business to grow and thrive when you get out there and show people what you have to offer. The combination of full color, high quality and personalization capabilities coupled with a wide range of dynamic products provides you with the perfect opportunity to attract new customers.

MARKETING

You have to let your customers know that you can give them one-of-a-kind products! Start close to home and create store displays, such as brochures showing examples of products and in-store signage, which can all play a part in letting people see what you now offer. Sampling customers is also critical. With sublimation, seeing is selling, as people can actually see the quality of the product you can offer to them.

IN-STORE DISPLAYS

There are a few ways to display samples that will help your customers picture their logos or graphics on multiple products. One way is to make your displays “theme-oriented.” Pick sports, industrial, corporate, special occasion, etc. and organize like products together. Show your customers how they can purchase several items using a few images to create a sports package. Remember to mix mediums. Do not have a wall full of just one item, such as name badges. Show the variety of items available, grouping according to category, coordinating the shapes and sizes in that series. Create familiarity with your products. Customers will be more likely to order something if they can identify with it. Choose local groups and company logos that have a “familiarity” aspect.
to you, you will need to go out and find them. Your first step in identifying potential customers needs to come from prospecting. Your “business in a business” success depends largely on how well you prospect and the variety of ways you prospect. Keep yourself well supplied with qualified target customers. Also, keep in mind your target customer must meet two basic qualifications:

The need or desire for sublimated products that are a value to them, and is profitable for you.

The authority to make a commitment (or lead you to the decision maker).

For each target group, you will want to start with the following:

- Define the market
- Research potential customers
- Plan products to sublimate and leave behind
- Contact the target and secure the sale

COMPETITIVE YOUTH SPORTS

According to the Sporting Goods Association data, 41 million kids participate in organized youth sports in the United States. It’s a huge market, but in its entirety, it is not our target. Our targets are the competitive club teams that require a significant time and financial commitment on the part of a player and their family. Over three million kids play for these teams, and their parents spend in excess of $1,000 in fees, equipment and travel costs in the course of a year.

Club teams compete regionally, and, in some cases, nationally, in volleyball, soccer, basketball, swimming, cheerleading, baseball, fast pitch softball, ice hockey, lacrosse, field hockey and gymnastics. Targeting these markets for packages of personalized bag tags, spirit jewelry, car flags, key chains, coaches’ gifts and other team paraphernalia is a great way to grow your business.

Here’s your edge.

When you’re focused on fabric applications, the TS34-1800A, a wide-format sublimation printer designed specifically for the dye-sublimation transfer market, gives you a productive edge on the competition. It is ideal for the growing soft signage market, retail banners, tapestries and flags. Plus it can be used for sportswear applications due to the durability and quick drying capability of polyester material.

TS34-1800A features:

- High speed printing – 345 sqft/hr in 4-color mode
- Two newly developed piezo print heads in a staggered arrangement for faster speeds
- 540, 720, 1440 dpi print resolutions; Variable dot technology for smooth gradations
- Uninterrupted Ink Supply System (UISS) for extended printing; Bulk ink system available

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One of the keys to success for any business is good marketing. Marketing yourself to businesses as their locally owned, full-color sublimation expert will allow you to provide enhanced marketing for businesses that want to utilize full-color logos or backgrounds to put their best foot forward with the people they serve. Sublimation allows you to economically produce items as simple as a full-color logo onto a plain background for a desk name plate, or as complex as a full-color photo split into segments and used in a building directory.

Target these customers for packages of personalized name badges, bag tags, promotional coasters, desk plates and other business paraphernalia. The market for name badges and name plates is driven by service industries, which are now the largest employers in the US economy. Restaurants, retailers, banks and other companies that regularly greet the public buy millions of name badges every year. Insurance companies, technology companies, banks and other white-collar businesses use nameplates in cubicles, on desks and in buildings in large quantities, and they promote their business with small items such as coasters. These markets, combined with the market for interior wayfinding systems and other types of signs that can be produced by sublimation, represent a market of over a billion dollars in size.

SCHOOLS

There are over 150,000 schools in the United States with over 77 million students. There is the potential for sublimated products in schools in a variety of areas and ways.

Potential product offerings include academic awards, packages for sports teams, band and other club activities similar to those used in the team sports module. Also, graduation gifts, picture frames, prom mementos, name badges, desk plates and other identification signage for school personnel.

When planning your sales approach to schools, it is important to keep in mind that there are multiple people to sell to, and it is important that you give the decision maker ideas on how they can use your products. Emphasizing that full-color graphics, school crests, mascots, logos and custom phrases, like “Seniors Rule” and “Go Panthers!” can be included on products is important. This, coupled with the ability to include school and personal names and years on the product, helps the groups to begin thinking about ways they could use your products.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

There are over 200,000 churches in the United States, and in many cases their members have a strong affinity to these organizations. Sublimation provides you the opportunity to provide personalized, full-color products that incorporate logos or other meaningful artwork to strengthen the bond between the organization and its members.

SECURING THE SALE

After you have identified targets to contact, make a list of 6-7 you want to focus on and send an initial contact letter. This can be done by direct mail or email. The letter should be addressed to a specific person and include a product brochure, product proposals and a free sample (if sending direct mail). In the letter, first get the reader’s attention with a hard-hitting lead paragraph. Then, involve your target customer with a statement that goes to their problems, needs or wants. Next, create demand. Your letter is an offer for a great product that provides exceptional value. Lastly, your letter needs to let the reader know the action they should take.

Once you have secured a meeting, you should organize the following to bring with you:

Business packet information:
- Information on your company. (Who we are, What we do)
- Suggested products and price list
- Product brochure
- Example of order forms
- Personalized gift: Create products specific to your target with their logo and the contact’s name
- Other decorated samples specific to the target customer

Presentation with the following key points:
- Past services to other local companies
and organizations
• Benefits your product will bring to that organization
• Steps to take to incorporate products into their organization
• Ability to personalize products with names, colors, logos, etc.
• Capability of producing orders in small and large quantities
• Questions answered in concern to literature and/or products

SAMPLING
Sampling is a useful marketing tool, and it is not exclusive to large companies. No matter the size of your company, you will find that sampling will pay in additional sales. Providing samples of your sublimation products will enable you to capture the attention of potential customers. Sublimation is unique, and we’ve found that once people hold it, touch it, and get acquainted with it, they love it!

DESIGNS
Designing full-color products for each market requires some different approaches from most other design processes. You now have 16 million color choices, the ability to utilize customer logos and artwork, and the capability of adding photographs into your backgrounds or foregrounds.

Sublimation can be an exciting and profitable “Business in a Business” for nearly everyone in the personalized gifts, signs, and awards businesses, and many other businesses as well. The true measure of the quality of your work is customer satisfaction. Everything else will fall into place from there.

Kristina Lowe is the Director of Marketing for the Unisub and Chromaluxe brands. She has seven years of experience in marketing and advertising and holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Kentucky and an MBA from Indiana University.

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