

THE OLD FASHIONED THINGS THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



New technology and social media are great but maintaining some old fashioned thoughtful gestures can make a real difference to the way customers view your business and its brand.

BY KATE TRIBE

At my business Tribe Research, we do five things to help us stand out and stay front of our customers' minds. While we believe social media is great, if that's the only way you're connecting with your customers, you're completely ignoring the ones who don't use it.

IDENTIFY A CORE MARKET AND A UNIQUE WAY FOR THEM TO REMEMBER YOU

When a new Australian company is entered into our CRM, we search for them on the ASIC website and put the month and year that ASIC said they started in a CRM field. At the start of each month we run a report for the businesses that are having a birthday that month. I hand write a card congratulating them and hoping they take some time out to celebrate.

It has several benefits:

- It is appropriate to the small business market as owners often forget to celebrate the birthday for their business.
- It is a nice surprise in their snail box, appreciated and remembered because it is something that is less common – a hand written card that is positive.
- They don't take long to do and it is a feel good for me to write them.
- It is a good reminder about Tribe Research to businesses that we might speak to less often, as they aren't connected on social media or don't receive our newsletters.
- It helps us to regularly maintain our CRM as I check the business' website and update the details, or if they're returned we call to find out the current details.
- It is a good fit with our brand of 'knowing your tribe' and staying in touch.

Each month we get at least one email saying thanks for the card. Sometimes they also want to have some research done and therefore it leads to income generation for us.

SLIGHTLY CHANGE MARKETING THAT CAN BE LOST IN A SEASONAL FLOOD

Christmas or festive season cards are still distributed widely, but are your cards getting lost on the

bookshelf or desk? Is the recipient thinking about your offering at that time of year?

We thought about this and how an end of year card is inconsistent with our branding. Research is about planning ahead and people are in that headspace in the New Year, not at the end of one. So, we send out New Year cards rather than end of year cards.

“Christmas cards are still distributed widely, but are your cards getting lost? Is the recipient thinking about your offering at that time of year?”

For our favourite clients we still do something special at the end of the year, like take a few out for lunch, because we want to thank them and celebrate the year.

The number of hand written cards is declining and being replaced with emails so yours may still be seen. Will, however, your

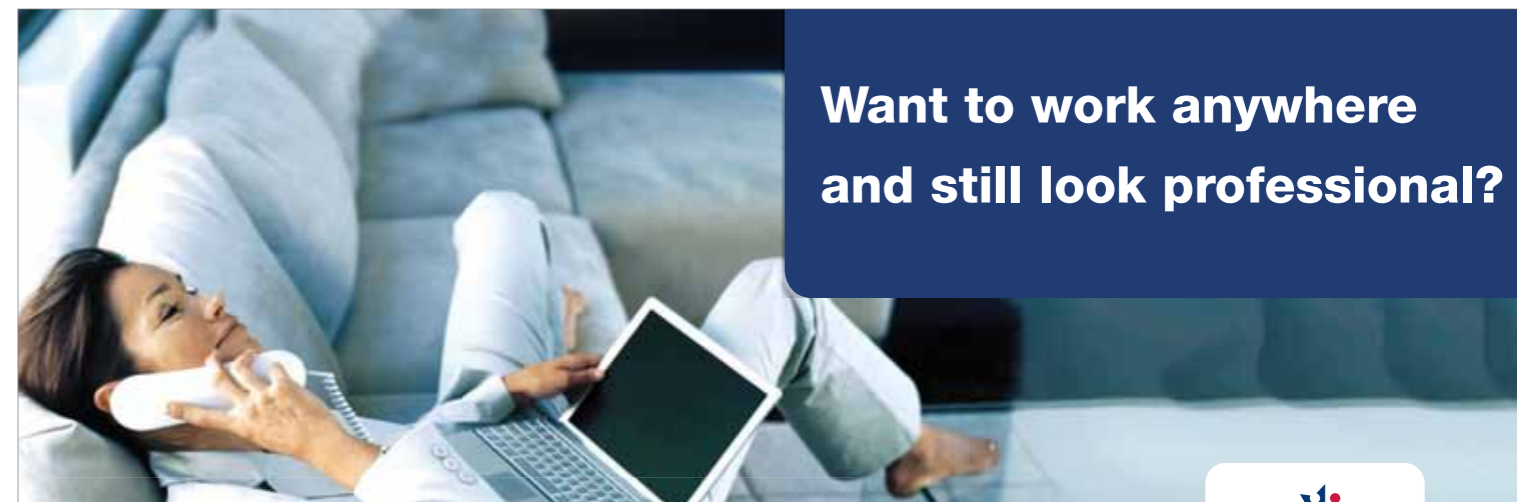
card still be visible in the New Year when suppliers are thinking about suppliers for the year?

It also has these benefits:

- January is generally quieter for research suppliers than December, so we have time to write the cards. In the New Year it feels like a pleasure to do rather than another task on the list or obligation.
- Recipients are in the mindset of thinking about what they want out of the year ahead, they're positive, they're possibly thinking about getting some feedback and need a research supplier.
- People we know that aren't small business owners, so don't get a business birthday card, receive a hand written card and so we have the benefits of connecting and updating our CRM.

THINK LATERALLY ABOUT YOUR BRAND MESSAGES AND FUN WAYS TO COMMUNICATE THEM

The running tag for Tribe Research is *explore, uncover, drive change*. A marketing concept we used a few years ago that was fun and useful was to get a batch of bright red bags made. We sent them out to some raving fans asking them to send us photos of them 'out and about' exploring with their Tribe Research bag. The photos started being emailed to us. The first thing we did was post them on the homepage of our website with a form for website visitors to email us and request a bag. We then sent them a bag. After we had more photos we put them onto Flickr and then put them on a world map, showing where



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our bags had been. We also took them to an expo that we knew weren't handing out bags until the end of the day, so many of the participants came to our stand to get a bag and this gave us an opportunity to talk to more people as well as our bags being seen all day easily in the crowd.

We added 'clear-head' to our philosophy a few years ago. To be able to drive change after exploring (asking questions) and uncovering feedback, you need to step away from your business and plan. We thought: what, other than planning days, gave you a clear head? Aromatherapy. We developed a clear-headed room spray (short term relief for an unclear head). We send it to people to say thanks for a referral and you can buy it on our website.

The benefits of these:

- It helped our brand in terms of being thought of as being innovative
- The clear-headed room spray was fun to make and was a good team day
- They are practical and useful. When we did the bags it was a new concept so people used the bags and they stood out from branded post-it notes or similar
- The bags could be brought to an online medium as well as offline.

WORD OF MOUTH ISN'T JUST THROUGH YOUR CUSTOMERS

Your team, past and present, talk about their workplace. Work out ways for it to be positive chatter helping your brand.

This also connects well with customers liking to buy from happy workplaces. Think about if you go to a café but the staff don't seem happy. Are you less likely to go there, no matter how good the food and coffee is?

At Tribe Research we formed a past staff club called TRX. Current and past staff can stay connected. When staff have moved to a location where other past staff are, I've connected them so they have a connection when they first arrive.

We have an annual catch up in November where we give out an award to leaving staff showing what their lasting mark on Tribe Research has been. All current and past staff are invited to our end of year dinner.

“Your team, past and present, talk about their workplace. Work out ways for it to be positive chatter, helping your brand”



Two key benefits:

- Past staff are kept up to date with what Tribe Research are doing so are still valuable in providing good word of mouth.
- Current staff can hear about the career path of past staff.

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES THAT ARE IN YOUR MARKET

Last Christmas I embarked on a Christmas mission – to buy all the presents from Australian-owned small businesses. During my mission I promoted them using social media. When I gave the presents I was able to tell my friends and family the story about the business their present was from which added value to the gift itself. Similarly, supporting a charity that fits with your brand is also good for your business, especially if it is done on a personal level with a real connection to you.

The benefits of this are:

- I was able to see the buying process from a customer angle of a range of small businesses.
- I got to help the businesses of many of my friends.
- I had to think creatively about the presents I was buying because I wasn't just walking into department stores and browsing for the first thing I could find.
- Best of all, it was heaps of fun.

These five concepts are fun to add to the mix and are an integral part of our brand. They don't make assumptions about ways to connect with our tribe as they include those who may not be using newer communication channels and they're a personal touch that show we take the time to get to know our tribe. **DB**

—Kate Tribe is founder of Tribe Research.