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Bumps, bruises and marketing snoozes: Learning the art of the entrepreneurial sell



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The creation process of a product or company may be the easy part. Presenting the product to an outside audience and asking them to purchase it or invest in it is another deal entirely. Everybody likes freebies, but not everyone wants to reach into their wallets and/or purses. In the post below, Johnetta Paye, Esq. and journalist Shamontiel L. Vaughn explore some of the biggest lessons they've learned in marketing and public relations, along with legal and business advice from Paye about what companies and creators should keep in mind.

From a personal perspective: Johnetta Paye Esq.

Johnetta G. Paye, Esq.

Since the age of 8, I knew I wanted to be a lawyer. When applying to college, I looked at colleges with a strong pre-law program. I was firmly committed to becoming a lawyer so declaring a major should have been simple.

Questions like “What if law school doesn’t work out for me?” and “What career options are available to me with a pre-law degree?” left me confused and unable to make a decision. I did not declare my major until the absolute last day of the deadline.

Ultimately, I decided to major in communications and minor in marketing. I figured if law school did not work out, I could explore a career in public relations. When I started my law practice, I quickly appreciated the marketing knowledge I gained in undergrad.

It was easy for me to work with a graphic designer to develop a logo for my company because I understood the psychology behind colors and knew the brand identity that I wanted to

I understood the psychology behind colors and knew the brand identity that I wanted to create for my business.

More importantly, I was able to create a business plan for my company that outlined my marketing strategy. As a new business, I had zero capital for marketing. I had to use low cost marketing tactics. For example, I sent out an email blast to friends and family letting them know that I started my law practice and encouraged them to refer clients my way. I also passed out flyers to actors standing in the audition line for Hollywood movies that were being filmed in Chicago. Attending networking events, conferences and meetups to cultivate business relationship were some of the moves I made to lead to new clients.

When my business started to make money, I was able to hire a video production company to shoot a commercial for my business and [four-part video series on foreclosure issues](#). My marketing knowledge enabled me to write the script for the commercial and my two foreclosure segments.

Now, I make it a practice at the end of the year to outline my marketing plan for the upcoming year. What is my monthly sales goal? How many clients do I need to hit my goal? What marketing initiatives am I going to execute to attract the specific number of clients I need for the month to hit my monthly revenue goal. For example, am I going to attend three real estate networking events to attract the three new clients that will enable me to hit my revenue goal of a five-digit profit.

As Grant Cardone, a sales expert, says: “People have to know you to flow you.” Creating a marketing plan for your business helps to ensure that potential clients are aware of your business and services. Starting the business is the first step. It takes heart, hustle and commitment to continuously promote your product and services so your business can gain traction and staying power.

From a personal perspective: Shamontiel L. Vaughn



*Shamontiel at National Association of Women
Businessowners book signing event (Photo courtesy of
Shamontiel)*

There's not a shy bone in my entire body, and I'm (normally) pretty talkative and friendly. But I knew something was “off” about my marketing plan to sell my novels when I only sold two books at a homecoming event. At my own alma mater, Lincoln University, there were faculty members who knew me and plenty of alumni who wanted to be supportive. I sold an entire box of books based off of association alone. Luck was on my side at an event for the National Association of Women Business owners

Shamontiel)

Association of Women Business owners where I sold quite a few books as well. I was also flattered when a co-worker asked me to

be a guest at her book club event.

But taking “Change for a Twenty” and “Round Trip” to one particular HBCU just wasn’t the same. These people didn’t know me from a hole in the wall and didn’t care. And I spied an Omega Psi Phi member whose line was from the door to his table. Meanwhile a couple other authors and vendors such as myself had the occasional person walk by, smile politely and walk away. I’d grown spoiled from the other experiences.

With a bachelor’s degree in English/Creative Writing and two years worth of grad school courses in Communications and Public Relations, I knew *how* to sell a product. In my own college days, I used to surpass the rest of my co-workers in earning money for charitable causes at a retail store I worked for. I’d ignore the laughs and/or excuses, and still push on to ask the next person to help out with a noteworthy cause.

I’d always enjoyed speaking on college campuses about pursuing careers, and attended auctions and spread the word about charitable causes I believed in, such as then-running BEHIV (an HIV/AIDS awareness organization). The same goes for canvassing for the Affordable Care Act campaign, and spreading the word about local political events and entertainers. As a reporter, a digital news editor and social media marketer, my full-time jobs were to spread the word about news and events. I did so and well. But it’s just not the same

Affordable Care Act campaign, and spreading the word about local political events and entertainers. As a reporter, a digital news editor and social media marketer, my full-time jobs were to spread the word about news and events. I did so and well. But it's just not the same to promote your own work/company as it is to promote and write about someone else's products/company.

Interestingly, the Que stood up from his own table of onlookers and walked over to check out my books. When he asked me what my books were about, I changed the subject to his books instead. He gave me a long look and said something to the effect of "Why are you changing the subject if you believe in your product?" Good question. And that was when I realized that no matter how many years of experience I have in writing professionally (12), editing (11) and social media networking (5), "selling myself" still made me cringe.

Oddly enough, I've been hired by several private clients via Upwork, Textbroker and on my own to write query letters, business plans and copywriting sales copy. Repeatedly. No complaints. But it took a few (mental) bumps and bruises before I finally figured out how to give my own products the same dedication that I do to others on a face-to-face basis. It's easy to hide behind a query letter or an email, but it's a different ball game to work on a marketing project in the flesh. In this particular case, I have to thank that Que for giving me some tough love and learning a few handy lessons from other more marketing savvy people to improve at in-person networking.

From a business perspective: What entrepreneurs need to know

When developing marketing materials or campaigning, entrepreneurs should consider:

1. Conducting due diligence on trademarks that are currently in the marketplace so the entrepreneur does not invest money creating a logo they cannot use.
2. Making sure to have freelancers that create marketing materials for your business sign work-for-hire agreements so that you own the work to the material created.
3. Avoid using random pictures from the internet in marketing materials. Pictures from the internet may be copyrighted. Using a copyrighted picture on your blog or marketing material could expose you to a copyright infringement lawsuit.

And from both a lawyer's and a journalist's hard lessons learned, you will have to believe in your product and be willing to put in the necessary amount of work to get others to believe in it, too.

Have more trademark, branding and freelance agreement questions? Contact [J. Paye & Associates](#) today.

Shamontiel L. Vaughn contributed to this blog. Find out more about her at [Shamontiel.com](#).

The information contained here is intended to provide useful information on the topic covered but should not be construed as one-size-fits-all legal advice. Speak to an attorney specifically about your contractual agreement for specific terms and conditions.

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