

LARSON · JUHL®

How to Boost your Business with PR

With people continuing to count their pennies, as the owner of a framing business or gallery you need to work even harder to ensure your business keeps flourishing. In the current economic climate, it is more important than ever to promote your business to existing and prospective customers, yet the last thing you see yourself doing is spending more cash on expensive advertising campaigns. But don't worry - there is an effective way to reach out to your customer base without breaking the bank - Public Relations, or PR.

To put it simply, PR is about conveying a positive image of your business to your customers. The value of PR can be seen in the media we read, listen to and watch every day.

So how does PR apply to the framing industry? In any sector, better brand awareness leads to increased sales. Art galleries and framers have products to sell and services to offer and these need to be promoted through the local media to attract customers and PR provides a powerful tool to reach your target market.

PR plays an integral part of any effective marketing campaign. No matter what size business you are, PR can raise awareness, change perceptions, build brands and encourage customer loyalty. Appearing in your local newspaper can be a great way of raising awareness of what you offer and encouraging people in your area to visit your store.

But PR is often misunderstood, misused or simply missed off the list because people think they lack the knowledge or, more importantly, the funds and resources to use such techniques successfully. You may lack confidence when it comes to organising an event or simply don't have the time to write a press release. With this in mind, Larson-Juhl has found a way to support its customers' businesses by sharing its PR expertise.

We can't all become Richard Branson overnight, so where do you start? The Larson-Juhl PR Toolkit is an online resource designed to give customers the support, knowledge, resources and skills needed to implement their own public relations programmes.

The PR Toolkit is based on an easy to navigate and attractive 12 month planner. It contains a wealth of material to help customers promote themselves directly to their customer base or to generate editorial coverage in the media. Accessed through the Larson-Juhl website, the new

LARSON · JUHL®

design enables art and framing professionals to choose from a range of ideas based on time of year as well as type of activity.

The PR activities are simple to implement and easily adapted to suit different needs. A section of templates - covering everything from letters and press releases to competitions - makes it even easier, and quicker, for businesses to achieve media coverage and attract customers.

PR isn't just about getting your name in the local paper. The PR Toolkit also includes a variety of event and activity ideas for promoting your business directly to your local community. There is also support material such as media calls, invitation letters and event management checklists. Each of the activities can be easily customised and adapted to suit your individual needs and know-how, from complete beginners to those with more experience utilising PR. Nigel Nidd, owner of Sturleys Picture Framing in Honiton used the Larson-Juhl PR Toolkit to promote his business. "I had always wanted to hold an event but I didn't know where to start. With the Larson-Juhl PR Toolkit all the thinking is done for you."

Nigel's framing business also incorporates a small gallery so he decided to stage a meet-the-artist event with the aim of drawing customers into the gallery area whilst raising awareness of the framing side at the same time. The Larson-Juhl PR Toolkit includes advice on how to plan such events, what to include on the invitations, plus a useful checklist to ensure every detail of the event is covered. Nigel approached an award winning local artist and printed smart invitations that were sent to all his regular customers, as well as those who he thought would appreciate the particular style of the artist.

"The night went very well. It exceeded my expectations and those of the artist," said Nigel. "I hoped to break even and cover the cost of the wine and nibbles, but not only did we make money, we got many new customers from it. I would definitely do an event of this kind again, it worked for me. We made money, gained customers and I enjoyed it."

And it's not just events. Larson-Juhl joined forces with IFFA, the Independent Fine Framer's Association to produce a DVD which demonstrates the framing process from start to finish. Promoting the high standard of work and expertise that goes into custom picture framing is a key way of boosting sales. So many consumers are unaware of the amount of work that goes in to picture framing and the DVD aims to help framers increase their business by demonstrating the skill involved.

LARSON · JUHL®

The 10-minute film shows the skill involved in framing a piece of work and covers everything from choosing the artwork and moulding right through to those final finishing touches before it is ready to hang in the customer's home. It also looks at the different types of objects that can be framed to offer customers inspiration for their own pieces. The film can be customised at the start and finish with individual shop details and will play on a continuous loop in shop windows to capture the attention of passing trade. The DVD is available free of charge to all Larson-Juhl customers.

The picture that is being framed in the DVD is called Latino Dancers by Martin Leighton, owner of the Leighton Art Gallery in Weymouth. Martin uses the DVD at his gallery to demonstrate the framing process to customers. He said: "Sometimes people think custom framing is expensive but that's because they don't realise how much work is involved. The DVD is great for showing the different stages and level of skill that framing entails. Once people appreciate the expertise involved, they don't mind paying for it."

The art of PR is being clever and targeted with your budget. Just a small amount of cash won't go very far on a full page advert in your local paper or on printing a pile of leaflets, and you can't guarantee who, if anyone, will take any notice. But with PR you can spend your money on a small, targeted event and you immediately have an audience who want to listen, learn and, more importantly, spend money! Take a picture and send it to your local paper and you could get additional awareness-raising coverage for free.

In today's competitive market, framers not only have to be experts in picture framing, they also need to be keen business people. Both the PR Toolkit and the framing DVD are designed to be key tools in helping customers promote themselves and increase sales. So take advantage of these invaluable tools and get working on growing your reputation and your business in your local area.