



# 50 Marketing Secrets

OF GROWTH COMPANIES  
IN DOWN ECONOMIC TIMES

A Small Business Owner's Guide to Surviving  
& Thriving During a Recession

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# Introduction

After more than 25 years working with small businesses, I have witnessed time and time again the frustration business owners feel as they continually seek the best ways to market their business for the greatest return. While there is great knowledge when it comes to their products, services and capabilities, confidence wanes when it comes to promoting the business in the marketplace.

When I started my company as a graphic design firm in 1984, I was dealing with the same challenge. I attended a graphics arts school, so there were no marketing, business or public relations classes for me to take. I didn't even know where to begin. However, as a freelance graphic designer and creative copywriter, I was expected to be knowledgeable about marketing as I created logos, brochures and other promotional materials for my clients.

Always loving a challenge, I went back to school, taking courses in marketing, business, psychology, and communications – anything and everything that would help me know more and become a better resource to my growing client base. My clients went back to school with me. They anxiously wanted to learn what I had learned, literally asking me to share my assignments as we worked on their graphics projects. It didn't take me long to realize what my own personal mission as a business owner should be: helping other business owners become savvier, more confident marketers.

By 1990, my purpose continued to prove a worthy one as my graphics company evolved into a full-service marketing firm. It was exciting and exhilarating. I also began to teach marketing to small businesses through the Senior Corps of Retired Executives Small Business Administration programs, as well as through Corporate & Continuing Education offerings at area colleges. It was just another way I felt I could fulfill my mission. So many businesses have a hunger to understand how to more effectively market their businesses, but lack the budget to hire an outside firm to assist them.

If you are in a business start-up or planning to start a business, I congratulate you for wanting to do it right. This book was developed to help you avoid the mistakes I have seen so many owners make when they market their businesses.

If you have been in business for years, I guarantee you will learn new ways to approach your marketing, enabling you to implement some tactics you have not used in your business.

What makes the information in this book so powerful is the fact that it is based on what truly works. It will help you make better and more productive marketing decisions for your business. This book is taking my mission to create savvier marketers to its ultimate level. This, my fellow business owners, is incredibly gratifying!

# CRISP Principle: The Study

As a marketing consultant and instructor for small business marketing classes, I often hear the same questions from owners: “How do I market my small business?” “Where is my money best spent?” “Why hasn’t what I have been doing worked?” “Where do I begin?”

After about 10 years in business, my marketing services firm adopted and perfected an approach that realized great success for our clients. The problem was, it was just our approach. I wanted something more than “this is the way we recommend doing it.” I wanted validity. I wanted confirmation. I wanted something that qualified, quantified and verified what worked and what didn’t work. I became more and more convinced that the marketing industry needed to do a better job at providing businesses with concrete initiatives that could be measured and confirmed.

In 1999, I decided to start tracking successful companies outside our client base to gauge what they were doing from a marketing standpoint. I specifically looked at companies that were successful and pretty much doing it on their own. My reasons were two-fold. First, I wanted to validate that the approach we were recommending to clients was not just something we had come up with, but was a time-tested approach being used by a number of successful firms. Second, I wanted to gain as much additional insight as I possibly could in my continuous mission to help business owners become savvier marketers and managers of their businesses.

Notice how I said “validate” rather than “prove”? This is a vital distinction. Anyone in market research knows you can prove anything you want. It is all a matter of how you ask the questions. However, validation means that there is the possibility the theory could be proven wrong or your research will have a different outcome than expected. Therefore, I spent about 18 months developing the survey and testing it to make sure I had covered all the bases, not just from a marketing perspective, but also from an operational one. This was significant because I believed businesses needed to view marketing as an integral part of operations, not as a separate function.

By late 2002, I was ready to send out the survey. It covered both sides of six legal-sized pages. Given that the survey was sent to busy business owners and that the typical response rate for such surveys is two percent, I was prepared to do several mailings to get enough responses to begin tabulations and analysis. Many told me I was crazy to think business owners would complete the survey because they already had enough demands on them.

Well, it turned out I was crazy like a fox. I received a 27 percent response from the first mailing. I believe there were two critical success factors. One, it was a blind survey returned in a pre-paid business reply envelope so participants could remain anonymous while sharing critical financial information. Second, I

promised to send the survey results to those who participated. This was the real value to the business owners who participated. It was accomplished by having them send a completely separate request on a pre-paid postage reply card asking to see the results when they were released. Those who were already successful participated because they wanted to see if there was anything else they could or should be doing. Those who were frustrated by and not seeing the results they hoped for were anxious to learn what they could be doing differently.

I knew I had embarked on a much needed initiative when businesses called into our office requesting another survey to use as a checklist to base their strategy on in the future. Just by taking the survey, many business owners realized there were critical areas of their business they had not been considering. This made me even more excited and impassioned about my mission.

We continued to seek participation in the survey through the end of 2003, and then released the findings in 2004. Much to my delight, the approach we were recommending, now known as The CRISP Principle: Power of Five® was validated. The CRISP Principle: Power of Five® is based on the five tactics EVERY business should use for maximum success in its marketing strategy. These tactics should be the foundational core of every business marketing program. They are as follows:

1. The POWER of customer relations
2. The POWER of referral relations
3. The POWER of an Internet presence
4. The POWER of strategic involvements
5. The POWER of public relations

Out of this research came an astounding correlation between a company's growth and the number of CRISP Principles employed, both strategically and operationally. This finding was of special interest because the study looked at companies that grew in spite of the aftermath of 9-11 and the economic downturn of 2002-2003. Companies that did not grow only put a couple of the principles into play and on a superficial level at best. There was no clear strategy associated with what was being done. The result was wasted marketing dollars and chalking it up to the economy. Does this sound like you?

We also sought in our research to comprehensively validate image approaches, operational practices and attitudes that were dominant in growth companies. You will see the results of this segment of our research in the Image & Attitudes portion of this book.

When you have finished reading this book, you will market your business in a more effective way. You will implement tactics your competitors are not. Marketing will no longer be a mystery. It will be fun and rewarding. Doesn't that sound more like it?

# About the Author

Sherré DeMao is passionate about helping entrepreneurs prosper in life and in business and has dedicated her 25-year career to this purpose. She is founder and Chief Marketeer of SLD Unlimited Marketing/PR, Inc., a full-service branding, marketing, consulting and strategy firm she established in 1984. Sherré helps owners of start-up and small-to-medium-sized companies become savvier managers and marketers by providing innovative operational and marketing guidance, solutions and services.



Her firm's creative solutions have won numerous awards including Telly, ProAd, PICA, Addy and IABC Crown awards. Her dedication to small business and her entrepreneurial know-how has earned her local, regional and national recognition. In 2004, the National Republican Congressional Committee honored her with a National Leadership Award for her small business advocacy. As chair of a national procurement task force formed by the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), Sherré co-authored a white paper on federal government contracting practices with small, women-owned and minority-owned business. Published by NAWBO in February 2006, the paper included 34 recommendations to federal agencies, which were presented on Capitol Hill to legislative subcommittees relevant to the procurement agenda. The paper is still used as a resource today. These efforts were among the reasons Sherré was recognized in 2006 as a Small Business Woman Champion by the U.S. Small Business Administration. In 2007, she was named among the 50 Most Enterprising Women in North America by *Enterprising Women Magazine*.

As an entrepreneurial business expert, Sherré frequently provides commentary and perspective to local, regional and national media. She writes a monthly "Savvy Business Owner" column in *Business Today* and is a contributing writer with articles appearing in *Enterprising Women Magazine*, *Women Entrepreneur*, *Entrepreneur.com*, *Business Insider*, *FoxBusiness.com*, and *Yahoo Small Business*. Her first book, *Me, Myself & Inc. – A Synergized World, An Energized Business, Living Your Ultimate Life*, was named a Top Business Shelf pick by *Midwest Book Review* in 2009.

**H**ow have companies, even in the hardest hit industries, grown sales and profits during the latest recession? What were they doing that gave them the edge while other businesses floundered or went out of business?

Learn the validated Marketing Secrets you can put into immediate action within your business! Get ideas and how-to's from expert entrepreneurial strategist, Sherré DeMao, plus more than 50 success stories of national, regional and locally-based businesses across the country. This book proves that even during tough times, your business can survive and thrive!

*"Sherré DeMao knows how to guide the newly minted entrepreneur as well as the seasoned business owner to bigger and better things. Her Savvy Business Owner column is a hit with readers who have come to expect advice on everything from business strategies to fine-tuning your marketing message. I thoroughly recommend paying close attention to what Ms. DeMao has to say!"*

Dave Yochum, Editor  
Business Today

*"Sherré DeMao's in-depth knowledge and never-ending ability to provide relevant examples makes whatever she brings to the small business arena a winner."*

Barbara Hall  
Director, Small Business Center  
Rowan-Cabarrus Community College

*"Sherré DeMao is an entrepreneur and a true champion of entrepreneurs. This dynamic ideas-person speaks the language of small business. She has "been there" in her own successful venture, and has helped increase the success rate of countless other small business ventures."*

Bonnie Sweeting  
Director, Small Business Center  
Catawba Valley Community College

## ABOUT SHERRÉ DEMAO



Sherré DeMao inspires millions through her monthly Savvy Business Owner column, her weekly eZine, and as a national contributing writer to *Enterprising Women*, *Women Entrepreneur*, *Entrepreneur.com* and *FoxBusiness.com*. An expert strategist and marketer focused on small business for over 25 years, her experience, unique perspective, and entrepreneurial approach has earned more than 50 awards regionally, nationally and internationally including being named among the most 50 *Enterprising Women* in North America. Her first book, *Me, Myself & Inc.* was named a Top Business Shelf pick by *Midwest Book Review*.

