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## **Nimble Marketing Saves Money and Enhances Brand**

*By Frank M. Harris*

With the escalating usage of cell phones, text messaging, instant messaging, e-mail, twitter, 24-hour news access, Facebook, and every other type of electronic communication and messaging tool, the rate of change in the business environment is accelerating daily.

In a fast paced environment, when sales opportunities arise suddenly, leaving little time to react, many businesses are caught unprepared and thrust into a reactionary mode. Rushing into marketing activities often delivers unpredictable or undesirable results. Not only do these businesses face a high likelihood of missing the sales opportunity, but they also risk tarnishing their brand in the haste to “do something”.

In any aspect of a business, being prepared for a crisis will always lessen the severity of the crisis. It then stands to reason that taking the time to prepare a *nimble marketing* plan prepares a business to capture the opportunity, reduce risk, and enhance their brand image in the process.

There are two components for creating a successful nimble marketing plan; pre-planned content and established fast turn-around production methods.

Pre-planned content includes creating a standard look and feel for all printed and electronic messages and several prepared layouts for the most common medium used by the business. The plan also includes several prepared messages that are specific to products, services, or markets that the business serves. None of these layouts or messages are 100% complete, but they are in a state where they could be completed quickly with a minimum of decision making. Think of it as a salad bar where you can quickly combine the ingredients for a custom salad versus staring at the produce section at the grocery store not sure where to start. Why should there be a minimum of decision making at the time of the opportunity? Experience shows us that the most time consuming part of the creative cycle is getting approval or consensus on content. Having planned in advance enables a business manager to move quickly.

The second component of a nimble marketing plan is having established fast turn-around production methods. An example would be, having a system in place to send e-mail blasts, loaded with your customer database and graphics. With this plan in place, you can send a message out in minutes, rather than hours or days. For cases where you print, utilize a local print firm that can turn around high quality printed material overnight. This allows you to order small quantities, so that if changes are necessary, they can be made inexpensively and stock can be replenished quickly. Short run printing has a reputation for being “higher cost” than large runs. This is true on a per piece basis, however, how much money did you really save when the material becomes outdated before you use it all?

No matter how you approach nimble marketing, keep in mind that the communication, whether printed or electronic, needs to be of the highest most professional quality possible. Your brand depends on it.