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## E-MAIL MARKETING HELPS BUSINESSES GROW

When Meryl Catlin Levin set her sights on double-digit growth for her Coral Springs-based businessTypeStyles Inc. last year, she reviewed her marketing plan.

Catlin Levin was active on the events and promotional items circuit, pitching her specialty merchandise and custom imprinting and embroidery company to local businesses and schools. She also took considerable time to complete the paperwork to achieve women-owned business status from Broward County and the North Broward Hospital District, hoping to grow government-sector traffic.

"We're trying to use every angle we can to increase sales," Levin said.

Small business marketing is not about using one particular media or marketing tool to reach an audience. The goal behind a "campaign" should be to use a variety of cost-effective media to reach as many potential clients or customers as possible.

And in August 2005, she signed on with an e-mail marketing company to create eTypeStyles, a neighborhood marketing newsletter that goes out to hundreds of area residents and businesses who have opted in to receive the e-mail. Because they have subscribed, recipients welcome the e-mail advertisement, as opposed to if it were unsolicited spam.

TypeStyles is not unique in its marketing efforts, said Myriam Cohen, president of Equilibrix Corp., the Davie company that distributes the electronic marketing messages for more than 200 South Florida companies. By distributing e-mails to businesses in the same market, each enjoys a larger combined distribution list, and the halo of each other's good will, she said. Other local businesses with ads in Catlin Levin's e-mail newsletter include AllStar Sports Bar & Grill, Pet Supply & Warehouse, Field of Flowers and Big Tomato Market Grill.

"It's important who you associate with for your image," Cohen said.

Such campaigns work best when they work on three levels: building customer loyalty; aiding new business prospecting; and staying in front of a large number of people at a low cost. Moreover, the combined distribution helps maximize each company's marketing dollars. They can track how many users click through to the company's Web site. And when coupons, promotions or other incentives are included, actual retail traffic can be measured.

"Small businesses don't have large marketing budgets," Cohen said. "With an e-mail marketing message, a company can stay in front of its customers. The information is right there in front of them, with colorful images and pictures."

The cost of the e-mail is \$195 a month for two campaigns, and enjoys about 5 percent response, Catlin Levin said. She spends another \$100 on the TV ads. Four 15-second ads an hour run on closed-circuit TV at the popular North Broward sports bar and grill, Bru's Room.

Cost is important. Several years ago, Catlin Levin spent \$500 for an e-mail campaign that drove no traffic at all, she said. She wasn't even certain it ever was distributed.

"I think it was a scam," she said.

As a result of her traditional and online marketing efforts, TypeStyles is approaching its growth milestones and serves as an example of effective small business marketing. But now's no time to slow down, Catlin Levin said. She knows slow times will come. Keeping the marketing flowing will help level off the highs and lows of business's rocky cycles, she said.

"When you're riding the high, you have to prepare for the low. You know it's going to happen," she said. "It's just a matter of finding the lowest-cost, most effective marketing."

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