



# UNTANGLING

Problem Solving for Student Businesses

## IS YOUR STUDENT BUSINESS MARKETING in the 21ST CENTURY?

Student business revenues were down from last year. The total revenue from all businesses was \$717,184 down 6.3% from the \$765,540 in FY08. Yes, more competition exists with better quality food from Dining Commons, better coffee around campus and more snack stations. Yes, the economy does not favor sellers. This defines the situation; now you now have the opportunity to respond to it.

What can you do to help your business market to more customers and get current customers to come in more frequently?

### Structure

*First*, develop your story. What do you do well? What do you do differently from other competitors? Identify your strengths and appeals and develop your story.

*Second*, consider your audience. What do they want? How do they want it?

*Third*, determine how you want to deliver your product or service. Do you want to have excellent customer service or the widest range of products or the fastest delivery?

*Fourth*, choose your media. You won't be able to do or afford every media, so be thoughtful and concentrate your efforts. Each business will have a different market requiring a different response. For instance, a couple of years ago Sylvan Snack Bar developed a Facebook page. Last year, Earthfoods' café developed a mailing list where they mailed their daily entrée to their fans. This summer People's Market redid their website.

*Finally*, evaluate your strategy. Did it work? What could you do better?

### Resources and Ideas

1. A standing kiosk is available to purchase via Center for Student Development and CSB.
2. Use the Web, emails or social networking, such as Facebook. Hand out your website URLs. ASI Media reports that 89% of potential diners research online before choosing a restaurant. If you do have a webmaster, make sure that your hours are listed with a map and directions. Insure that your website is updated weekly so that people will keep coming back.



What can you update? Your specials, your regular menu, your catering menu, any change in service such as hours or delivery service; any events you might do. Adding pictures and videos on a regular basis keeps your site interesting and attracts more visitors. Show any awards you have received.

**Collegiate Link**, a new software linking with other UMASS organizations is a quicker link to the Web if you do not have a webmaster or a co-manager with Dreamweaver skills.

3. Residence Life has many free advertising options that came from: cmclaugh@gw.housing.umass.edu. Once you have figured out which residence halls your particular business would like to market to:

- provide hard copies of your flyers to their student staff by forwarding them along with the distribution count (i.e. 1 per RA) to Berkshire 208. There are a total of 389 staff members if you are ordering 1 poster per RA/ALA. If you need assistance with numbers and/or methods of delivery, please contact Sarah Rastallis at 5-1964.

- Develop an electronic format for the staff to select to use on their bulletin boards. If you have bulletin board 'kits' you would like our RAs/ALAs to access, contact Patty McGill at mcgill@gw.housing.umass.edu.

- Send announcements twice a year to our RA/ALA listservs. You can do so by writing reslife-ra@housing.umass.edu and reslife-ala@housing.umass.edu. (This would be something you do once during the semester, for instance, announcing when your opening day is.)

4. Consider developing student coupons to sell and exchange. This might be a Board of Student Business project.

5. Brochures; our current brochures are used at the Visitor's Center, for New Student Orientation, at Resource Fairs etc. The Board of Student Businesses may want to change or update this.

6. Link your information with other websites or blogs. Cross-market to other sites in exchange with them linking to your site. For instance People's Market had products that they advertise for vendors...they can suggest that the Vendor's link with their site as well.

7. Discuss commercial coupon books for business advertising. You've seen them; they are handed out at the textbook annex and around the campus at the beginning of the semester. The CSB has contact information and samples. These options tend to cost a lot of money.

8. Develop better customer service; the CSB would be happy to help provide a workshop.