First Friday speaker shares low-cost marketing tactics for businesses

Seiler says ideas spring from willingness to ‘delight’ customers

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Lea Ann Seiler knows that, across Kansas, small business owners are working pretty hard to keep their companies afloat.

So, she figures, they don’t need to over-complicate how they market their business.

Seiler, the manager for entrepreneurship in southwest Kansas with the non-profit NetWork Kansas, recently was the featured speaker during the Nov. 4 First Friday e-Call, a monthly online series hosted by K-State Research and Extension that helps to nurture small businesses and inspire entrepreneurship in Kansas.

The online discussions, which routinely host dozens of Kansas citizens from the public and private sectors, are available free each month.

“Marketing,” Seiler said, “is getting people to take notice of your business or your service. It is thought that it takes 7-8 times that people need to see something before they remember it.”

Seiler’s 45 minute talk outlined low-cost or no-cost ways to market a business or service. Her suggestions included some obvious choices – social media, photo opportunities and prize giveaways, for starters – but also strayed into some more uncommon tactics, such as wearing character costumes, giving temporary tattoos and even chalk art.

She admitted that many of the nearly four dozen ideas on her list are ones that she picked up from others either as a small business owner herself, or as the economic development director for Hodgeman County, where she worked for 15 years before her current position.

Also among the long list of ideas:

- **Teach people something** – hold a class or workshop that address something local people want to know.
• **Celebrate lesser-known holidays** – There is a “national something” day just about every week of the year. Look online for ideas.
• **Thank customers with handwritten notes.** It’s a simple thing that shows you care.
• **Include cute animals and cute kids in promoting your service.** It draws people to your business, where they likely will look around and shop.
• **Offer freebies.** Gifts for new customers, treats for pets, candy for kids are some examples.

“If you’re constantly thinking of a way to surprise and delight your customers, you will likely think of numerous ways to market your business,” said Seiler, whose own business – a bed and breakfast that caters to western Kansas pheasant hunters -- often hands out free t-shirts for kids, or leaves home-cooked foods or drinks for visitors.

“And with just a little tweaking, you will find the same holds true for your internal customers – or your employees. And we know that happy, engaged employees result in happy, engaged customers.”

Seiler’s full talk and other First Friday presentations are [available online](http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship) from K-State Research and Extension.

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATION:** Links used in this story
First Friday e-calls, [www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship](http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship)

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