

Off Season Marketing on a Budget
By Joe Bunn for
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As we come out of the holidays and the insanity of winter weddings and corporate events, it's time to start marketing for 2016. If you're like me, you spent way too much on Christmas gifts for your friends, kids and family and you know that a huge chunk of your hard earned dough is also about to get taken by good ol' Uncle Sam. Ouch! Lucky for you, in this day and age, you can still market on a budget. Let's talk about how.

Email. I know what you're thinking. You're saying, "I get so much email and I unsubscribe from so much stuff!" You might, but others might not. You'd be surprised to know how many people actually want to hear from you and know more about you and your company. Every month we send out an e-blast. In fact, we try to do it on the first or second day of each month just so that we stay on top of it. It goes to vendors, friends & family, and of course our clients and DJs. Long ago, I did have to spend a little bit of money on this method of marketing to get my graphics person to design a template for us to use in the mass email program called Mailchimp. However, nowadays, I just have to pay a small monthly fee to use the service and I just change the content in that original template. I would say maybe once a year you could update the template just to give your fans something new to look at each month. For content? That's easy. You can do things like DJ of the Month, photos from one of your biggest events last month, upcoming bridal shows where they can see you, info about showcases you are putting on, fun facts, trivia, whatever. Make it your own and don't write too much! We all know how short everyone's attention span is these days.

Postcards. Contrary to popular belief, I don't think snail mail is completely dead as a marketing piece, especially if you do it the right way. We just did three recent postcard mailings that all seemed to be successful. The first one was to a lot of the planners and venues in the area just reminding them to think of us for their clients' upcoming holiday events. The next one was for our Black Friday sale and then finally we sent out a holiday card to all of our 2016 booked clients and our vendor friends. There are several places to order the cards online for a good price, try Vistaprint or ClubFlyers.com for starters. 4x6 is a good size. On one side, you have your information and on the other side, you're basically just going to have a white box where the address will go, your return address and then the bulk permit number. The bulk permit number is something you can get if you use a mailing house (highly recommended) to help you with this. Not only can the bulk mail place save you money, these mail houses can simply get an excel file from you and print all of the addresses on your cards too! Saves a lot of time and stress!

Freebies. During the first of the year, we do ton of events for no money, that's right, for free! Let me explain how this is helpful. Normally, early in the year is slow, but there are several types of events that are usually taking place. One example is hospitality industry holiday parties. Most of the hotel and country club folks we work with are slammed around Christmas and don't have time to party. They usually wait until January, and we DJ as many of them as we can. Did we make any money? Nope! But we just secured our spot for yet another year as their go-to DJ company for everyone that wants to have a party there, and you can bet that will make us a pile of money in the future. Other events that you can jump in and work for free include charity events, tastings (for caterers or hotels), and open houses for venues that are opening soon or just want to show off their property. Rock them all for free and watch the referrals roll in! Trust me on this one!

Trade. Now I know that bridal shows are expensive and that's why they aren't on this list of shoestring budget ideas. We stopped doing the really big bridal shows many years ago. However, there are a lot of smaller shows that take place around our area. They normally charge, but a much smaller fee than the "cattle calls". But if you work it right, you might not have to pay at all. Perhaps they need music playing throughout the venue? You can do that! Maybe they want to light up the outside of the building with blue uplighting? You can do that! And in turn, boom, you get to sell there for free! All you have in it at that point is your gear (which is probably already paid for) and a little bit of time. Try it!

Well I'm hoping that all or some of these work out for you. I didn't even get into social media this time around, but that's also a very cheap way to get your name out there! Good luck and start marketing NOW for 2016 work!