

THE DAILY RECORD

LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

Using Barter To Buy Media Brings New Cash To Businesses

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BARTER BASICS

Just when we've survived the Democratic National Convention, the Olympics and the Republican National Convention, here it comes. The bombardment of advertising that is typical in any presidential election year.

In the 2004 presidential race, advertising has been the single biggest expense on both sides of the issues, accounting for at least \$116 million for Bush and \$93 million for Kerry campaigns. In addition, nonparty groups are spending tens of millions on advertisements and other "get-out-and-vote" efforts such as direct mail.

The bottom line is that marketing and advertising are still the best way to create visibility and strengthen your brand identity whether you are running for office or just trying to reach your annual business goals. Businesses waking up from the long recession should take a page from this year's presidential campaign to get in front of willing buyers and get a jump on the competition.

With cash still tight for many operations, barter can help you break out of a "catch-22" situation. In fact, armed with a solid barter business plan, companies can leverage the additional income from new barter transactions to purchase radio, television, print and billboard space locally, regionally and even nationally to promote their products and services.

This is one of the best uses of barter because you are using trade dollars generated by new customers to create a stronger voice in the marketplace, which will inevitably drive more customers and even more cash to your business.

Barter is not limited to advertising space, however. The list of products runs the gamut from signs and banners and signage at event venues to bumper stickers, taxi toppers, bus wraps and advertising specialties — all those things that keep your company's name in front of customers and prospects.



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Your local barter exchange can also "hook you up" with graphic designers, copywriters, media buyers, printers and binderies as well as mailing services so you can launch that targeted direct mail campaign or put a little life into your old company brochure without using any cash at all.

An increase in the size of the online population, rise in time spent online and the real revenue businesses are seeing from online marketing has widened our view of media to include websites design and hosting, e-mail marketing campaigns, banner advertising, search engine optimization and even online Yellow Pages.

In fact, Jupiter Communications reported 73 percent of businesses it recently surveyed said they had planned to increase their online advertising spending for 2004. If you are not

online yet, you can bet your competition is.

Don't know where to start? No problem. Barter members can provide marketing consulting and strategic planning services to help you create the vision for your organization, establish short and long-term business goals and drive revenues to your door.

Most importantly, these consultants can help you build in measurement tools or yardsticks that will allow you to objectively gage return on any marketing and advertising investment. This is an important part of the puzzle that's often forgotten. Once you know how effective your marketing investment has been toward building your business and maintaining your customer base, you will be much more likely to expand your investment next year.

Stephen E. Webster is president and CEO of Alliance Barter, a 25-year-old Rochester-based company with offices in Toronto, Buffalo and Syracuse. Webster is past president of the International Reciprocal Trade Association (IRTA) and presently serves on the board of governors of its universal currency. He is a life-long resident of the area.