

## **Custom Marketing Finds Its Niche From the Business Ledger Publication**

Caryn Amster believes there are no accidents in life.

Taking time off from her job as a chemist to raise her children resulted in a successful 360-degree career change. Lunching with a friend at the right time and right place yielded a major consulting and even planning assignment for the Walt Disney Corporation.

And receiving [The Business Ledger's 1999 Excellence in Business Award](#) in the small company category was no accident, either.

Twelve years ago Amster invested about \$500 into Custom Marketing Associates, a public relation, marketing planning, implementation and consulting firm that she founded after growing weary from commuting to her job as a business and corporate marketing director of two shopping malls, raising two children, running an antique matching serviced and teaching an antiques course.

“I wanted to be my own boss. My parents were entrepreneurs and I know what is needed for small to mid-sized businesses to succeed.”

With the support of her family and friends, Amster used her self-described “eternal optimist” attitude to begin soliciting her services to small companies in need of “an independent observer, not embroiled or impaled in their business.”

Today, she's used her marketing experience on everything from “glitz to garbage” – referring to her clientele, which ranges from a dramatic performance troupe to a waste hauling company.

Amster typically spends two to three hours on tape giving feedback to a client on all aspects of their company, from advertisement mailings to its internal operations. She will help business owners create a monthly marketing plan, with specific goals relating to overall improvement or advancements in a requested area, like targeting a particular market of consumers.

In addition to providing feedback, Amster is not afraid to return to the basics and ask her service business clients what she considers three very important questions: [Why You? And Who Cares?](#)

“I might say to a client that there are 250 other computer consulting businesses doing the same thing as you so why is yours any different? Why should you provide these services and who are the customer that will care?” she said.

After these initial questions, Amster noted that she has refrained from accepting some businesses as clients because they lacked confidence in their own services and abilities, or were unwilling to work beyond a 9 to 5 workday to promote their business.

“Business today is no longer a 9 to 5 day,” Amster said. Rather, she sees small businesses as needing a special edge to compete with large corporations and emerge successful. Finding this edge is impossible without first finding a target market.

“I wish I had a dime for every time I’ve asked someone who their target market is and they say everybody. With today’s integrated marketing we can target green-eyed people living on the left side of the street,” she said. “I have an integrated marketing plan designed to help businesses find their target market.”

Another reason small businesses are not succeeding, according to Amster, involves the lack of a strong public relations effort and a lack of uniformity among businesses that do have PR departments.

“The very first thing I do when I begin working with a business is ask them to put everything on the table that they’ve ever done to promote their company”, she said. “And eight of ten times the materials all look like they’ve come from different companies. The advertising person has done something different than the marketing person....”

This lack of uniformity makes Amster feel as if the company is losing its identity.

“And if I am feeling like I don’t completely understand the business I tell them to imagine how their customers will feel,” she said.

Amster began experiencing success in her second year of business, when she was “actually making some profits.” By the third year she was considering expanding outside of her home-based office and renting an office with employees and assistants.

“I was seriously thinking about moving into an office,” she recalled. “Yet my original intent was to plan my business so it could be affordable to small and mid-sized businesses. I didn’t want to charge downtown prices to pay for employees and an office.”

“My goal is to consistently give business owners the best and latest tips, tricks and information on marketing their business,” says Caryn. Custom Marketing Associates, started in 1988, is a business-to-business marketing, advertising and public relations firm located in Elk Grove, Illinois. Amster’s second business, The Marketing Coaches, specializing in speaking, training and consulting on marketing, direct mail, customer service and trade show issues, was started in 1990. For information, contact Caryn at (847) 895-6449, e-mail [Caryn@MarketingCoaches.com](mailto:Caryn@MarketingCoaches.com) and see the site at [www.MarketingCoaches.com](http://www.MarketingCoaches.com).

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