

Personalized cards, website, speeches, are inexpensive, effective marketing

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By Steve Baska, editor

She decided late last year to create the more personalized, visual cards, instead of sending out standard "thank you" cards. So, before Valentine's Day this year she went to a graphic artist who drew the caricature drawing of her off a photograph. They then developed the look and text for the Valentine card with the phrase "My bid's on you" on the outside, and the phrase "You're the heart of my business" on the inside of the card, which she further personalizes by writing words of thanks in her own handwriting.

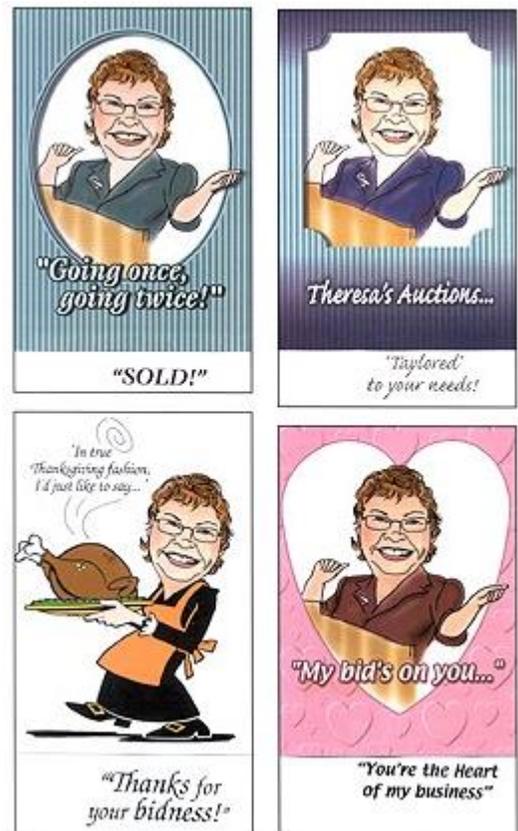
"I thought Valentine's Day was a good time to send a card because a lot of my senior citizens customers probably get no other card on that day," she said. "When I went to print a small number, the printer said it was more cost effective to do a run of 6,000, so we then developed more cards and did the 6,000 run."

She developed a total of four cards (one for Thanksgiving and two for use anytime) and this year will send out 1,500 copies of each.

One card has her trademark green wallpaper on the front with her face and the words "Going once, going twice" on the cover, then inside it has the word "Sold!"

"That card has the teal wallpaper, which is my branding. It's also on my website," she said. The other card has the wallpaper cover, the words "Theresa's Auctions" on the cover, and the words "Taylored to your needs!" on the inside. She uses these cards as "Thanks for your business" cards to send after a sale. The goal is to keep her name in front of customers.

She sends the cards to customers, consignors and dealers. "I don't know of any other Auctioneer who has a personalized card. I think it's pretty effective," she said. "One



customer said to me that he doesn't know the name of the mayor in our town, but he sure knows the name of the Auctioneer!"

The cost of such cards are 24 cents per card to print and 15 cents per envelope, she said. She plans to expand her card line by developing an Easter card ("SomeBUNNY wants your business" will be the message), and a St. Patrick's Day and a Halloween card.

"You gotta go the extra mile to keep customers. I used to use blank Thank You cards or embossed cards, but this is much better," she said.

Other marketing tools

In addition to the cards, Taylor said she uses the following marketing methods.

Auctioneer Theresa Taylor, of Ontario, Canada, found a new marketing method this year that is proving especially effective for her small auction company: personalized cards that she sends as reminders, "thank you" notes, holiday cards and so on.

The cards, which have a caricature drawing of Taylor on the front that grabs the attention of recipients, have clearly generated business, she said.

"I've picked up two auctions, several referrals and lots of email response from the cards," said Taylor, who often a monthly antiques and consignment auctions. "And after I send a mailing, I see a higher crowd attendance at my next auction."

The cards are just one of the inexpensive and effective marketing strategies she uses on her limited budget, said Taylor, who teaches marketing at World Wide College of Auctioneering. Taylor is a one-person company, with no full-time employees but 10 part-time employees that she brings in to help catalog, move product, set up sales and so on.

- **Wine bottle labels**

Taylor has personalized labels printed for wine bottles. The labels have her teal wallpaper, company logo and other information. "I give out wine bottles as a "Thank You" to customers. It costs me less than \$7 a bottle." She also gives the branded wine bottles as a gift to charity auctions as an item to sell.

- **Water bottle labels**

Taylor does the same label creation for bottled water. "When I go speak to civic groups, I take a case of bottle water and hand out the bottles. It costs me about \$10 for a case," she said.

- **Website**

Taylor's website (www.theresataylor.com) is an important place where customers can follow up after seeing her cards or hearing her name in the media, she said. "I'm redoing my website now to add the caricature drawing of me," she said.

- **Speaking to groups, and attending meetings**

"I speak to bankers, Rotary, a women's entrepreneurial group, business clubs, at continuing education meetings, just about anywhere," she said. "I talk about the auction industry, not just about my company," she said. "I also attend church socials and Chamber of Commerce meetings. I was the first Auctioneer to join my local Chamber in 113 years."

- **Frequently contact the media**

Taylor contacts the newspapers, radio and television stations "As much as I can." I send them press releases and I offer to go on radio as a spokesperson for the charity auction I have coming up, for example. I become an expert on that charity organization and tell all about it, not just about the auction.

Taylor also advises Auctioneers to market themselves to all ages of potential clients, from youth to senior citizens. "You can't ignore any of your demographics," she said. "You can turn them into your loyal customers. Invite them to visit an auction to see what it's like. Tell them you'll have free coffee, donuts and even items for diabetics. Do everything you can!"



The front page of Theresa Taylor's website (www.theresataylor.com)