

# next tuesday afternoon

april 29, 2008

Last week while socializing with a group of colleagues, one of them asked, what can small businesses do to market themselves during the economic slowdown? I shared that there are many ways a small or young company can stay in touch with existing or potential customers. The basics these days will revolve around a website, an email marketing program and potentially direct mail.

Then I ran across a new dimension of advertising that's been coined by Lester Wunderman, the gentleman who coined the phrase "direct marketing." His idea of how to withstand the tough times is one simple word - engagement.

What is it? It's the commitment to creating long-term relationships between buyer and seller, business and prospect. This isn't the old style relationship marketing - as engagement requires ongoing work on the part of your business to stay relevant to prospects and customers.

"Engagement is a promise that carries an obligation by all parties to *do something*. [And] to *continue to do it* for each other. It can be in the form of an agreement, contract or commitment."

If you think you'll seem too B2C if make an extra call to a B2B customer, not to worry. Pick up the phone and engage them. Add interactive elements to your e-marketing. Continue to educate your customers and prospects.

Engagement lives in the here and now, and can live well into the future if it's maintained and nourished.

The point? Figure out how you can be helpful to your customers and prospects. Then offer your insight and support over time. This kind of engagement brings about a commitment of trust between both parties, and is sustained by ongoing communications and experiences. Companies that foster engagement are the ones people will remember.

I'm Lisa Davis. Let me know if I can help you in any way, please feel free to visit at [OneAlliance.com](http://OneAlliance.com) and I'll be back next Tuesday afternoon.

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