



Recession Marketing Strategies: What Works for Staffing Firms Right Now?

By David Searns

It's amazing how dramatically some things change – and how other things stay the same.

When I wrote this advice post back in 2008, the staffing industry was facing similar economic challenges – for very different reasons. And while it's more than a decade old, this post contains invaluable lessons for surviving an economic downturn that are as relevant as ever.

The biggest takeaway?

Firms that sell strategically and market aggressively during a recession will come out on top during the recovery.

Here's the original copy from my 2008 post, with a few updates made for accuracy:

Q: David, you work with staffing firms across the country, what marketing is working best right now?

A: Yes, we work with roughly 1,400 staffing firms throughout the U.S. and Canada. With all these clients, we get to see a lot of what is – and is not – working in selling staffing services.

So, what's the magic solution for selling staffing right now?

Well, as you might guess, there is no magic, one-size-fits-all, works-in-every-case, silver bullet sales or marketing solution. The economy is in rough shape. Business is down. And there is less overall demand for staffing services.

But don't get me wrong. Some things ARE working, and I'll share a few ideas in just a minute. However, before I get to what is working, let's consider what's NOT working:

- **Order taking is not working.** You can't sell staffing by being transaction oriented. You have to sell solutions.
- **Increasing call quotas is not working.** While boosting quotas can temporarily increase sales, it's nearly impossible to sustain.
- **Price cutting is not working.** You may get more orders, but you may wipe out your profits – and you'll attract the worst clients. Even worse, you can't easily raise your prices when business improves.

Doing the same old things is not working.

The definition of insanity is doing the same things over and over and expecting a different result. The economy has changed. Staffing has changed. And if you want to continue to be successful, your business has to change too.

Learn more: Watch our free on-demand webinar, "[Strategies for a Changed World](#)." In it, we share best practices to plan for, recover faster from, and even thrive in these turbulent economic times.

So what does work?

While no one solution will be right for every business, here are three strategies that can help you generate more job orders in the coming months:

1. Sell more strategically.

Your clients are facing the same business challenges as you. They don't need temp help, but they do need ways to reduce costs and drive revenue. And that's exactly what you sell!

Teach your sales team to sell solutions that improve efficiency, drive productivity, eliminate capacity constraints, and reduce labor and associated personnel expenses. Change your business from providing staffing services to offering workforce efficiency consulting.

2. Be more visible.

In your market, there are prospects that don't know your firm. And there are clients you don't have time to call. If you'll pardon the semi-self-promotion, now is the time for more marketing. Your sales reps can only contact so many people per day. Marketing allows you to reach more people, more often, for less cost than cold calling. By investing more aggressively in marketing, you will not only attract more business in the short term, you will also recover significantly faster as business improves.

Aggressive marketing makes more people aware of your firm. It signals to buyers that you're successful and you must be doing something right. And it reminds people of the value you can provide. During a downturn, the

only way to grow is to take business away from the competition, and you do that by being more aggressive.

Ideal marketing tools you should consider right now include: e-mail (e-mail newsletters, e-cards, personal e-mails, etc.), PPC, content marketing (e-newsletters, blogging, video), social marketing, public relations, SEO and simply spending more time on the phone with your existing clients. Once people return to their workplaces, direct mail (personal letters, greeting and note cards, and postcards) and in-person visits will be great options, too.

You can even combine strategies 1 and 2 to maximize your impact.

By educating your local community on strategic uses of staffing (via content marketing, PR, etc.), you make more companies aware of your firm, you position yourself as an expert with more knowledge than other staffing firms, and you create new opportunities to sell staffing.

3. Focus on hard-to-find talent.

Most recruiters already know this, but even in a down market, some jobs remain hard to fill. In today's market, that may include transportation/logistics, IT and healthcare (clinical, allied and administration).

Become a consumer of local job postings. Study the trends and see what positions remain in high demand. Then either train your recruiters, or hire recruiters with the right experience, to make your firm the top local expert at finding those kinds of people. No matter how weak the economy becomes, staffing firms that can recruit hard to find people will always have a market for their services.

The bottom line is that the best marketing we are seeing right now is marketing that is both aggressive and focused. Marketing that has a specific goal, is being measured, and is integrated with sales and the operations of the staffing firm. Companies that are making those kinds of marketing investments are having far fewer struggles than those who are simply continuing to do business as usual or trying to downsize their way to success.

How can Haley Marketing help?

Whether you need sound marketing advice or help solving a specific challenge, our marketing experts are ready to help. [Let's talk.](#)

Join the new [Staffing Works Slack Group!](#)

We created a [Slack group](#) to help the staffing industry come together to deal with the challenges we are all facing. The group is a place for staffing professionals to discuss sales, marketing, recruiting, technology and other issues that are impacting your company. It is completely free to participate, and just one more thing we're doing to help staffing professionals thrive in this economy.



1.888.696.2900

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