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What's your USP?

Don't waste the opportunity the new BAS agent regime provides for promoting your services, advises *Kathryn MacMillan*.

Now that the bookkeeping industry has become regulated there are barriers to entry to ensure that BAS service providers have the relevant education, experience and knowledge to offer the service levels required by the Tax Practitioners Board. However, there are still many bookkeepers who have not taken the steps to enter into the new regulatory environment or update their skills.

Their failure to do so provides a golden opportunity for those who have embraced the new regime to race to the lead in terms of marketing their services.

Opportunity knocks

As a recruiter who works with both bookkeeping businesses looking to recruit staff and bookkeepers seeking extra work, I see daily evidence of the number of bookkeepers who are still not aware of the regulations. Others have become BAS service providers, but have not recognised the huge marketing advantage available to them from the new regulatory environment.

This is despite the fact that business is undoubtedly hard these days. I rarely attend a networking event without meeting at least two or three bookkeepers who are trying to build their businesses. Anyone else attending has a smorgasbord of bookkeepers to choose from, should they be looking for such services.

The new regulatory environment hands you your uniqueness on a platter!

But why would one of these potential customers choose one of these service providers over another? Bookkeepers all do much the same thing, yet I never hear any of them talking about how they differentiate their business from the rest. Why is this, in an obviously competitive market?

Everyone a marketer

In part, I think it's another example of that classic situation where a sole practitioner or owner of a small business not only has to be able to provide the products or services on which their business is based, but also has to fill the roles of business, operations, HR and marketing manager (and more!). And while they're experts on their products and services, they're not necessarily experts in these other areas that are also crucial to achieving business success.

In the case of the BAS agent legislation, for example, any marketing, PR or advertising person worth their salt would instantly recognise the potential for businesses to use it as a promotional tool – as part of what marketers call their 'unique selling proposition' (USP).

Learn more

This article provides just a few examples of the many ways you can differentiate your bookkeeping business from 'the rest' in the new regulatory environment. To learn more from Kathryn about building your unique selling proposition and developing your marketing skills, sign up for one of AAT Australia's Public Practice Seminars, which are now being delivered in the time and cost-effective webinar format.

Previous participants have had this to say about Kathryn's session:

- very informative – excellent for someone starting a business
- answered a number of questions and has given me information to tailor my business
- gave me several things to take home and use in my business straight away
- very motivational, prompted a lot of good ideas for my business.

Watch the AAT Australia *News Update* and AAT Australia website for details of upcoming seminars.

What makes you 'different'?

The website BusinessDictionary.com provides the following useful definition of the USP concept, describing it as the "real or perceived benefit of a good or service that differentiates it from the competing brands and gives its buyer a logical reason to prefer it over other brands." Importantly, the definition continues, "USP is often a critical component of a promotional theme around which an advertising campaign is built." That is, your USP is of vital importance in building your bookkeeping business – and the new regulatory environment hands you your uniqueness on a platter!

continued on page 20



continued from page 8

Make your BAS agent status work for you

There are so many aspects of the new BAS agent regime that a savvy businessperson can utilise for effective marketing. For example:

- Did you contact all your existing customers letting them know you have achieved full registration, with a brief explanation of what that means in terms of the education and experience you can offer them?
- Do you send emails with your registered BAS agent number in the signature panel?
- Did you phone or send a news release to your local paper, letting the community know it has a bookkeeper of your status in its midst?

Small steps like these can reinforce the message that you are a registered BAS agent and, as such, are truly a cut above the rest. ■

The next step

Add to your status as a registered BAS agent by becoming an AAT Australia Public Practice Member (PPM), and your branding is now truly saying, "I am not the same as Bare Essentials Bookkeeping Service down the road." Use your PPM logo in the same way you do your BAS agent number, by adding it to all your communication tools such as emails, newsletters, invoices etc.

Kathryn MacMillan



Kathryn MacMillan MRCSA is an accredited recruitment professional, a registered BAS agent and member of AAT Australia. She has used savvy marketing to build a home-based business into a preferred supplier for clients including investment banks, the federal government and many small businesses. Contact her at email kathryn@nine2three.com.au or on 1300 923 000.