

Since 1984, Skin Two Magazine has carried the advertising of businesses serving the BDSM/fetish market worldwide. Our readers use Skin Two to find goods and services they want to buy.

I have seen a lot of fetish businesses come and go over the years – and a few of them survive and flourish. So it might be useful for you if I share a few things that I've picked up along the way...

- Most businesses are set up without any proper planning. I know mine was. So long as you are aware that you are doing it just for pleasure, no problem – a hobby business can be fun. But, if you want it to be a serious business, please, whatever you do, have a proper business plan and cashflow. If there is one thing I regret, it's not having started with a sound business plan.
- Consider your marketing carefully. I don't mean sales – I mean marketing. That is, make sure that you are offering goods or services that the customers want to buy, at a price they are prepared to pay. You may think that your product is the best thing ever – but do the customers really want it and will they pay your price? Do your research. Check the competition.
- Plan your promotion. Good publicity is essential, so organise professional press releases and really stylish photographs. Make sure your web site looks good and works well. Don't skimp on this – if your product looks crummy in your publicity material, who's going to buy it?
- Get your ads professionally written and designed. Copywriting and photography are highly skilled crafts – don't make the mistake of thinking that because you can write an email and you can take a holiday snapshot, you are a copywriter or a photographer. There's a reason why these professionals earn their pay.
- Plan your advertising long term. Don't expect to place one or two ads and see what results you get – you need to advertise steadily year after year to build up a presence in the market and keep your company known and trusted. Notice that the major players in the market advertise constantly. Budget for this. If you don't advertise, your sales fall off. Then you have even less money to advertise. Then your sales fall even lower. It's a vicious circle with only one end...
- Don't think that you can advertise online only. Nothing matches print advertising for lasting power and authority. There's a reason why glossy magazines are full of ads. Develop a programme of print ads, backed up with a great website. Have affiliate links on your site and promote them to other traders. Send a regular newsletter to your customers, with genuine information.

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● When you take stands at fetish trade shows and events, don't necessarily expect to make a big profit from sales on the day – budget for this as part of your annual promotional campaign. Let buyers see your show stand, chat with you and get to know and trust you. Then – if your product and pricing are right – they are more likely to buy from you than from your competitors. Therefore, sales will come in over time.

● Don't make the classic mistake of thinking that anything to do with sex will make loads of profit. (If that were true, I would be driving a Bentley by now.) Customers in the fetish market are an intelligent and discerning lot. They won't buy your goods unless they are convinced that the quality, service, design and price are all to a high standard. As I say above, make sure your marketing is right. You *must* offer something that customers really want, at a price they are happy to pay.

● Imagine that you are going to see a very sceptical banker, to ask for money for your business. They will want *very* convincing answers to every single one of these points. Make sure you have thought everything through and can answer the most searching questions. If there's a gap in your preparation, however small, fix it! (Even if you are not going to see a banker, you still need to do this exercise – get a few friends to ask searching questions.)

● Finally, sell, sell, sell. Sales is the lifeblood of a business. If your product is the wrong colour or the wrong design, you can probably change it. If your pricing is wrong, you can probably look at your costs and alter your prices. But, without any sales, you have no business – it's as simple as that. You might not like selling much. (If so, I know how you feel.) But, when you know you have made a great product, that people really want, at a price they are happy to pay, selling becomes much easier... So, however good your product is, sell every day, as hard as you can.

● I hope you have found my notes useful. After 25 years running Skin Two, these are just a few of the things I wish someone had told me in 1984.

Our job is to help you – do contact us with any questions...

For advertising in our printed publications, contact our Sales Manager, Mark Rodgers, on [mark@skintwo.com](mailto:mark@skintwo.com)

For advertising on our web site, contact our Web Manager, Rachel May, on [rachel@skintwo.com](mailto:rachel@skintwo.com)

For anything else, contact me, Tim Woodward, on [tim@skintwo.com](mailto:tim@skintwo.com)

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