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Ideas can take on a life of their own

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Sometimes a good idea takes on a life of its own.

In a past column I wrote about a medical equipment client to whom I suggested using tiny bottles of Tabasco sauce instead of pens as a handout for account reps, with a "We're HOT" label.

The bottles were attached to cards proclaiming, "We're HOT on cost-containment and patient compliance." The reps gave them to doctors, therapists gave them to patients. It created great "buzz."

We followed up with a news release and photo of the cards with bottles. The story was carried in two top health industry publications and in business columns. We posted those articles on the company website and social media sites. Account reps and clinical staff emailed it to contacts and handed out copies. They were inserted in mailings. I was flattered when American Express OPEN Forum for small businesses chose the idea as "A marketing idea worth stealing." (<http://www.openforum.com/articles/4-marketing-ideas-that-are-sure-to-make-a-splash>).

A few months ago I arranged for Miss Massachusetts 2010 to make a personal appearance on behalf of my orthodontic client, in exchange for complimentary tooth whitening. We got excellent pre- and post-event publicity. Then I arranged for my orthodontists to be "The Official Orthodontists of Miss Massachusetts," in exchange for a scholarship donation, great PR for my client and the organization.

An independent school client opened a Gallery of Understanding named for a local Holocaust survivor. Large panels trace his life from peaceful prewar Poland through WW II, to a new life in America. I suggested adding an exciting dimension: a mini-museum of artifacts from the era. A few news stories helped us obtain the first few items. Donors began to contact me. At last count, some 20 items had been donated and the museum was launched. Both the gallery and school use the display as a tool to solicit donations and attract new families. The idea can be worth many times the investment.

One good idea is worth a million dollars. And a good idea person can be worth many times that.

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