

free ideas you can put to work now

SPROUTS

free fertile ideas you can put to work now

an ebook by
Clark H Smith | Good Earth Creative



HAPPINESS IS...

An idea that comes to life.

A hunch that pays off.

A commitment that demonstrates its virtue.

A return on your investment.

The ability to bless the lives of others.

Creating solutions that really solve human challenges.

The opportunity to optimize the value of your time.

Whatever motivates you to engage in commerce, you have some expression of happiness that keeps you moving forward.

Sharing these **SPROUTS** makes me happy. I believe they'll make a difference in your organization and that's my mission.

Best wishes,

Clark H Smith

© 2009 by Clark H Smith

Copyright holder licenses this work under the [Creative Commons License, Attribution 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).

Titling is set in Akzidenz-Grotesk BQ Condensed.
Body copy is set in Arial.

Special thanks to:

Noah Butler-Smith of RenderGarden Media for his help with graphic design and other technical aspects of this ebook.

Devin Rose for the unique illustrations used throughout the ebook.



Direct link:

www.goodearthcreative.com/sprouts.pdf

You are encouraged to liberally share the link to this ebook with whomever you wish. Please feel free to post a link to this ebook on online resources that you control. (If you post a link, I'd appreciate it if you'd [let me know](#). I might link back to you.)

BE INTERESTING

Consumer demand is driven by a complex set of motivations. Many times the quality / quantity / price of your product or service is in the caboose of the motivation train. We're social animals. Are you connecting with your consumers on a social level? Where in your marketing do you create a personal connection with the people who comprise your marketplace? Distinguish yourself from your competition. Be interesting. Incorporate your story, your values, your activities, your accomplishments, and your challenges into your marketing efforts. Real people are interested in real people.

I can illustrate this with a personal story I call "the John Mellencamp Factor". I don't particularly care for Mr. Mellencamp's music. It's not my style, he's not my style. As an artist, Mellencamp is immaterial to me. But I *always* pay attention when one of his songs



comes on the radio or he appears on TV. *Always*. Why? I just happen to personally know the craftsman who built a very high value custom kitchen for John Cougar. This is probably one of those "six degrees of separation" things, but because I am even tangentially "connected" with Mellencamp, he actually matters to me even though I have no preference for him or his music. Mellencamp is **interesting** to me because I know something about him that creates a connection between us – thin as it may be. You can, and must, create those connections in your marketplace.

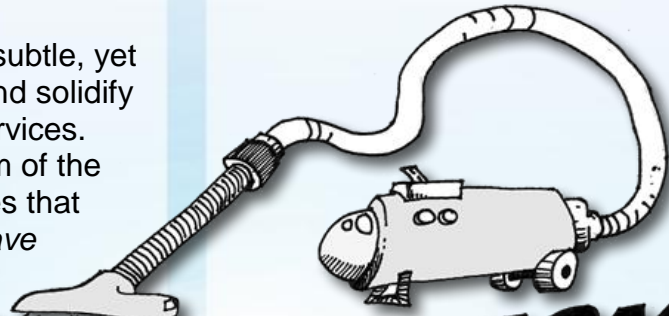
Take note of the [When You Make A Contact, Make A Connection](#) **SPROUT** where

I share several ideas for content that makes a personal connection. Most importantly, don't limit yourself to just talking about your business. Celebrate the people and the passions, the history and hopes that make up [the human side](#) of your business and make you interesting.

UP YOUR OV

An Obligation Vacuum is a subtle, yet powerful way to stimulate and solidify demand for your goods / services. Although it lacks the altruism of the Golden Rule, the OV advises that you do for others as *they have done for you*. Doing good for others creates an expectation / obligation that they should return the favor. There's a vacuum until they do. When Mark the Merchant bends over backwards to assist Suzie Shopper, the whole Shopper family is more inclined to patronize Mr. Merchant's Mart than to take their business elsewhere.

What's the strength of your OV? Think carefully about what you do for others. If you want more referrals for your business, be deliberate in giving them for other businesses. (See my website's [DEEP ROOTS](#) as an example.) And don't be reluctant to make a personal connection by sharing a tip on a great new restaurant or a movie worth watching. What you do for others will not be soon forgotten.



OBLIGATION

WHAT DO SPROUTS DO FOR YOU?

SPROUTS from **Good Earth Creative** are free fertile ideas that you can put to work now. Following the suggestions presented in this ebook will

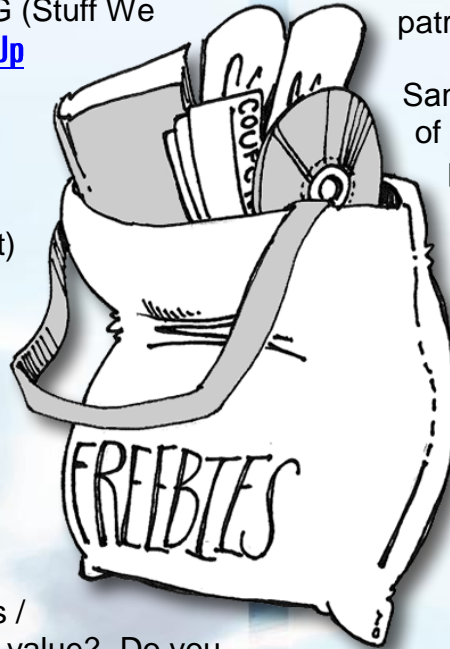
- make you more interesting
- distinguish you from your competitors
- create a connection between you and your marketplace

Read this ebook with a pen in your hand and make a note of the **SPROUTS** you think will work for you. Then [call or email](#) **Good Earth Creative** and let's get your prospects picking up the phone and calling you.

GET YOUR SWAG ON

Everyone loves SWAG (Stuff We All Get). One way to **Up Your OV** (obligation vacuum) is to be generous. What do you leave behind (besides a sales sheet) when you call on a client. Where's the grab bag of goodies on the way out of your store / office? And I'm not talking about a ten pound tub of mints from Sam's Club.

What resources / assets do you have of value? Do you have a friend who is a budding musician? Burn a CD (with their permission!) of a couple songs and give it away (complete with a list of upcoming concerts). Does your favorite restaurant publish coupons? Ask the manager for a short stack for you to use to promote the restaurant to your clients / customers. He/she will beam with delight at the idea (and might even post up your business card in their establishment). What goods / services do your existing



customers / clients produce? Will they give you samples / discounts / free stuff to pass along to your other patrons?

If all else fails, go to Sam's and get a ten pound tub of mints. Just don't leave people empty-handed.

BLOW PEOPLE AWAY

List your "preferred" competitors. "If you're not going to do business with us, please consider _____." This simple gesture shows your confidence in the quality of your own business, generosity toward your competitors, and open-mindedness about the influences operating in the marketplace.

BE GOOD FOR GOODNESS SAKE

From Enron to Madoff, the business world seems to live with a perpetual black eye. Even if you have a sterling reputation, there is a growing trend that businesses should demonstrate good citizenship. Combat this subtle cynicism by touting what you do for the greater good. In your marketing and sales efforts, feature your volunteerism, generosity, and other forms of community contribution. There's nothing wrong with letting others know where your heart and your values are – and you might inspire them to get involved, too.

Consider asking your consumers to join you in your next venture into good citizenship. What kind of corporate functions do you have that could be tweaked to support a charity? Bring canned goods for a local food pantry to the company Christmas party. Host a charity event at your site and invite your community / marketplace to attend and participate. Incorporate a charity in your advertising.



GO VIRAL

Good Earth Creative recommends [The New Rules of Viral Marketing](#) by David Meerman Scott. Scott gives an example of a grainy, goofy spoof [video](#) that became a viral sensation – for IBM! This demonstrates that virtually anything (with great creative input) is fair game for marketing techniques that get people talking about you – for free!



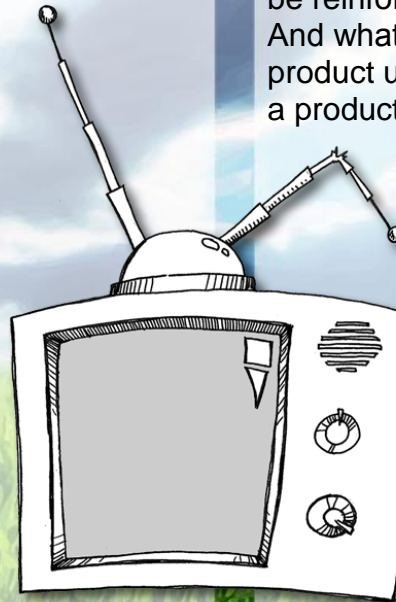
SPROUTS

they're good for you
and even better
when you pass them on

email this ebook
to someone today!

BE A CONDUIT

Most of us are involved in several organizations besides our business. We attend churches, our children are in schools, we are members of organizations and clubs – all of which have activities and events that they want to share with the public, their marketplace. Make a regular habit of asking what you can help to announce / promote. Your value to those organizations will increase (always a good thing!) and you will show your marketplace that you are engaged with your community and are eager to lend support.



FEATURE YOUR PRODUCT / SERVICE IN VIDEO

A picture is worth... Oh, you know that one already. Well, what's a video worth? Good video seizes the attention of the viewer. (Have you noticed the difference between how people behave when a television is on as opposed to a radio? That's the power of video.) Embed video on pages in your website. Set up your own channel on YouTube.com. Loop video on monitors in your establishment where consumers will be reinforced for their patronage. And what's on TV? How is your product used – by real people, not in a product demonstration lab? Do you have a testimonial for your service, customer care?

Viral video is often best (see [Go Viral SPROUT](#)). Create a competition among your customers to produce video featuring your company. Offer the best videos a coupon / discount / premium and placement on your corporate website.

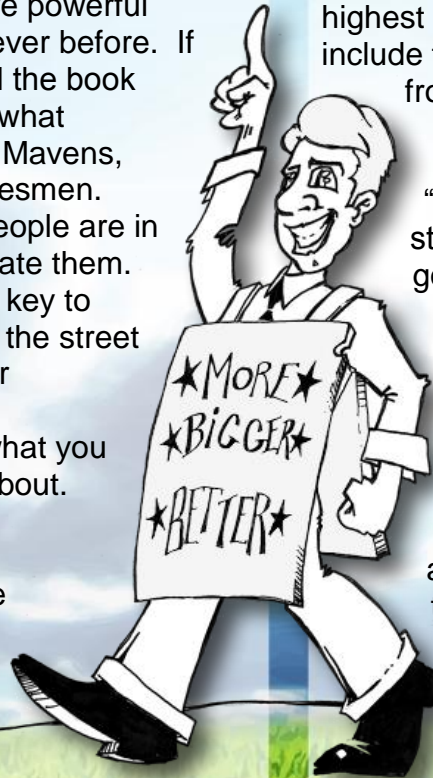
SPREAD THE WORD

In **Tipping Point**, Malcom Gladwell closes his remarkable book with an assessment that in an era of mass(ive) communication, word of mouth may be a more powerful marketing tool than ever before. If you haven't yet, read the book and pay attention to what Gladwell says about Mavens, Connectors, and Salesmen. Identify who those people are in your world and cultivate them. Connectors are your key to getting your word on the street and in the ear of your potential consumers.

Think about what you hear others talking about. Why are people recommending *that* restaurant? Why are people talking about *that* movie? What is it that is **unique** or **excellent** about what you bring to market? Feature that aspect of your business.

When government leaders want to get their point across, they formulate "talking points" – clear,

concise statements of policy or approach. What are your talking points? Formulate them and communicate them. Keep them simple and memorable. Feature them in your advertising, print them on customer receipts, give them highest visibility on your website, include them in every outbound email from your organization. It is vogue for businesses to generate well-crafted "mission / purpose statements". Frankly, that's gotten a little boring and it does not tap the aspirations of the consumer. No one ever spread the word about a clever mission statement. They brag about the taste of the food, the speed of service, the personal attention received. Let's start talking about the value the consumer gets from patronizing your business.



PUSHMEPULLYOU

It's not just an animal in Dr. Doolittle's amazing world. The authors of **The Attention Economy** make an obvious point in a compelling way: **To**

Get Attention

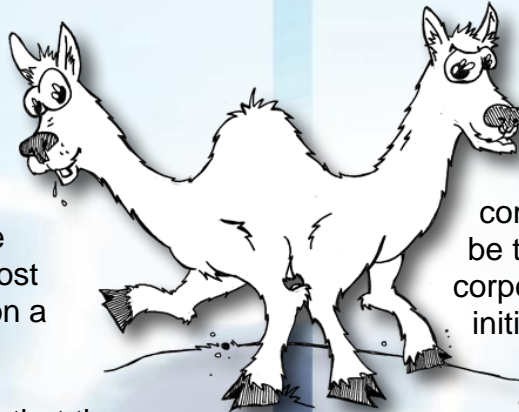
You Must Give

Attention. Think about that in terms of your business.

Many small businesses have the luxury of knowing most of their consumers on a personal as well as professional level.

Frequent is the case that the larger a business gets, the less connected it is with their individual consumers. While a diligent salesman may have a Rolodex full of anniversary and birth dates, that may not be workable on a larger corporate level. So what does?

Other **SPROUTS** recommended in this ebook deal with heightening your value by [Being A Conduit](#) or [Upping Your OV](#). Good ideas. In terms of giving attention, remember that most people enjoy being celebrated for their accomplishments. Hallmark Cards, Inc is probably never going to



know all the valedictorians their cards may go to, but local Hallmark shop managers would be wise to call local high schools in May and feature those students in signage at their stores – maybe even host a

celebration at their store for the top grads and their families and friends. What would that say about store's connection with its community? What would be the net gain for Hallmark corporately to set that as an initiative for all its stores world wide? Insurance agents definitely know when Junior or Sissy get their driver's license. Would sending a note or gift of congratulation to a young driver bursting with pride create a lasting impact?

The larger the company (economically and/or geographically), the broader the nature of attention given. Consider how Disney celebrates Super Bowl winners. Before the last strip of confetti hits the ground, an ad is on TV with the MVP announcing they're "going to Disneyworld". That's old fashion attention giving to get attention – a push to get a pull.

ROUND UP A POSSE

In the good old days, when a beleaguered sheriff had to round up the bad guys, he deputized half the county. In the shows I watched as a kid, the sheriff always got his man. (Not so much anymore, but that's another ebook.) That still works in a very real way. I once sold a house in a lukewarm market in less than 72 hours. How? I rounded up the posse.

We tend to think about touting the things we sell to the people who buy them.

Every once in a while, we discover we have allies in the sales process. Who cares most about a house going up for sale? The neighbors! They are interested parties with a stake in the outcome. Rather than contracting an agent (who wasn't anymore interested in my house than the dozens of others they have listed) I deputized the neighbors. I printed up fliers featuring my house and led with this headline: **Pick Your Neighbor and Get \$1000**



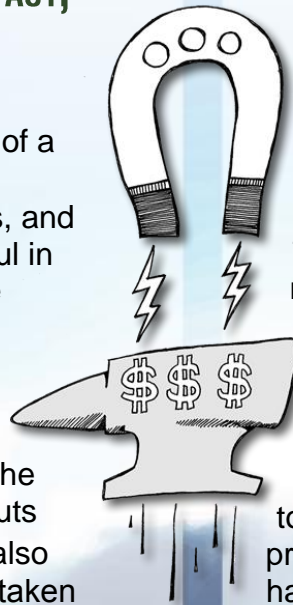
For Doing It. To make a long story short, I had a buyer in less than 72 hours and a month later I wrote a \$1000 check (instead of multiple thousands in real estate commissions) to the 14 year old girl who lived next door who told her BFF to tell her house-shopping parents to check out the neighbor's house!

Who's your posse? Who are the people in your universe who have a vested interest in talking up your goods / services? Deputize 'em and enjoy the results of an energized and incentivized "sales" force.

WHEN YOU MAKE A CONTACT, MAKE A CONNECTION

This **SPROUT** is at the heart of a CD I hand out liberally to business clients, prospects, and people who might be helpful in referring me to prospective clients. The CD features a budding young artist I'm helping promote. The CD features this ebook, and an offline website (all the files are on the CD) that touts Good Earth Creative. The CD also includes some photos I've taken that I'm proud of and it also shares my "championship" rib rub recipe. Contrast that with the business card my competitor leaves behind. I win!

What impact are you creating with your promotional materials? Yes, you'll always need a sales sheet touting your competition-busting prices and way-beyond-excellent customer care... but what else? The **Be Interesting SPROUT** reminds us that we are social animals and we need to connect on a human level as well as on a business level. Somewhere in your marketing materials, celebrate your business history and current



culture. Tell why the business started in the first place and what have you done right to persevere? Tell the human side of your corporate story. What did you glean from the **Spread The Word SPROUT**? Are you touting your talking points in all your marketing? Are you **Upping Your OV**? Talk about your suppliers and why you use them. Talk about your consumers and why they consistently patronize you? Tell their story in a way that touches on the aspirations of your prospective consumers. (Don't have a compelling story? Make up one like **my favorite restaurant** did!)

If you are in a face-to-face business, make a lasting impression by sharing your well-earned wisdom and insights. People always appreciate a reliable recommendation for a good book, movie, restaurant, musician. Tell people what websites are helpful to you and what brands you rely on to deliver exceptional value. All these are touchpoints that may not relate to the pure economic transaction between two parties, but they definitely celebrate the human element that is at the core of all successful enterprises.

NOW FEATURING!

Old movie theatres promoted their current and coming attractions on colorful and brilliantly lit marquees. But if the movie was a dud, no amount of signage could bail it out. Does what you feature matter to your consumers or your marketplace in general? In the [Be Good For Goodness Sake](#) **SPROUT** we talk about putting your best, civically-conscious foot forward. What else can you feature about the way you do business that matters to your consumers. Depending on what is appropriate in your industry:

- Feature Your Accountability Practices – if you have a fiduciary responsibility to your clients, assure them that you have measures in place to protect them.
- Feature Your Privacy Protection – if you store or process any kind of consumer data, assure your



consumers that their privacy and safety is your utmost concern.

- Feature Your Email (virus) Protection – tout the tools you employee to protect the people who communicate with you safe from ETDs.
- Feature Your Corporate / Employee Accomplishments – build a corporate brag book. Where did you rank in the latest industry survey (performance, satisfaction, effectiveness)? Build that information into all your communications.

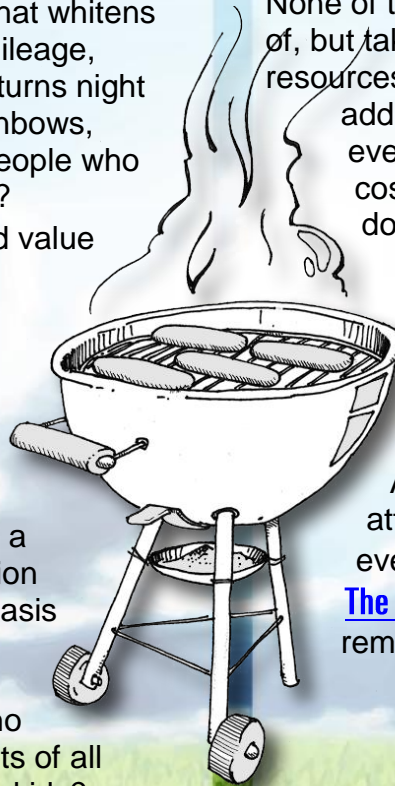
- Don't forget to [Be Interesting!](#) Celebrate the accomplishments of your employees and their families. If the accountant's husband just won "Best Pie" at the county fair, distribute his recipe!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY?

Businesses ask a lot from their patrons – their money. Besides the latest, greatest product that whitens teeth and extends gas mileage, besides the service that turns night into day and rain into rainbows, what do you do for the people who keep the register ringing?

Up Your OV and add value to what you bring to the marketplace by going above and beyond for your consumers. Consider the value of the following scenarios:

- An orthodontist hosts a customer appreciation event with an emphasis on networking opportunities for business people who happen to be parents of all those snaggle-tooth kids?
- A regional distributor offers regular, hands-on product demonstrations.



- A financial consulting firm hosts free seminars on topics of interest to high net worth clients.
- A manufacturing enterprise sponsors user-groups and soliciting input.

None of these scenarios are unheard of, but take them further. What resources do you have to provide additional value to these events? Can you co-op the cost of premiums, free product, door prizes? What would you gain if you incorporate hospitality (food and beverage) into the mix? Add entertainment and make the event a memorable experience. And don't forget to send your attendees away with plenty of everything they need to **Spread The Word** about what a remarkable company you are.

PUBLISH AN eBook IN YOUR AREA OF SPECIALTY

Do you need a really great example to follow?

Knowledge is power. By teaching, informing, illuminating your marketplace about your products and services, you empower them and that's a feeling they like. They'll thank you for it.

In what areas do you have expertise and in what areas does your marketplace lack or need additional information?

- A health care provider could talk about first aid pertinent to their region or advise on early detection of diseases in their area of specialty.
- A manufacturer could summarize their processes and demonstrate how each decision they've made benefits the client / consumer.
- A knife-maker could talk about the relative merits of different metals.
- An insurance company / agent could spell out the differences



between types of insurance and explain what is appropriate and when (target distribution to high school and college grads).

- A real estate firm could do some “dream-building” by photographing newly decorated rooms in recently sold homes (co-op the cost with home furnishing stores and target apartment dwellers).

If you run a business, you (*better*) know something that has value to your potential consumers. ebook that knowledge. What's that? *“Most of that information is already ‘out there’.”* Great, that means producing your own ebook just got a lot easier! Just get permissions, acquaint yourself with “fair use” guidelines, and build your book from existing bricks. And whatever is already out there lacks one thing – the most important thing. It doesn't point potential consumers to you.

BE PROGRESSIVE

If you are in a service industry, the Progressive Insurance Company has a long-running series of television commercials that suggest an important way of marketing your services. Although property and casualty insurance is an intangible service, Progressive features customers walking through a “store” where policies are shown as well-branded boxes on shelves. A store clerk refers to the boxes and talks about the package contents. It’s an effective concept because it communicates the features and benefits of an intangible service in a tangible, familiar way.

This is an important strategy for service providers to consider. A typical retail package attempts to communicate two things: the contents of the package and the features of the product. Beyond that, the packaging needs to be attractive, memorable, and reinforce corporate branding.

What if your services were packaged and offered for sale in a

brick & mortar store? How would you package your goods? How would the design advance your corporate identity and branding? How would you describe the contents of your packages? How would you articulate the features of your product in the finite space of your packaging?



This little flight of fancy is actually an important step in conceptualizing how your services are marketed. Insurance policies have multiple ingredients. Bank accounts have important features. Memberships have varied uses. Professionals provide benefits beyond the specific service rendered. Consultants need to create a sense of “what you get” that is clear in the mind of the client. Social and civic organizations

increase their value by enumerating specific benefits to their participants.

So grab a shoe box, wrap it in white paper, get out your crayons, and have fun developing a tangible representation of your service.

Who's Working For You?

An important component of a marketing strategy is to get people thinking about you early and often. Remember the [Round Up A Posse SPROUT?](#) There we talked about “deputizing” interested partners to help spread the good word about you. There is another way to tap resources in your community to boost awareness of your organization.

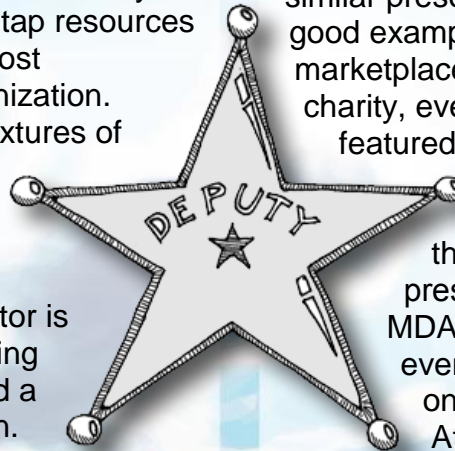
Think about the fixtures of your universe. It may be a park if you are local or a benevolent foundation on a national level. The important factor is that you identify something that has prominence and a very positive connotation. Now, associate yourself with that.

Got a local park or attraction that the community holds in high esteem or *positive* regard? My community adores the [Deanna Rose Farmstead](#), a petting zoo that families flock to throughout the year. I suggest that businesses feature the park in their corporate communications as a great activity for

families. The business could go as far as occasionally distributing complimentary passes. The outcome is that every time the zoo is featured (in their own or other publicity), it vicariously promotes the business in return. Now Deanna Rose is working for Acme Corp.

If you have a larger footprint, identify an organization that has a similar presence. Charities are a good example. When you lead your marketplace in supporting the charity, every time the charity is featured, it reminds people of you as well. (Hint: Find an organization that has a consistent presence. Jerry Lewis' MDA Telethon is a grand event, but it only rolls around once a year.)

Attach yourself to something that enjoys a high regard in your marketplace and that organization will return the favor by keeping your marketplace thinking about you.



AND NOW, A WORD FROM YOUR AUTHOR

I trust this ebook has inspired you to create a greater presence in your marketplace. From beginning to end, the **SPROUTS** suggested here will make a difference. I hope you'll give serious consideration to implementing what works for you.

The most important tool you need is ***a comprehensive marketing strategy*** with tactics that you faithfully employ over time to drive consumers to your fantastic solutions. That's where **Good Earth Creative** comes in.

Clark H Smith

Good Earth Creative serves our clients through:

- comprehensive marketing / advertising campaigns
- branding / corporate identity
- media / public / employee relations
- copy writing / creative content
 - print materials
 - radio / tv / media
 - corporate / inhouse communications
- video design & production
- graphic / print / package website design
- experiences



Impact in your marketplace in a more significant way?

Contact **Good Earth Creative**

913 710 3995

clark@goodearthcreative.com

www.goodearthcreative.com

And we remind you, this **SPROUTS** ebook is **free**. Please pass it along.

Direct link: www.goodearthcreative.com/sprouts.pdf