

# Marketing Disciplines

How to choose the right marketing programs for your business

## Know Where to Market Your Products, Services and Company

Where will your best customers come from? How will you reach them? Many businesses jump into marketing activities without having clearly defined their target market. Unfocused and un-targeted marketing programs are a sure way to waste your company's time and resources, and probably will leave you thinking "marketing does not work".

## Marketing does work!

Think about it – what makes you select a vendor for your own business? If you receive information from a company that clearly shows that it understand the business you are in, you'll be much more inclined to evaluate and select them rather than the vendor who has not even bothered to learn about the products and services you offer.

Doing research on your prospective customers is the first step in getting your foot in the door, and we can't stress enough the need to conduct a thorough market analysis, to uncover not only the needs and purchasing habits of your customers, but to also find out how your competitors are positioning themselves.

Which industries have you been targeting so far? We often hear our clients tell us that they do not need to focus on any specific industry, since their products and services can be used by all types of businesses. So what are the advantage of marketing to an industry as opposed to individual customers? You'll build industry-wide market recognition for your company, you'll be able to obtain references that will be very relevant to the next customer in that



same industry. The vertical press will also be more inclined to publicize your customer success stories, new product launches, expansions and other company news, as they know that their readers will understand and appreciate articles that might affect their own business. And you might very possibly benefit from starting a trend: if your product or service helps a client become more competitive, chances are that his competitors will be interested in making similar gains, with your help.

## Real customer surveys!

Many businesses conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys, which most often take the form of five of six canned questions with a scale of 1 to 5 for least-most satisfactory.

This is not what we are talking about here.

We suggest that all businesses should conduct full customer surveys with the objective to uncover your customers' strategies, focus, purchasing habits, budget cycles and the like. These surveys should be conducted every two or three years, interviewing your most and least active customers, and your lost customers as well. If you've not asked a customer why he has discontinued using your company's services, you are missing a big piece of the marketing puzzle.

Prepare a list of up to 30 questions, work with staff from various departments to gather their input. Organize these questions by category then prioritize them. Narrow them down to no more than a dozen. Once you've prepared

your list of customers, think of an appropriate gift to thank them for their participation. Capture every single comment from your customers, you'll want that raw data for your analysis. You'll want to be looking for trends such as intervals between orders, frequency of orders, time of year for the best orders, etc. This will help you time your marketing programs.

### Advertising

Tight budgets do not really allow for advertising campaigns. That's right: if you're thinking about placing an ad in a magazine, you really need to think about a campaign. The advertising industry has over the years demonstrated that a prospect takes action following the 7<sup>th</sup> contact: repetition is key in advertising, and it works very well for consumer products. Repetitive advertising placed in vertical magazines also works very well for specialized products, especially when the ads contain a very clear call for action. An ad that is a component of a larger marketing initiative will also do well in most markets.

So what's a company to do? Decide what your marketing budget should be, and how much of that budget you are willing to commit to advertising, knowing that you'll have very limited means to measure its effectiveness (unless you're are willing to commit even more dollars to conducting an effectiveness survey!).

### Trade Shows

For well-established companies, participation in trade shows has become a staple of their marketing initiatives. They have a lot to loose by not showing up: their current

customers will wonder if they are doing poorly, their competitors will happily be speculating along the same vein, the trade press will show up and join in the rumor mill. Rather than not showing up at all, consider a much smaller presence.

But what about a small company that would like the exposure but is concerned about the return on its investment? We recommend walking the show(s) you are considering, to gauge the quality of the audience, and to learn about the promotional activities that the trade show organizers are putting behind their event. Then decide which trade show is the right one for you. If you must decide quickly, then at least consider calling up a few of last year's exhibitors, those are not in direct competition with you, to get their feed-back. Like investment advice, last year's results will not predict the future, but you'll be armed with insider information to help you make the best decision.

### Public Relations

It's all about getting publicity. So don't just think press releases. Press releases done right are a great way to get your company in the news. But there are lots of other informative methods to get published. Become an expert in your field, give speeches, write articles, offer to moderate discussion panels, run seminars. And don't forget community-related publicity, it's an often overlooked

initiative that can get your company lots of positive publicity.

### Direct Response

Traditional direct mail programs and online marketing campaigns are all examples of direct response initiative. They are measurable, which is why most marketers are avid proponents of these programs. And so are we. Carefully planned and executed direct mail campaigns can directly contribute to the growth of a company, by bringing in qualified leads, reinforcing corporate branding and identity, and maintaining a positive relationship with existing customers.

### What else is there?

These are just a few of the most widely deployed marketing programs, but there are so many more to consider: seminars, road shows, radio, TV, partnership marketing, channel marketing, web marketing, promotions...

Whatever you choose to do, it ultimately has to fit into a bigger picture to truly benefit your business.

For more ideas on how to build a cohesive plan of actions or to conduct an internal review of your existing marketing initiatives, check out the [Resources](#) page on our website.

**Turfbuilder Marketing can help you prioritize and plan your marketing programs – simply call us at 508-366-9212 or email us at [brigitte@turfbuildermarketing.com](mailto:brigitte@turfbuildermarketing.com) to get a jump start on these critical business-generating strategies.**