

The Building Blocks to Effective Marketing

By Julie Chance

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The Building Blocks to Successful Marketing
It's More than Sales and Advertising

By Julie Chance

Whether you're a Fortune 500 company or a one person shop, to be successful, you must have a marketing strategy and you must implement it consistently. However, it doesn't have to cost a fortune and you don't have to be a creative genius.

The key is developing a marketing strategy that forms a solid foundation for your promotional efforts. Implementing promotional activities such as advertising, direct mail or even networking and one-to-one sales efforts without a marketing strategy is like buying curtains for a house you are building before you have an architectural plan. How would you even know how many curtains to buy or what size they needed to be?

You can develop a strong marketing foundation by:

- **Defining your product or service:** How is your product or service packaged? What is it that your customers are really buying? You may be selling web-based software tools but your clients are buying increased productivity, improved efficiency and cost savings. And if you offer several products or services which ones are the most viable to promote?
- **Identifying your target market:** Everyone or anybody might be potential clients for your product. However, you probably don't have the time or money to market to Everyone or Anybody. Who is your ideal customer? Who does it make sense for you to spend your time and money promoting your service to? You might define your ideal customer in terms of income, age, geographic area, number of employees, revenues, industry, etc. For example a massage therapist might decide her target market is women with household incomes of \$75,000 or more who live in the Uptown area.
- **Knowing your competition:** Even if there are no direct competitors for your service, there is always competition of some kind. Something besides your product is competing for the potential client's money. What is it and why should the potential customer spend his or her money with you instead? What is your competitive advantage or unique selling proposition?
- **Finding a niche:** Is there a market segment that is not currently being served or is not being served well? A niche strategy allows you to focus your marketing efforts and dominate your market,

even if you are a small player.

- **Developing awareness:** It is difficult for a potential client to buy your product or service if they don't even know or remember it exists. Generally a potential customer will have to be exposed to your product 5 to 15 times before they are likely to think of your product when the need arises. Needs often arise unexpectedly. You must stay in front of your clients consistently if they are going to remember your product when that need arises.
- **Building credibility:** Not only must clients be aware of your product or service, they also must have a positive disposition toward it. Potential customers must trust that you will deliver what you say you will. Often, especially with large or risky purchases, you need to give them the opportunity to "sample", "touch", or "taste" the product in some way. For example, a trainer might gain credibility and allow potential customers to "sample" their product by offering free, hour long presentations on topics related to their area of specialty.
- **Being Consistent:** Be consistent in every way and in everything you do. This includes the look of your collateral materials, the message you deliver, the level of customer service, and the quality of the product. Being consistent is more important than having the "best" product. This in part is the reason for the success of chains. Whether you're going to Little Rock, Arkansas or New York City, if you reserve a room at a Courtyard Marriott you know exactly what you're going to get.
- **Maintaining Focus:** Focus allows for more effective utilization of the scarce resources of time and money. Your promotional budget will bring you greater return if you use it to promote a single product to a narrowly defined target market and if you promote that same product to that same target market over a continuous period of time.

Before you ever consider developing a brochure, running an ad, implementing a direct mail campaign, joining an organization for networking or even conducting a sales call, begin by mapping a path to success through the development of a consistent, focused marketing strategy.

Strategies-by-DESIGN is a Dallas based firm that helps small and medium sized businesses Map A Path to Success by providing consulting, training and skills based coaching in the area of marketing strategy development. For more information go to www.strategies-by-design.com or call 972-701-9311.

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