

A Smarter Brand of Management

Making Effective Use of Your Marketing Resources is the Key To Success

By CHRISTINE L. PILCH

It is common for people to use terms like sales, business development, advertising, and marketing interchangeably. However, savvy presidents and CEOs know that each requires a specific skill set, and very few people possess all of them.

Mixing them together into a common function can be a wasteful business practice. To understand why, it is helpful to understand the functions of each and the unique qualities of a successful candidate.

Marketing

The essence of marketing is educating the market about your product or service. Your marketing specialist begins this step-by-step process with positioning, which is the identification process by which you determine specifically who your customers are, where they are, and what they want and need. The next step involves pinpointing what is unique about what you have to offer your customers and why you can do it better than anybody else.

This is important because simply stating that you offer a product or service creates a, 'so what,' attitude in the minds of your potential customers, if they notice you at all. You must give them a reason to seek you out. Your goal is to package yourself exactly as they want you to be. Remember that marketing is entirely about your customers' perception of you, not self-perception.

Once the initial groundwork is done, you can then develop a tagline that grounds your message and burns into the minds of your target demographic. Next is development of your logo and a method for its use. This is the solid beginning of your brand development. From there, marketing materials may be designed and advertise-

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ments may be created which speak directly to your pre-determined targeted customer. Your brand is woven into everything you communicate about your product, and it must be carefully protected to present a consistent message, which clearly defines your image.

A wide umbrella, marketing often encompasses advertising, public relations, Internet, collateral, direct mail, sales promotion, telemarketing, and tradeshows. The ultimate goal of marketing is to communicate your company's message so effectively that when a targeted customer, consumer, patient, user, or client needs or wants whatever your product or service provides, he or she thinks only of coming to you.

Marketing people are strategists focused on the long-term. The best ones are methodical and not reactionary. They have confidence in their well-crafted message, and have thoroughly researched all possible options for getting your precise message out there. They develop a plan based on optimal impact mediums determined by research, and they orchestrate its phases through the various marketing channels. They stay the course despite internal turmoil or competitor reaction.

eMarketing

The advent of the PC and the Internet opened a whole new medium over the past decade or so, in addition to traditional radio, TV, newspaper, and magazines. Various electronic marketing

options have evolved like a whirlwind, with today's preferred method quickly eclipsed by tomorrow's emerging technique. The effectiveness of Web site banners, popup ads, and E-mail spam were rapidly diminished as the public rejected such intrusions. Today's hot techniques include purchasing keywords on search engines and the utilization of blogs and RSS, or Really Simple Syndication, software that pushes blog postings toward subscribers.

But it goes even deeper than that. Your marketing specialist knows that emerging-media marketing technologists understand that today's best Web sites are built with strategic search engine optimization techniques, and search engine strategy is becoming a specialized entity unto itself. As search engines continue to evolve their ranking matrix, the race is on for your company to stay on top of its marketing game. Even Web sites built as recently as two or three years ago may contain ancient technology and not rank well with popular search engines. If you rely on the Internet for business and you do not have an advisor who is comfortable with this cutting edge media, you are in danger of your competition increasingly outranking you.

Advertising

While marketing is broadly defined as the educational side of things, advertising is the tactical component. Advertising can change monthly, weekly, or even daily. It is the physical message

that you put forth containing an offer and call to action. Print and traditional electronic media are the most common examples. The print options are diverse, spanning the gamut from newspapers, trade journals, magazines, newsletters, direct mail, shared mail, postcards, and specialty mailers. Traditional electronic media, or more specifically, TV and radio, offer an assortment of options too. Ads of various length, IDs and specific sponsorships are popular options.

One who handles advertising within your company does so under the direction of marketing, but an advertising specialist has specific knowledge and tasks. The best advertising professional thoroughly understands all media and creates media plans based upon goals, budgets and direction from the marketing department as to which media to target. He or she researches rates and places media buys to maximize impressions upon a predetermined demographic and within a specific budget. This specialist understands things like share, thousands and ratings points, which are used to negotiate the best possible media buy for your company.

Advertising people may also be involved in the development of a marketing campaign and the resulting advertising material. There is often a blending of marketing and advertising within smaller companies where there is no budget to separate these functions, so everything from market research, to positioning, branding, campaign development, individual advertisement creation, and placement may be directed by a single person.

Public Relations

Public relations (PR) is another important component of crafting your image. It is the process of uti-

lizing the media to champion your product or service. PR is done on a time-sensitive basis through press releases, which announce press-worthy news about your product or service, or offer your expert commentary about something news-worthy.

It is also facilitated through long-term relationship-building with members of the media, who will then call upon you when the need arises. If done properly, PR positions you as the expert, the go-to company for your product or service, because your target market perceives you this way. Again, marketing is all about public perception, and PR facilitates that. Best of all, PR is free and the most believable form of promotion.

PR specialists possess excellent written and verbal communication skills. They are comfortable in public situations, poised, and cool under pressure. They have a thorough understanding of your company's message, are able to 'think on their feet,' and are proficient at presenting you in the best possible public light. Under the large umbrella of marketing, PR is another department that may be blended into the responsibilities of

a single person in companies too small to divide the functions.

Business Development/Sales

Business development is the term du jour for sales, akin to account executive or account manager. These folks are responsible for bringing business through your door in the most literal sense. They utilize tactics such as telemarketing and canvassing businesses and homes to sell your company's product or service.

Business development individuals are specialized, 'Energizer Bunny' kind of people who persevere despite the sometimes frustrating challenges of selling. They are motivated by the thrill of closing the deal, and they thrive in a situation where they are selling an interesting product that they can get excited about. The best business development people absolutely love selling. They need to be out selling and can barely tolerate what they consider to be wasted time spent in an office.

Allocation of Assets

Merging your business devel-

opment with your marketing makes about as much sense as having your accounting professional go out on a service call. The most efficiently managed companies maintain a strong relationship between these inter-dependent departments, but recognize that a sales person does not always see the big picture. The focus that makes him or her effective at selling your company's product or service may preclude his ability or willingness to evaluate the master plan.

Business development people are not typically strong candidates to manage a marketing function. Their job is to sell. That is what they are really good at, and your company needs them in this critical function.

Marketing strategists, on the other hand, do not tend to be comfortable with the task-focused process of selling. They thrive when they are free to continually evaluate and orchestrate all options to get your message out there in front of the demographic most likely to want or need your product or service. They then put together the tools your company needs to sell, such as feature and

benefit sheets, product slicks and sales sheets; all with major copy points, carefully and properly branded to augment your identity.

Even if your company is small and money is tight, you can afford the best marketing expertise if you carefully choose your players. While it is tempting to economize by combining your marketing, advertising, public relations and sales functions, the result will likely be reduced revenue, as professionals are required to split their time and perform functions that are not their core competency. Marketing specialists are available to come in, analyze your marketing machine and institute a plan, which may then be maintained by in-house staff. This cost-effective solution may be the answer to thousands of wasted advertising dollars that you may be currently spending on poor campaigns from misguided strategies. ❖

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