

Play It One-on-One

Consistent
marketing for
customers
new & old

By Brad Good

It is no secret that every business wants to find the magic solution that will profitably increase business year over year. We have all sought that proverbial silver bullet. However, in nearly 20 years of working in the marketing and direct marketing industry, I can offer this advice on finding the silver bullet solution to marketing: You will probably find it with a leprechaun and a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

Now that the bad news is out of the bag, here is the good news: There is a next-best solution and it is actually fairly simple. Just stay in touch with your customers and do it in a personal, one-on-one way.

You may be wondering what this means and how it affects your marketing budget—both valid concerns. It does not mean breaking the bank or changing what you do in an uncomfortable way. It does mean marketing routinely and intelligently in a targeted way, while keeping relationships with customers and prospects open and consistent.

A tragic loss in this information age is the art of personal relationships and communication. Customers are inundated with tens of thousands of messages every day. The little coupon you tried in the local paper or pennysaver, the postcard you mailed once to everyone to see who responded, the phonebook ad you overpaid for—all probably disappointed you from a results standpoint or showed serious signs of staleness, with declining response.

This is because your customers and prospects have probably heard of you and even recognized your trucks or branding, but when the time came to act, they knew nearly nothing about you. They had not heard from you for so long that they decided to call someone else. Someone else who communicated with them on

a regular basis; someone else who understood that they might not be ready to buy now, but reminded them that they will be there when the time comes; someone else who knew they would be forgotten unless they were in the forefront of a customer's or prospect's mind.

Marketing Frequency

The closest thing to a silver bullet solution is maintaining the one-to-one marketing relationship: the consistent process of staying in the forefront of a customer's or potential customer's mind, using regular and multiple impressions. It is important to market at least quarterly, if not monthly, to prospects and current customers. Ask yourself these questions:

When does a prospect become a customer, and why? It could be long sales cycles, emergencies, life events or new information.

When does a previous customer become a repeat customer, and why? You should nurture relationships and cycle customers into marketing triggers such as scheduled maintenance or service, accessories or add-ons associated with specific products, and the timing of reorders. Perhaps the life of an original product is coming to an end and it is time for an upgrade.

Can you predict when a potential customer will need your services, and how? The answer to this question is twofold. You cannot always predict when a specific customer will need your product or service. You can only predict that, if you are staying in a continuous one-to-one relationship to your customer base, chances are someone always will be in need of your product or service—whether it is a regular purchase or an emergency.

Catching Customers

Keeping your marketing fresh and consistent is the key to catching

those opportunities. Your potential customer has seen you and knows who you are. He or she now is looking for you when it comes time for a buying decision rather than doing a cold, generic search online, quite possibly netting the competitor with the largest pay-per-click budget.

Research shows that it takes at least 12 impressions for a customer to begin to remember who you are. That means your marketing needs to be timely, direct and targeted. Do not waste time on a prospect that is out of your targeted demographic or geographic area. There are many tools available for taking a look at the best customers in your base and finding more just like them. Understanding which common traits your best customers share will help you find more like them, speak to them properly and design your marketing around their particular lifestyle and interests.

To recap, here is my advice:

- Understand your customer demographic scientifically and thoroughly.
- Design your marketing to appeal to your audience.
- Keep your marketing consistently working for you in the background.

Staying consistently in the forefront of your potential customers' minds is the closest thing to a silver bullet solution. When you have a one-to-one relationship with your potential customers, you will be more likely to hear from them. Keep your marketing consistent and it will keep your business profitable. *wqp*

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