



Four Simple Ways to Improve Your Marketing

Let's be clear. Marketing IS NOT advertising. It's also not PR email blasts, slick brochures, or flashy web sites. How much of the junk in your spam folder came unsolicited? Many clueless PR agencies are still blasting out dreck, with no regard to content or receivers' interests. (As a female blogger, I get spammed on everything from diet aids to kid's toys. NOT interested.) A brochure never closed a deal (you may not even need one in today's virtual Google world.) Some of the worst web sites are the most "creative." (Who cares if the site won awards? It's broken if it doesn't produce *business* results.)

Advertising and such are *tactical* activities and need to be coordinated, consistent in message, and integrated....and you don't need to do all of them or spend a lot of money to be successful. You may, however, need to change your perspective to improve your marketing.

1. DO NOT think of marketing as something you "do." Marketing is a process not a promotion. As I frequently tell people, marketing is NOT advertising, pretty brochures, a cool logo or PR. Rather, marketing is everything and anything that helps or hinders the sale of your product or service.

When I marketed computer support services, I spent many hours with Operations, ensuring that:

- We could actually deliver on the services we were selling;
- that operations knew what we were selling so they could deliver.

If the field service technicians were under trained and overworked, the service suffered – and I had a BIG marketing problem (particularly since "Mary Schmidt" was listed as the HQ escalation point for service issues). Think of it this way – when was the last time *you* made a buying decision based on a company's logo or press release?

2. Don't believe in magic. Sorry, there is no magic bullet in successful selling. A well-designed ad *may* get your target market's attention – but it isn't going to automatically generate dollars. You have to do that.

3. Get real. Get out of the office. Don't rely solely on third parties for information about your target customers. The major problem with *any* survey method is people. They will tell you what they think you want to hear; what makes them look smart; and, yes, just downright lie. (That's why market analysis is as much of an art as it is a science.) Go undercover, visit your competitors' locations; call your company as "Mary Jones" and see what happens. Hang out with your target audience – listen, lurk and learn.

You can do a lot of this virtually – thanks to Facebook, Twitter and blogs. However, you still need some good old-fashioned face time – people act (and buy) differently live and in person.

4. Think of how you are different. We all look the same to our target markets. The one thing that nobody can imitate is your personality. The more two things are alike – the more important even the tiniest difference becomes. Google "innovative solutions" – you'll find hundreds of thousands of results. And, if you visit the sites, it can be difficult to even tell what the company does...don't let that happen to you.

Think how you can stand out (using common sense of course – if you're a financial advisor, it's *probably* not a good idea to show up with purple hair at your next client board meeting.) Don't be afraid to be different. You first have to get someone's attention before you can do anything else.

Note that I said "simple" – I didn't say it'd be "easy." © The simpler anything good appears, the more work you've got to put into it on the back end.