

April, 2011

MARKETING MISTAKES YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE

Every business, professional firm or non-profit organization markets in a combination of ways that may include advertising, public relations, brochures, direct mail, web sites and, of course, social media. As a result – to paraphrase an old song – “There’s a whole lot of marketing going on”.

Some of it is pretty good – Nike, McDonald’s and _____ for example. Some of it isn’t (No examples, to protect the guilty). But the difference between good and poor marketing isn’t just creativity. *Successful marketers don’t make many mistakes. Poor marketers make a lot of them.*

Here are some of the most common marketing mistakes you don’t want to make.

- **Failing to make doing business with you easy, desirable and even fun.**

When firms and organizations fail to look at their products and services from the *customer’s* or *client’s* point of view, they can easily drive business away without realizing it.

Think of when you receive poor service at a restaurant or the dry cleaner starches your shirts when you had clearly said “no starch”. Do you take the time to complain or do you just look for another restaurant or cleaner? Unless our purchase is a big-ticket item, most of us don’t take the time to complain or argue. And we’re not unique. Various studies confirm that 90% of the dissatisfied customers don’t complain; they just go elsewhere. Yet most businesses make the mistake of assuming that any customer who doesn’t complain is a satisfied customer.

In today’s competitive world, even a *satisfied* customer isn’t enough. Customers must be *delighted*. This means you must make doing business with you easy, desirable and even fun. This requires only two things: 1) Learning what your customers or clients *really* think by talking to them and surveying them. 2) Monitoring or changing your products, services and even your people if necessary to *exceed*, not just meet, customer wants and expectations.

- **Failing to integrate marketing and operations.**

Many companies, particularly smaller ones or those in high tech fields, do not have separate marketing departments. Even when they do, they often fail to integrate marketing with the other functions in the company. Yet, when it comes to operational details, the salesperson is often ignorant. On the other hand, operating personnel and technicians are generally not well skilled in communication and customer service.

The answers? Integrate marketing with operations and customer service. Educate everyone on the marketing program and what they must do to meet the expected results in terms of inquiries, orders, production and delivery of the product or service. Also realize that, while not everyone can be a salesperson, everyone can and must be a marketer – able to understand the market, listen to the customer, spot an opportunity or come up with a new idea.

- **Failing to understand the business you're really in**

Gino's started in the fast-food business shortly after McDonald's. But Gino's thought they were in the restaurant business. McDonald's knew they were, first of all, in the *real estate* business i.e., location, location, location. Gino's went out of business a long time ago (although they are starting up again). So think of McDonald's and understand the business you're really in.

- **Looking back, not ahead**

Financial statements and sales records are history; they tell you what *did* happen. Many business people only look at them. Successful marketers look ahead – projected sales, target markets, potential contributors and trends – to try to determine what *will* happen.

- **Not staying with marketing campaigns that are still working.**

Most business people get tired of their marketing campaigns long before the marketplace does. One of the great advertising executives used to say to her clients, "When you're getting tired of your ads, the market is just beginning to notice them." Constantly changing a marketing program that is producing business can be – and usually is – an expensive mistake.

- **Staying with marketing campaigns that aren't working**

On the other hand, some business people fall in love with their marketing campaigns and continue them, even when sales are declining. When that happens, something's wrong and changes are needed. Perhaps the market has changed i.e., shopping on-line instead of at a store. Perhaps the campaign is out-of-date i.e., "Where's the beef?" Or perhaps the media you are using is out-of-date i.e., print advertising vs. on-line.

- **Casting too wide a net**

An effective marketing campaign focuses on specific segments of the market. Unfortunately, too many marketers think the opposite. They want to appeal to *everyone*. This is actually counterproductive. A campaign intended to appeal to everyone generally winds up appealing to no one.

If your target market is first-time home buyers – or major international corporations – or high net worth individuals – focus everything you do on that market and only that market.

- **Not paying attention to your competition**

That doesn't mean copying them or doing exactly what they do. But if they undercut the price on one of your leading products or services, what are you going to do? Or if they come out with something new, what impact will that have on your business? Ignoring your competition can be a fatal mistake.

Robert Denney Associates Inc. has provided strategic management and marketing counsel to law firms, companies and non-profit organizations throughout the United States and parts of Canada for over 30 years. Recent Communiques, as well as information about our services, are posted on our web site www.robertdenney.com

P.O. Box 551, Wayne, PA 19087-0551 • 610-644-7020 • fax: 610-296-8726
email: bob@robertdenney.com • web site: www.robertdenney.com