

CREATIVE COMPOST

Where Great Marketing Ideas Grow

Vol. III, No. 6

FINDING New Customers...Then KEEPING Them



An effective customer acquisition and retention program is paramount to the growth of your business. How well are you doing on that front? Ask yourself these five questions:

1. Who is your ideal customer? Nope, it's not everyone. A too-broad marketing strategy is a colossal waste of time and money. Narrow your focus to the most likely prospects and go after them with a vengeance. It may take a little time and thought, but develop a profile and put a human face on it: who and where potential customers may be, what needs they have, and where they are most likely to turn for information, advice, or solutions.

2. What are the problems facing them? What makes your ideal customer happy or unhappy, and what can you do to soothe the pain or trigger the bliss? What benefits are they looking for in their lives, and to what degree will they go to achieve them?

3. What type of messages are they likely to respond to? Are your customers computer savvy? Old-fashioned daily newspaper readers? Are they early adopters or conservative "wait and see" types? Will they appreciate a clever, subtle sales message, or do you need to be more aggressive and upfront? Are they shopping on price or looking for value?

4. Where is your ideal customer likely to be found? Now that you know the type of information you need to get out, where will you put it? What does your customer read/do/listen to? Are they infomercial junkies or NPR aficionados? Will you have to hold seminars, telemarket, do a direct mail drop or a TV interview? Where are they and how can you get your message to them?

5. What is the best way to communicate with and learn from your ideal customer? Once you have your ideal customer's attention, how do you keep the lines of communication open and really learn from the relationship? Learning takes customer service to a whole new level. Anticipating a customer's desires by creating products or services before the need surfaces creates an invaluable competitive advantage — relationship longevity. Don't give your customer no good reason to leave. Better yet, give him a slew of terrific reasons to stay.

What's your website done for you lately?

It may be time to rethink your company's web presence

When your website finally launched way back when, you probably sat back and

thought, "Oh great, it's done, that's one thing I don't have to think about ever again." Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but unless your site was created very recently, it's probably time to revisit and revise. The good news here is that any updates will lean towards simplification: lose the glitz and cut to the chase.

The first wave of websites was pretty esoteric — lots of buzzword-filled content, but no clear-cut description of the business the company was in or what it had to offer. Sites were also busy showing off the available technologies — glitzy flash, dazzling animations, and the expectation that visitors would take the time to download a plug-in or wait while the site blinked that it was "loading."

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Rethinking your web presence

(from p. 1)

At this moment in time, in this difficult economy, consider the following:

- Everyone functions on “Internet Time.”
- Flash animations are the speed bumps of web travel.
- Think of your home page as your elevator pitch.
- Websites DO need a human presence to create online credibility.

To understand the concept of Internet Time, picture the amount of time the typical TV channel surfer pauses on a show before clicking onto the next. *That's* Internet Time. The mindset of your site

traffic (a.k.a. your business prospect) is therefore akin to that of the channel surfer holding the remote. If they don't see something that grabs their attention right away, they're on to the next website — perhaps never to return.

Flash introductions can be roadblocks to doing business. How many visitors leave your site before the animation has fully loaded, never even seeing your home page or what you have to offer? The key to effective animation use, if at all, is to keep it short and to integrate at least part of your main selling message within the graphic.

Think of your home page as your 20-



second “elevator pitch” — it has to grab attention and compel a surfer to put down the remote and stay for a while. You have a short time to deliver your goods, including: the who, what, where of your business, your unique selling proposition, and the name of your company. Most importantly, it should let the prospect know what you are going to do for them. How are you going to help their business or solve their problem? What will be their return on their investment if they do business with you?

Is anybody in there? The days of the virtual, faceless company are gone. While the web can still allow you to compete in the playing field with the big guns, your visitor is more skeptical these days. To help inspire confidence and credibility, I suggest you put a human face and a name behind your website. Post a picture of the principal or the entire team, including some contact names. List some of your clients, or what have you done for other companies — quantifying the results. Documenting measurable results as well as customer testimonials all enhance your online credibility and image, and bring you much closer to a sale.

Jane Tabachnick eMarketing partners with companies to help them use the Internet to market their business and grow their profits. For a copy of the full report, call (973) 509-1325 or go to janetabachnick.com.

SALES TIP: More Effective Follow-Up

How do you follow up on a proposal when you keep getting your prospect's voice mail?

According to Wendy Weiss, “The Queen of Cold Calling,” avoid this situation completely by putting your follow-up plan in motion during the initial conversation. “When a prospect asks for a proposal, part of your discussion should be about how and when you'll deliver that proposal,” says Weiss. “Once you've established the time frame for delivery, take out your calendar and say, ‘Let's pencil in a time for me to come by with the proposal and we'll be able to talk about it. Is early next week good for you or is later in the week better?’ This way, you are having a conversation about when you will meet to discuss the proposal, not if — an important distinction. Plus, the word ‘pencil’ implies that the time can be erased or changed so the prospect does not feel trapped.”

This strategy can be useful throughout the sales cycle. If your prospect says, “Call me next week and we'll set something up,” respond with “Let's pencil something in and I'll make sure to call you to confirm.” This approach eliminates the endless rounds of phone calls and telephone tag that drive us all crazy. And who wouldn't want to cut the number of calls needed to close a deal?

Wendy Weiss is a sales trainer, coach, and author of *Cold Calling for Women: Opening Doors and Closing Sales*. Contact her at wendy@wendyweiss.com.

Email Marketing: Did you get the new rule book?

Marketing to AOL customers via email? America Online's new version 8.0 could have a dramatic effect on your approach. AOL's new mailbox setup includes an

automatic filter that sorts incoming mail into four categories: People I Know (names in the user's address book), Bulk Senders (who've agreed to honor AOL's policies), Unknown Senders, and Everyone, which is the default setting. If you're marketing to a large percentage of AOL users, consider sending an email asking to be added to the user's address book. Also of concern is AOL's new "Report as Spam" button, which lets users lodge a complaint with a single click. Make sure your messages prominently feature your product name or brand in the subject line to avoid being labeled a spammer.

Put your **EMAIL** signature to work

How many emails do you send out each day? Do the math — every communication with a prospect, customer, or colleague is a golden opportunity to promote your business. Create an email signature file that (briefly!) lists products and directs customers to your website. Better yet, create a special email-only offer with a link

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right in your signature and watch the responses roll in.

Your ad: In the palms of their hands

Ever read the back of a cereal box? What about the label on your coffee cup? You're not alone! If you want an ad that's guaranteed to be seen, read, or held for at least a few minutes, try advertising on food or food packaging.

Companies like Offline Promotions can put your logo on thousands of paper coffee cups distributed to delis, coffee shops, and street vendors. And it doesn't stop at coffee — try pizza boxes, Chinese takeout containers...even wild postings and street stenciling when you're ready to move beyond food. For a fraction of the cost of a 30-second TV spot, you can make a lasting impression to far more consumers. Think about how you can get your ad into the hands of your prospects...literally.

Source: www.offlinepromotions.com

Say **HOLA** to a new audience

If your 2003 marketing plan includes increasing awareness of your products among Latinos in the U.S., a new co-op program may be for you. Carmen's Cupones y Consejos dispenses coupons as well as household advice to Hispanic consumers. Test mailings to 500,000 households earlier this year generated considerable interest — enough that publisher Walters Media Group will mail four times in 2003 to a total of 10 million households. Cost at press time was roughly \$35 per thousand for a half-page ad.

Source: www.ethnicprograms.com

THE MEDIA MAVEN **REPORT: PART II**

Whom to Reach Out to and How

Is it just an ego trip? There's more to receiving media attention than temporary gratification. Press coverage is often viewed as a third party endorsement, which speaks powerfully to the observer. Media attention also sticks around — especially the print variety, so take advantage of its longevity. When an article is written about you, make reprints. They are one of the most cost-effective marketing tools out there. Use them to communicate who you are.

Which media do you go after? PR neophytes aim for big stories in major, national venues...along with thousands of their competitors. Little steps for little feet. You will need time to hone your message, define your stories, get your facts and backgrounders together and learn the ropes. While it's great to be in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, it's also great to be in smaller or local newspapers and magazines.

One of my clients wanted more than anything to be in *The Times*, but no matter how hard we tried, we just couldn't get there. Then one day an article appeared in a small regional publication describing this client in glowing terms. The article attracted the attention of a *Times* writer who approached his editor, and *voilà* — there they were.

The days of one major media source are over. The media today is an enormous, multifaceted, interactive whole. Media people are always looking for good stories. When it comes to media placement, there is more than one way to skin a cat.

(Cont'd on back page)

Media Attention

(from p. 3)

How do I reach them? “Keep it simple, stupid” is a good rule of thumb. Having determined what your target audience reads, listens to, or watches, research and contact the key people who control those venues. Remember that these people are drowning in pitches. Tailor yours to emphasize what they are looking for. Clearly cover these points: Who are you? What are you doing? What are you trying to accomplish? Who are you trying to reach? And, most importantly, what does the editor/program director/reporter want?

One hard truth about placing your story: special events, awards, anniversaries and other celebratory occasions often don't matter to the media as much as they matter to you. Unless you are approaching your own town paper, keep in mind that every group has anniversaries and events. From the media's point of view, these announcements come at them like an avalanche, so try combining your notice with a bit of interesting information. A children's music program

plans to announce a special concert series. A notice to the press will probably get them into appropriate calendars. Blurbs about the children — 12-year-old Jane Smith will lead the class in four original compositions — may attract an editor's attention. Adding that their teacher, an area resident, is an expert percussionist, recently returned from a study of ethnomusicology in South America, will do much to secure you an article.

The media are on information overload, too! Consider the news and where you fit in. The media will work with you, if you work with them. As you develop real relationships with media people, they may even begin to call you. You know you've arrived when you hear those magic words: “Hi, what's new?” And good luck with your media relations campaign.

Media maven Jacqueline Hershops runs JH Associates, a South Orange, NJ-based media relations company specializing in media placement and strategic planning. Reach her at JHershops2@aol.com or (973) 763-7555.

Want to read Part I of the series? Go to fahouryink.com/newsletter and click on “Back Issues.”



OFF THE BOOKSHELF

Are there companies that defy the odds to convert long-term mediocrity into sustainable superiority? And if so, what are the universal characteristics that take a company from good to great? Jim Collins' new ***Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*** identifies a set of elite companies that made the transition and sustained the results for at least fifteen years. The results may surprise you: the type of leadership required to achieve greatness, thinking differently about technology, and why those who launch radical change programs are almost certainly doomed to failure. The secret to success? It's all about the people: understanding them, leading them, and tapping into their sometimes hidden strengths. Collins also offers tips for transcending what he calls “the curse of competence” to make truly effective decisions and build an organization that's destined for greatness.

Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't, © 2001, HarperCollins



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