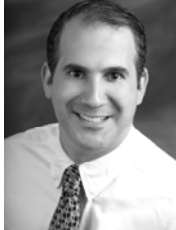


**DAVID
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Guest
commentary



Marketing strategy trumps ads alone

A joyous time of year is near. Not just the jingle bells ringing in our ears, rather the time for leaders to create budgets and marketing plans for 2007. During the season of giving, give your organization a comprehensive marketing plan, rather than isolated advertising tactics spread throughout the year.

A marketing plan is a comprehensive view of all your marketing efforts. Many organizations approach marketing budgets as an opportunity to spread their dollars as thin as possible, to reach a very broad audience.

However, a marketing plan allows business leaders to align products/services with advertising dollars, resulting in impactful marketing tactics to reach the right audiences. Without a plan, delivering your organization's brand message involves expensive guesswork.

A marketing plan is a crucial budget item and essential to create and improve:

- Company alignment
- Customer acquisition
- Brand awareness
- Customer retention

As we watch commercials during holiday football, it becomes apparent which organizations have well-defined marketing strategies and which are spending carelessly. Examples from two Fortune 10 companies help illustrate this.

Viewers uninterested

IBM Consulting complicates its strategy for its audience. Elite consulting services advertising is best for leaders who make key strategic decisions for organizations. IBM spends millions on its television commercials during Sunday football to reach an audience largely uninterested in its capabilities, rather than specifically targeting these leaders.

Compare this with Chevrolet. A new truck commercial shows images of American men working with Chevy trucks and is accompanied by a catchy song touting "this is our country." Chevrolet knows its audience, the men who buy trucks and watch football. Is it clear which organization spent more time on its marketing strategy — not just advertising?

This is not to say we have budgets of Fortune 10 companies, yet we can learn from them. However, if both spend the same amount of money on marketing this year, one may reap a greater return on investment (ROI). Essentially, one will get back more dollars than they spent. ROI has become a popular statistic to measure marketing, yet a more specific measure is response for investment. This measures the number of people responding to marketing efforts (i.e. leads generated). In our examples, it is unlikely the football fan seeks business consulting services; though possible the same audience will respond to Chevrolet's marketing.

Keep audience in mind

It is important to create a strategy keeping the audience in mind, yet mirroring corporate strategy and your organization's actions. To create and ensure organization and customer alignment, a successful marketing strategy must acknowledge customers' perception of your organization. Gaining this knowledge is accomplished through the following processes:

- Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)
- Net Promoter Score (NPS)
- Voice of the Customer (VOC)

These processes are imperative to a successful plan and strategy implementation. Gaining the most customer knowledge involves performing all three (discussed in our next article).

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