

It's Better to Ask than Assume (The Power of Market Research.)

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By Claire Cunningham

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No doubt about it. Smart marketing takes finesse. Nowhere is that truism more apt than in message definition. If you want to craft a compelling message, you need to understand your prospective buyer's motivation.

I had a boss once whose favorite saying was "Don't assume. It makes an ass out of you and me." Drove me nuts, but you know what? It stuck. It was meaningful, memorable (although corny,) and it was repeated. (A meaningful and memorable message is more likely to stick with the audience. Repetition imbeds a message in the brain.)

The communications lesson inherent in this saying is "know your audience." If you want your promise (message) to be meaningful, you need to understand what's important to prospective buyers of your product or service.

If you've been working in a particular industry or market segment for a while, you may think you know what's important. And you may be right. But why not ask and confirm your thinking? You'll get your information "straight from the horse's mouth," and you'll avoid relying on potentially dangerous assumptions.

I've snuck the term "market research" into my sub-title. Some of you may gasp and yell, "Too expensive!" I say, "Not necessarily." and "Guesswork can lead to expensive mistakes."

If you're marketing computers or fast food, your potential target audience may be huge. You'll need Research with a capital "R." Find a good research company - preferably one with experience in your industry. Tell them your needs and budget and let them put together a plan for you.

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Those of us who work in small niches can do small "r" research. Here's what I mean. Think of 3–5 questions that will help pinpoint prospective buyers' hot buttons. Call your top customers and prospects and ask away. You'll have great conversations, and you'll learn something each time you talk to someone. Develop a matrix of everyone's answers, and I'll bet you learn even more.

If you get bogged down on deciding what questions to ask or making the phone calls, call in a consultant. Whatever it takes to get information. Remember: `Tis better to ask than assume!

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Why Is Market Research Important?

By Martin Day

Market research is an essential part of any business that wants to offer products or services that are focussed and well targeted. Business decisions that are based on good intelligence and good market research can minimise risk and pay dividends and by making market research part and parcel of the business process and conducting market research throughout the lifecycle of a product or service market research will bring the following benefits:–

Market research will help you better communicate – Your current customers experiences are a valuable information source, not only will they allow you to gauge how well you currently meet their expectations they can also tell you where you are getting things right and more importantly where you are getting things wrong.

By asking the customer you not only show them that you care but you also take the guess work out of customer services.

Market research helps you identify opportunities - If you are planning to operate a new service and want to know the preconceived attitudes people have then market research can help, not only in evaluating the potential for a new idea, but also by identify the areas where a marketing message needs to honed.

Market research will minimise risk – Market research can help shape a new product or service, identifying what is needed and ensure that the development of a product is highly focused towards demand. Market research creates benchmarks and helps you measure your progress – Unless you measure you may not be able to gauge how well your business is performing. Early research may highlight glaring holes in your service or short falls in your product, regular market research will show if improvements are being made and, if positive, will help motivate a team.

Martin Day is a Director of Survey Galaxy a web site that allows anyone to create, design and publish online surveys. For more information please visit

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