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It's Not About You

By Dave Balch

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Marketing. Yikes! ...the dreaded word has reared its ugly head once more. Like going to the dentist, marketing is one of those things that everyone has to do but most people don't want to do or even like to do. It is arguably, however, one of the most important parts of your business, so you can't just ignore it and hope it goes away.

I take that back. You CAN ignore it, but it won't go away. No matter what your product or service, you simply MUST do some sort of marketing if you want to get more business.

Volumes have been written about marketing and ways of approaching it, but I recently received a letter that, frankly, left me astonished. I don't claim to be a marketing expert, although I've been fairly successful at it, but I thought it was one of the worst marketing letters I have ever seen. And it was from someone who claimed to be a sales expert, which brings up the difference between the two: 'marketing' is supposed to get someone interested in what you offer, 'sales' is the process of converting that interest into cash.

Here is the single most important thing to realize when you create marketing materials: it's not about you, it's about them. Think about that for a moment. No matter what you say or do, no matter how pretty the brochure or how fancy the web site, the person you are trying to reach wants to know just one thing: "What's in it for me?" Good marketing will tell them exactly what is in it for them.

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Tell them how they will benefit from doing business with you; what they can expect and when to expect it. Tell them that they will make loads of money from your advice, not that you need just one more customer to win a new Kia.

Here's a second tip to help you remember the first tip: start a marketing letter with the word 'You". For example, "You will be amazed at the results when you use..." or "You can help your customers and make a few bucks in the process! Here's how..."

Back to the bad letter... the first sentence completely turned me off. The first sentence! "I just wanted to give you an update on what's going on in my life." I don't mean to be cold or cynical, but who cares? Send me a marketing letter that's about me, not about you! Tell me that I'm going to make money, lose weight, or be better looking... not what's going on in your life. (I did know this person but only casually, as we had taken a class together two years ago.)

He goes on to explain what he's doing and then he says, "I believe that you, as a friend of mine, may be in a position to help me." Why would I want to do that? It shouldn't be about him, it should be about me (the reader)!

To paraphrase Dennis Miller, "I didn't mean to get off on a rant...", but you can learn plenty from a good example of a bad letter, and then you can avoid making similar mistakes.

And that IS about you.

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