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Technology's unrelenting assault on Marketing

By Frank Williams

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"Change, you know, has subtle quality. It comes upon you quietly. It creeps and you continue to pleasantly operate on the basis of old and comfortable assumptions and premises until suddenly, change explodes opportunity in front of you. And you are totally unequipped to deal with it because your ways of thinking, your concepts, your techniques, are all geared to an age that is no more!"

Source: unknown

Today's marketing leader and savvy CEO's better recognize that change is constant, even more so than last year, last month and perhaps even last week!

Time-to-market issues are more acute than ever, in some cases, causing the demise of once mighty companies. Product life cycles are measured in months, with some in weeks. Globalization is in full swing. The ubiquitous WWW continues to level the competitive playing field providing smaller firms cheaper and easier access to global markets. New markets are harder to segment causing competitors, big and small, to lurk behind every account and around each order. Outsourcing skill-sets such as manufacturing, engineering and even marketing tare at the fabric of established firms, yet must be required strategy for companies wishing to not only survive, but thrive in the business environment of the 21st century.

Technology is assaulting every aspect of your marketing mix – price, promotion, product, and place. Thinking otherwise is simply not thinking. Creative marketing groups must focus on understanding, trending, and innovating ways to use technology as a significant competitive advantage.

Innovation is key and must be applied to these emerging trends:

Techno-edge: Technology is advancing rapidly – embrace it! Market winners will be those that most effectively understand and utilize technology to their customers' advantage. Find ways to insert technology in all phases of your marketing mix – automate your sales force with CRM and SFA productivity tools but always make sure your customer benefits; look for systems that provide easier,

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and more comprehensive pre/post sales support through WWW techniques; make sure your R&D group is cutting-edge and understands how technology can solve your customers' problems – not just add low-value, "techie-type" features; innovate your distribution methods driving more channels-to-market with least cross-channel conflict.

Speed: Speed in everything your firm does – from new product development, to how many rings it takes to answer your business phone. Speed wins and technology is pushing things to get faster while raising consumer expectations on how long they should wait. I'll bet if you critically reviewed every step of your organization, you would find useless queue times and non-value add steps that don't help your customer. Look for ways to create a business that thrives on speed-of-customer satisfaction'.

Convenience: Whether you like it or not, your thinking competitors are building an edge on convenience. Don't be left behind – find ways in your business to provide unparalleled convenience to your customer. Purchasing your product via the web or gaining access to product support or the ability to download software tools 24/7 should be your norm. Many companies are allowing demo's (well done videos or actual software use if appropriate) of their product to be available 24/7 so the customer can pick their time to review the product. Can you create an advantage in your customer billing system? What other areas can you automate to benefit your customers? Look through your entire organization and find ways to make it more accessible, and portable. Consistently add ways to make it easier for your customer to do business with your firm otherwise they will with your waiting competitor.

Choice: Customers are beginning to realize that they don't have to be stuck' with standardly offered products or service if it only meets part of their need. Choice is becoming more of a market differentiation resulting in a competitive edge. Marketing leaders must realize that company growth through targeted niche markets includes finding ways to provide customized choices. And do so to a variety of customer demographics in a cost effective and highly competitive manner. Technology can greatly assist this issue.

Value-adding: Price pressures will continue to mount for your company's products and service. Reject becoming the low price quote through aggressive discounting unless you can really be the low-cost producer such as Dell or Wal-Mart. Use advances in technology to add value to your product or service. Intelligently adding features and value (which could be as easy as changing delivery pricing policies or inserting programs that make customer order status more real-time) will keep margins in tact, while retaining accounts. Your customer is assaulted with competitors daily that claim richer product features, with better prices and faster delivery. Know your customer well. CRM (customer-relations-management) or SFA (Sales-Force-Automation) tools help skilled sales force to more quickly adopt and respond to changes in customer accounts. Seek value-added' features in your new product development. Don't allow R&D to add features without a customer verified value given to that feature.

Yes, a significant paradigm shift occurred and continues to assault the way most companies operate. Capitalism has a brutal way to deal with those who miss the change and therefore are ill prepared to take advantage of opportunity – they go out of business! Creating shareholder wealth is trickier than ever, but not impossible for the marketing dude' with visions, flexibility, risk orientation and the ability to execute in the market place.

Assault Weapons Legal

By Gary R. Hess

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On Monday September 13th Assault Weapons became legal for the first time in ten years. The weapons which become legal include AK-47s, Oozies and other automatic weaponry.

This un-banning of the weapons make it easier for criminals to get their hands on automatic weapons and cause more harm quickly and abruptly than before.

The bill which made these weapons illegal was backed by more than 64% of the population to be renewed however congress and the president did not even touch the issue.

The assault weapons ban was put in place to stop criminals from getting these weapons, although it was not full proof it was proved to be very helpful in cutting down on crimes which included assault weapons.

Days before the weapons became legal Al Qaeda released another video telling its members to go to the USA and buy the assault weapons when they become legal. Since the United States is one of the only countries, especially civilized, that allows the use and selling of such weapons the USA will become a haven for terrorists.

The main reason why the bill was not renewed is the NRA, National Rifle Association. The members of the NRA have been waiting for this day since 1994. The group is so powerful to stop a weapon from getting banned because of their money and ability to persuade the public. If the members of congress were to renew the bill, their days in would be limited.

The NRA has the power to make or break the political career of any man or woman. They do this by spending millions of dollars placing negative ads against them. In return the voters see politicians as 'evil' and vote someone else to take their place. In an election year it is extremely important to the congressmen and women to stay away from such harm.

The members of Congress know that the selling of assault weapons is immoral and should be banned. The problem is that the NRA holds so much power they will not even bring the issue to the floor.

The people of the United States need a ban on assault weapons. Write your congressmen today to have this done.

Gary R. Hess is a writer at

garyr_h@yahoo.com



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