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The 7 Step Challenge – Does Your Marketing Company Measure Up?

By Peter Lawless

What makes you different? How do I know I will get value from your services? Why should I use your services, as opposed to someone else? These are questions that I get constantly.

I am sure that in your business you get equivalent questions. This article objectively looks at criteria you should use for choosing services like 3R's. I would strongly advise you to use this as a template for the products and services that you sell.

All companies are set up with one key goal in mind - to make money . Owners and investors put money into a company based on a business idea and plan. However, without continued and profitable sales they will fail.

It is essential that business owners realise how crucial it is to plan their sales and marketing effectively. This means understanding why people buy their products, who buys them, what problems purchasing those products solve, and what solving those problems enables the purchaser to do. Finally understanding how customers will put a value on the ownership of the product, as well as understanding the cost of not buying them.

In line with this, it is also very important to know the decision making process and also who their competitors are. This will impact the sales and marketing strategy, as well as pricing.

If you are not an experienced Sales or Marketing Manager, or indeed do not have the time to do everything yourself, you should look to investing in some services to compliment your own skill set. Below are some criteria, you should consider, before deciding on someone to help you generate additional business;

1. Experience - Do they have relevant experience in my type of business - Do they have satisfied customers?
2. Understanding - Do they understand what my issues and problems are – More importantly, do they understand my target market's issues?

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3. Methodology - Do they follow and implement proven processes – Will they work for my business?
4. Measurement - Do they track all results – Can I see exactly what I am getting for my money?
5. Shared Risk - Do they work on a flat or fixed Fee – Or is their remuneration part based on my actual sales?
6. Credibility - Do they sound believable - Am I prepared to trust the future of my business with this firm?
7. Integrity - How honest are they with me - Are my customer contacts, plans and aspirations safe?

And finally

8. Passion - Do they have a passion to succeed in their own business, which will reflect on what they do for my Business? Any engagement with an outside firm should be based on partnership. You need to share common values, and beliefs. While all businesses should operate to make a profit, there also needs to be a guiding principle of care and customer service.

Business Owners who need more sales and better marketing advice, turn to Peter Lawless, of 3R Sales & Marketing -

<http://www.3r.ie>

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website and subscribe to Success. We also provide free Sales & Marketing Assessments for Business Owners with an Irish Connection.

The 5–Step Web Site Marketing Plan

By Bobette Kyle

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Do you have a marketing plan for your site? If not, it may be time to think about developing one. A marketing plan helps you make the right day–to–day and long term decisions. Without one, your site is less likely to be a success.

Creating a marketing plan need not be scary or difficult. It does not require a marketing degree or a lot of experience. You do, however, need to put some quality time into your plan. Building your plan is a five step process.

**** Step 1: Gather and analyze information. ****

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You will need information about your company, competitors, customers, and other industry players. This includes all you can find about how the Internet is currently being integrated in your industry with respect to products, promotions, pricing structures, and distribution channels. From this information, you can complete industry and SWOT analyses as well as identify your target customers.

**** Step 2: Verbalize your main challenge(s). ****

Write down the main Internet–related challenges you want to overcome. Referring to these main challenges will help keep you focused while developing your plan. You may even want to write your challenges down in question form – "How do we _____?" When completed, your Web site marketing plan will answer the question "How do I address these challenges?"

**** Step 3: Develop your Web site objective(s). ****

The objective addresses the "big picture". Your objective answers the question "How will I overcome my main marketing challenge(s)?" in broad, general terms. If your company's main site–related challenge is figuring out how to use your Web site to help build client business, for example, an objective for your Web site marketing plan could be "To enhance online client service as well as build site awareness and interest with clients."

**** Step 4: Create strategies. ****

Strategies support your objective. Your strategies define the general approaches you will take to meet your objective. For example, strategies to support the above objective could include 1) improve online communication, information, and education, 2) build awareness of and interest in your company on the Internet, and 3) communicate the Web site's existence and advantages to existing clients.

**** Step 5: Choose tactics. ****

Tactics are where the action takes place – these are the things you will do to bring your strategies to life. Tactics for strategy 2 in the above example (improve online communication, information, and

education) could include 1) sharing experience and observations in your industry through participation in discussion boards, 2) offering an email newsletter, and 3) listing/submitting your site to targeted search engines and directories.

**** The Write–Up ****

Once you have your plan developed, there are numerous ways to do the write–up. If you are a company employee, there may be standards you must follow. If you are an entrepreneur, go with a style you find usable. For some ideas on what to include, read one of my previous articles, "What to Include in Your Marketing Plan Write–Up" at <http://www.websitemarketingplan.com/Arts/WritePlan.htm> .

After your initial plan is developed, you should treat it as a work in progress. Tweak and adjust as

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needed in response to changing conditions. Many companies update their marketing plans annually when developing budgets for the coming year and reviewing the company's business plan.

Whether you are a one–person shop or part of a good– sized company, having a Web site marketing plan can help your business prosper on the Web.

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