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Troubleshooting Your Marketing

By Alfred Lautenslager

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Article Title: Troubleshooting Your Marketing

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Article:

Troubleshooting Your Marketing

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Troubleshooting marketing is almost the reverse of planning your marketing. Think of all those things you would do in marketing your business, products or services, itemize them and analyze each one to see whether they are working or not. Once you understand these components, they can be isolated, changed if necessary and re-tested for contribution significance.

Usually when you feel that marketing ins not providing some results or the results you had hoped for, it is due to one of 4 primary marketing components, and guess what? It is not one of the 4 P's.

Troubleshooting Your Marketing

The 4 components to isolate, analyze, fix and test are:

- The message
- The vehicle
- The consistency of the message
- The target audience

Let's review each component.

The Message

Although sometimes subjective, you must check to make sure that the message is clear, concise and attention getting to your audience. Does it create interest, desire and is there a call to action? Does the message relate to you, your company, product or service or does it relate to the challenge that you are offering the solution for? If all is in order and the message is convincing or purposeful, consider on of the other components. Sometimes there is one or more message that is ideal for the respective marketing situation. It is still ok to test messages. Testing always is a tradeoff to what's working now. If the message you have is working now, it may be reaching your goal and you may decide not to mess with it.

The Vehicle

The definition of a vehicle is something that takes you somewhere. If it is not taking you somewhere and you want to go, you need to change vehicles. The same thing applies to your marketing. You may be using a nice letter in an envelope that appears as promotional in nature and is automatically discarded by the receiver when a postcard would do the job and be more effective. You might be trying to use television advertising when radio would be better. This is common in the business to business market. Another vehicle that sometimes is ineffective is a sales person with poor appearance, poor demeanor or poor selling skills. That would be the wrong vehicle to carry your marketing message to your customer/prospect. In today's world of technology, different audiences require different medium as compared to marketing of yesterday. This all has to be considered. If its not working and you know you have the right message for the right audience but its not getting communicated, change the vehicle, test its effectiveness and make the necessary corrections to optimize your marketing.

The Consistency of the Message

This really has to do with the frequency your message is communicated to your target audience. Someone once said to me, "I tried direct mail once and didn't get any business." There are all kinds of statistics out on how many times someone must be exposed to you or your message before they take action. Once is certainly not ideal. Most will say 6–8 times while others have said even higher. This being the case, have you given your message a chance before you stop or change it? Usually the person that tires of the message first is the marketer him/herself. Usually the target audience doesn't

remember like the sender and still has potential for impact when receiving the message. Does this mean once a day, you communicate your marketing message? Usually not but sometimes you see or hear something related to consumer brands daily, e.g. Coca-Cola. This must be measure against audiences tiring of your contacts and effectiveness. In the case of direct mail, once per month is probably optimal. In the case of direct sales, it depends on the sales cycle, the stage of the relationship and the magnitude of the sale. Different audiences will require different frequencies of messages. Each must be evaluated as to the optimum effectiveness. If it's not enough, change it. If it's too much, change it. Consistency and frequency is just one more component to be evaluated when troubleshooting your marketing.

The Target Audience

We've all heard the saying about what is heard if a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it. The same anecdote can apply to marketing when it comes to the target audience. You could have the best marketing message ever, the best vehicle over and over and if the right potential buyer doesn't receive your message, nothing gets marketed; no one acts. Putting yourself in front of a potential buyer

is the key to marketing and selling. No potential buyers? No selling. The right target audience might be the right segment, the right niche within a segment or the right people within a niche. If you are marketing to banks, are you marketing to the bank President or the branch manager? If you are marketing to manufacturers are you marketing to the operations department or the purchasing department? All this has to do with having the right target audience for your marketing. Just as a side note, don't forget about current customers as part of your target audience. Even breaking up current customer segments into different targets may be more effective for your marketing. Find the people to populate the forest and let the trees fall.

If all of the above is in order and deemed to be effective, don't fix anything. If all of the above is in order and marketing is still not being effective, then we need to revisit the 4 P's of marketing. Hopefully before any campaign you have evaluated strategically your product, distribution, pricing and promotion and advertising. Troubleshooting is not only trying to find out what the problem is, but what the problem is not. With these four components outlined, you can differentiate what is working and what is not.

Alfred J. Lautenslager is an award winning marketing/PR consultant, direct mail promotion specialist, author, speaker and entrepreneur. His businesses have helped hundreds succeed in their own businesses. He is the principal of Market For Profits, a Chicago based marketing consulting firm and also the president and owner of The Ink Well, a commercial printing and mailing company in Wheaton, IL. Al is a featured marketing and PR expert on numerous website publications including the online version of Entrepreneur Magazine and is on the small business panel for USA Today. His leadership has extended to his involvement into the community, is on the board of directors of five non-profit organizations. Al is also a business partner with two area school districts. He can be contacted through his websites at www.1-800-inkwell.com or www.market-for-profits.com or his email, al@market-for-profits.com and offers a free report on how to Instantly Add 50 People To Your Network at http://www.market-for-profits.com/free_report.htm.

Why would I read about it when I could be doing it instead?

By Mike Banks Valentine

Why would I read about it when I could be doing it instead? by Mike Banks Valentine

I spend about 10 hours a day reading and have yet to read a software manual for any of the 50 apps I have on my computer. They don't make sense to me and they insist on putting too much stupid stuff in there like disclaimers and marketing hyperbole. What good is that after you've already bought the software?

Personally, I read the more sensible "Quick Start" guides and then only skim those to get the key points. The way I use the software is usually different than that envisioned by the designers and even other users, so it really only makes sense to look up stuff when troubleshooting.

If I read the manual for my digital watch, my cell phone, my two-line digital cordless phone, my PDA, my printer and my ebook, I'd never use them for lack of time. What do I need to know more about my software for if it is serving its purpose? What I need is for everything to be a hosted app on the web and universally accessible wirelessly with built-in voice recognition troubleshooting software.

That way I could just say "Diagnose error" and it would fix itself. I don't care HOW it works, just THAT it work. If it isn't relevant to me, it isn't relevant.

Why do you think the trend is toward system on a chip (SoC)? Have you ever read the owners manual for your car? If you have. Did you learn anything? Did it make you a better driver? No need to read marketing hyperbole or disclaimers, I just want it to work. When it breaks, I don't want to learn why, just fix it please. I won't buy another one of those because it breaks too often.

I think only help-desk personnel, who would rather be hacking the Pentagon and technical writers are upset that they aren't writing best selling novels. They don't get paid as well for hacking and nobody reads the work of technical tomes of the unfulfilled writers. At least they are both being paid to do something.

In the early days of photography only scientists could be

photographers because they needed to know how to obtain and mix the chemistry, apply the emulsion to glass plates, develop those plates and do that entire process again when transferring negative image to paper. Are we any less well-off now that cameras are disposable and we can see our film in an hour without going into a dark room even once to do it?

My wife is ready to throw away her new \$1000 computer because it won't accept the password when logging on to the ISP. There is a real disconnect between the problems and the source here. That is usually the case when things get so complex. Reading manuals won't help.

I look forward to the day when the software designers realize that the users don't care how they created that amazing software and that as long as it will do what they bought it for without fuss, it will be popular and well-liked by the buying public. If it takes a day of reading, I'll go buy something that works without study instead.

Is your VCR clock still blinking? If not, I bet you still end up seeing the "blue screen of death" as often as I do.

Mike Banks ValentineWebSite101 "Reading List" Weekly Netpreneur Tip SheetWeekly Ezine emphasizing small business on the InternetSubscribe by e-mailto:WebSite101-subscribe@listbot.come-tutorial online at:
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