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**Use PR to Change Your Customers**

**By Rusty Cawley**

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When faced with customers who are either ignoring or abandoning their products, CEOs often choose to alter their products to fit demand. This is usually a path to disaster.

Altering a product is expensive and time-consuming, eating away at precious resources and profits. It also damages the strength of its brand name, confusing the consumer and widening the rift.

The PR Rainmaker understands that there are two ways of doing business. You can compete or you can create.

Most companies compete for the same set of customers. In a growing market, this works just fine. The number of available customers is going up and up, so there's plenty for anyone who is willing to get out there and fight for them.

But what happens when a market refuses to grow? Or worse, what happens when a market actually begins to shrink. Suddenly, you are fighting for fewer and fewer customers. Your pricing power vanishes. So do your profits.

Instead, companies should seek to change the customer by creating new behaviors. The best method for this is public relations.

No one understood this better than Edward L. Bernays, the father of modern PR. Indeed, according to Bernays, it is this principle of changing the public instead of the product that separates PR from advertising and marketing.

Whenever hired to sell a product to the consumer, Bernays always chose to sell a new behavior instead.

He began by quickly analyzing the public behavior that prevented his client from thriving. He then determined how the public would need to think and to act in order to benefit his client.

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Finally, Bernays would select the strategy and the tactics that would alter public opinion and consumer behavior to fit his needs.

His methods were indirect, complex and at times inscrutable. They employed front organizations, public demonstrations, letter-writing campaigns, expert testimony and other alliances.

But more often than not, they worked:

- Assigned to sell books for Simon & Schuster, Bernays enlisted experts to call for great literature in the everyday home, plus he convinced architects to include built-in bookshelves in their home designs.
- Called in to bolster the sagging luggage industry, Bernays persuaded colleges to inform their freshman students about the wide array of suitcases they would need on campus. He also hired singer Eddie Cantor to pose for magazine photos while packing a large trunk for a coming tour.
- When the hairnet industry found itself threatened by the shorter hairstyles of the 1920s, Bernays convinced health officials to require restaurant employees to wear hairnets. He also urged fashion setters and famous artists to write newspaper articles that proclaimed the beauty of long, flowing hairstyles.
- When Proctor & Gamble found that it couldn't get children to use Ivory Soap, Bernays organized national soap-carving contests for kids.
- When the bacon industry found itself being shut out of the urban American breakfast during the Roaring Twenties, Bernays found doctors to proclaim that a "hearty breakfast" of bacon and eggs is more healthful than a light breakfast of coffee, fruit and toast.

The key, Bernays said, is to get a credible champion to say what you need to have said or to do what you need to have done in order to alter the public's opinion. Bernays would build an event around this champion's words or actions, thus attracting media attention.

In this way, he would change the opinions and behaviors of consumers, and thus grow the overall market for his clients.

Bernays knew what many CEOs forget: It is always better to own a small share of a growing market than a large share of a shrinking market.

The Bernays Formula for employing the news media to change public behavior is simple, but effective:

- 1.) Use PR to generate an event.
- 2.) Use the event to generate news.
- 3.) Use the news to change opinion or behavior.

Of course, today's news media are far more skeptical than they were in Bernays' day. But they are just as easily manipulated by the PR Rainmaker who has the creativity and the moxie to put Bernays' ideas to work.

Don't believe it?

Study the media machinations of the Clinton White House.

Observe the techniques of activist groups opposing everything from old-growth forestry to global trade.

Dissect the news in national media and look for the front groups, the third-party experts and the public events that are used to mold public opinion.

You can apply these same techniques today to grow your business.

The PR Rainmaker knows what Bernays knew: If you want to attract more customers or clients, focus on changing their opinions and behaviors, not on changing your product or service.

Or, as Napoleon told his generals, "Circumstance? I make circumstance."

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## **Is It Time For A Copy Facelift?**

**By Karon Thackston**

### **Is It Time For A Copy Facelift? by Karon Thackston**

by Karon Thackston © 2003

<http://www.copywritingcourse.com>

I just had to laugh! During a recent conversation about how often you should change your copy, I had one person tell me "Well, if there were any \*good\* copywriters out there, they'd be able to write it once, and it would work forever!" Oh really? Actually, nothing could be further from the truth.

It is extremely rare for advertising copy to last for extended periods of time. Changing your copy is a given, the reason being that people and events change. Since we, as copywriters, are reaching our customers on an emotional level, we have to stay in tune with what's going on in their lives and their worlds. Let's look at an example.

Say you rent mailing lists. Your primary benefit might be that you have the largest lists available offering a minimum of 100,000 names per category. Things are going great, and you're renting lists like wildfire. But then - right in the middle of your success - the postal service increases rates substantially.

All of a sudden, your rentals begin to drop dramatically. Here you are screaming about the largest lists available anywhere, and your customer is thinking about how much his postage expense is going to skyrocket.

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The businesses you rent lists to are now very concerned. What \*used\* to be your biggest benefit is now your biggest deterrent. Your customers no longer want to rent lists that have a minimum of 100,000 names. Instead, they'd love to be able to rent much smaller lists - in the 5,000 to 10,000 quantity range. Yep! You guessed it. It's time to change your copy, USP and all!

Any number of aspects can cause a change in focus for your target customer, and therefore a need to rewrite your copy. Here are some of the more common ones for businesses:

- New tax laws
- New mandatory expenses (such as a postage increase)
- Starting a new business
- Closing a business
- Stock price increase
- Stock price decrease

Business to consumer sales can be affected, too. Personal circumstances that change every day include:

- Buying a new home
- Retiring
  
- Getting married
- Getting divorced
- Having a baby
- Receiving a tax refund
- Receiving an inheritance

What do I recommend? Twice a year, take a good, long look at your copy. What has changed in your marketplace? What laws, regulations, or events have been implemented or have taken place? Will these things have an impact on your customers? How will you respond to them?

Take that information and compare it to what your current copy says. Is your message clear? Are there benefits you need to update or change? Is your copy still making the most positive impact on your potential customers that it can?

If not, don't hesitate to make changes. After all, your copy is your key to new customers and repeat customers. And, as I said in the beginning, hardly any copy will last forever. Eventually, everybody is due for a copy facelift.

Most buying decisions are emotional. Your ad copy should be, too! Let Karon write targeted copy and ezine articles for you. Visit her site at <http://www.ktmarketing.com>, or learn to write your own copy at <http://www.copywritingcourse.com>.



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