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What Is Your Marketing Telling You?

By Kevin Nunley

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Marketing is an essential part of building a profitable business. Even if your customers come entirely from one customer telling another, your sales go nowhere unless you have a way to get the word out.

But what happens when marketing fails to do its job? You shuck out hundreds, even thousands of dollars for advertising. The ad runs, then nothing. The phone doesn't ring, Nobody comes in your store. Your web site gets no hits.

Do-nothing marketing gives you a sinking feeling. You didn't just waste your ad budget, you're also flying without any good way to bring new customers to your business. You have spent money without any assurance you will be making more down the road.

Fortunately, most marketing problems have fairly easy answers. Listen closely to what your marketing is telling you and you will discover surprisingly simple ways to fix lackluster advertising.

Problem 1. Your ad runs, but nothing happens. Most ads that fall short do so because customers didn't notice or didn't understand what your ad was trying to tell them. It's that simple. The ad doesn't communicate so people don't respond.

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Give your ad the "mother" test. Ask yourself if your mother would completely understand it. Customers are a lot like Mom. They are smart people but may not know much about your industry. What makes perfect sense to folks in your business may sound like Greek to customers.

Watch for insider jargon, long complicated sentences that mix up your meaning, or ad copy so clever it hides your main message.

Problem 2. You get response, but it is from the wrong kind of people. The folks who come in your store or email you aren't the same people who will become good customers.

For example, you advertise car covers, but everyone who contacts you is looking for bumpers. This problem is usually caused by poor targeting. Your ad might have reached a lot of people, but most weren't individuals who would buy from you. This is a common problem for businesses advertising in big newspapers or on TV. They reach a big massive audience, but not many are interested in what the business sells.

Solve this problem by putting your ad in magazines, ezines, and on radio stations and cable shows that have a narrow, specific audience that closely matches your best customers.

Problem 3. You get response from a few good prospects, but not as much as you anticipated. Instead of a flood, you get a trickle. This often happens when your headline or offer doesn't grab attention. It may not be juicy enough or loud or obvious enough.

"Come visit our online mall" doesn't turn near as many heads as "Get an instant \$100 gift certificate when you visit our online mall." My tests have found prospects jump at headlines that include big dollar numbers or free computers.

Your industry may have other hot button offers that always get response. The only way to know is to test different ads. Also pay attention to what works for your competitors. If they have used the same offer for years, it probably works like gangbusters.

Problem 4. You super charge your ad with a great offer,

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but still get only a trickle of response. Great ads don't always work the first time they appear. In fact, the first ad rarely gets an avalanche of results. Once you develop an ad that seems to be hitting home with customers, repeat it over and over.

During the many years I worked in media, we figured it took a minimum of two weeks of heavy promotion to get an idea across to our audience. It often took six weeks to really do the job right. Promoting for only a week virtually insured we wouldn't get much response (and that was with an exciting ad running EVERY hour of the day).

So what if your ad budget is just a small monthly amount? Find a good ad, then repeat it week after week and month after month. Watch closely to see if sales gradually mount. The business world is full of examples where a small business put a tiny display ad in the Sunday paper month

after month. After a year or two, almost all their new business comes from the ad.

Problem 5. Your ad pulls lots of interest, but nobody buys. We see this a lot with advertising on the Internet. A site will run a great ad in an email newsletter and get plenty of clicks, but nobody buys. In this case, the problem isn't with the ad, but with the web site. Frequently the web copy fails to do its job. The ad gets the customers through the door, but the copy is too flat, too short, or doesn't encourage customer confidence.

The same kind of thing happens in retail stores. We did a wildly successful promotion for an auto dealer. Hundreds of people came into the dealership each hour of the promotion. The store's sales people were completely unprepared for that kind of response. They stood around grinning with their hands in their pockets. Not once did a sales person offer to help the hordes streaming through the door. At the end of the day, not a single car had been sold.

Solve this problem by making sure your sales or support staff know all the details of your advertised offer. When a prospect sees your ad and calls, anyone who answers the phone should immediately know what the customer is asking about.

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Most ads fall short because of one of these five problems. All have definite symptoms and easy solutions. Listen to what your marketing is telling you. Then fix the problems and encourage your successes. You will quickly take the mystery out of marketing and make it a reliable partner.

If The Viewpoint Character Is A Secondary Character, Have You Established Who He is?

By Nick Vernon

Creative Writing Tips -

I have said above that if a secondary character tells the story of the main character, then the spotlight should be kept on the main character.

This shouldn't be taken to the extreme though.

In other words, you don't just write the story of the main character without telling your readers a bit about your secondary character.

Unless the reader understands the reason a secondary character is telling the story, it will seem peculiar that the main character isn't telling it himself. It is, after all, the main character's story.

So, the following have to be answered... Who is this secondary character? Why is he telling the story instead of the main character? What is his connection with the main character?

Weave in some information about the secondary character so we can gain a better understanding of his role in the story.

Besides his passion for writing, Nick Vernon runs an online gift site where you will find gift information, articles and readers' funny stories. Visit

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