

## Marketing...doing it right

By Gary Banko

Mention “marketing” to someone, and they probably think of advertising they see on television or hear on radio...or the telemarketers who are frequent but uninvited dinner guests. Or maybe they think about the “market research” they read about in the newspaper that has found that 78.2 percent of people between the ages of 17 and 34 use fluoride toothpaste an average of 2.3 times per day.

What does marketing mean to you? There is no “right answer” because what marketing means is what it does.

If you are in business, what marketing does is to present your product or service offering to the right customer, at the right time, at the right price, and in the right way. The right customer is one who is ready, willing and able to buy. The right price is one that agrees with the perceived value, and the right time is when the customer perceives the need for it. And the right way is...well let’s think about that...

To get to this happy place, the business manager must activate all those well-known elements of marketing: market research, competitive analysis, marketing strategy, market positioning, market segmentation, advertising, sales planning, and finally making the sale. We could dig into and explore each of these elements – and a business must do that to have an effective marketing program – but first we need to understand a common theme in all these elements. And we need to keep that theme squarely in front of us as we make our way through the marketing maze.

This magical theme, without which a business cannot succeed, is the customer perspective. Every element of a marketing program must be analyzed, developed, and executed from the perspective of that most valuable person – the customer. Remember, without a customer, there is no business.

Every product presentation, every advertisement, and every sales effort needs to be designed and delivered as viewed by the prospective customer with the skeptical question “What’s in it for me?”

It really doesn’t matter how advanced, sophisticated, or wonderful you think – or just know – your offering is. All the features and bells and whistles mean nothing if there is no benefit for the customer. In fact your prospect won’t even bother to consider your product or service unless there is a perceived need for it. Are you going to want to hear a sales pitch for a Lexus LS 430 when you need a four-wheel-drive pickup? Or an office copier?

By viewing the product or service from the buyer's perspective, a business can be sure that the product or service is presented – and even designed and developed – in the only way that means anything: as something that is valued by the customer. Once value is established, the marketing process moves to the sales-closing element.

So, to evaluate your marketing program, see yourself – and your product or service – as others see them. Is the benefit there...for your customer?

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