

Five Marketing Tips

Start the New Year off right.



by Kevin
Clancy and
Peter Krieg

MANY STANDARD MARKETING RESPONSES to tough economic times focus on the old method of short-term marketing—concentrating too heavily on hitting the numbers now, no matter the costs to long-term financial and brand health. For the new year, why not embrace the better long-term alternative?

Here are five marketing strategy do's and don'ts to help move the sales needle and keep your brand strong enough to take out the competition, both during and after the recession.

1. Maybe do/maybe don't increase your marketing spending. Whether you see any bottom-line benefit in the short- or long-run depends on a lot more than the size of the budget increase. No matter the condition of the economy, the buyer target, the brand's positioning, the ad copy, the ad executions, and the media vehicles are more important than the budget to driving revenue. In one Copernicus analysis, the firm discovered Three Sigma targeting/positioning/copy/ad execution/media vehicles yield greater effects on market share and brand equity than doubling the budget. So get all the elements of your marketing strategy lined up before considering this bold move.

2. Don't enter into the more-for-your-money race. Price is the primary consideration for only 15 to 35 percent of buyers in most product and service categories, even during a recession. Price cuts can cause serious problems if they reset buyer expectations about prices or go against a brand's image. The halls of marketing history are littered with brands that dropped their pants to make a sale in a recession only to find they couldn't pull them back up again once it was over.

3. Don't get ugly with your advertising. Going negative with your advertising and poking holes in competitors' products doesn't offer much in the way of a defensible positioning—it is quite easy for your competitor to come right back and do the same. The back and forth starts, and soon buyers have no idea who the ads are for—never mind why they should buy

either brand. If your advertising raises more questions than it answers, you're going to get tuned out.

4. Do walk two miles in your customers' shoes. Marketers should not guess at what will or won't work to motivate buyers during a recession, and instead go beyond the customer information basics that everyone in the category likely has. The brands that will win are those that know the twists and turns of the course.

5. Do find the Blue Sky/White Space/Big Hairy Opportunity. If ever there was a time when people are aware of their problems and are willing to talk about them, it's now! Figure out what people are missing and determine if you can deliver it to them profitably. In your advertising, explain how and why your brand is uniquely qualified to solve their problem. Give

people a reason to listen, and you will break through—now in tough times and when happy days are here again.

When the buyers of your products and services are struggling, your marketing efforts need to have pinpoint accuracy. Get customers to pledge patronage and loyalty to your brand and not somebody else's.

Now and for the new year, marketers can use the pressure they are under to help the company make their numbers and channel their nervous energy—not into one-off, quick and dirty marketing tactics, but into a thought-out marketing strategy to drive sales, profits, and growth. **SSE**

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ACTION: Make 2009 a great marketing year.

MANAGEMENT/PLANNING

Strategic Planning Observe the Do's and Don'ts.



by Rebecca Staton-Reinstein

MANAGERS AND LEADERS can stumble creating and executing strategic plans. These do's and don'ts will help.

- **Do follow this KISS principle:** Keep it Simple and Sustained. Your goal is to create objectives that focus your work. Limit the goals to one page.

- **Don't set too many or too detailed goals.** This leads to confusion, conflicts, and failure to execute. Don't measure your plan by the pound.

- **Do follow the plan methodology as designed.** You chose it because of its reputation. Learn from others' success.

- **Don't skip steps or do them partially.** Don't tinker with the process. You have no data to justify your changes.

- **Do focus on the mission.** It's central for planning. Before you accept a goal, ask, "How will this help the mission?"

- **Don't do things that don't fit your mission.** If you do, you will miss innovative solutions, drift off course, and become reactionary.

- **Do use brain dump to avoid starting the tactical plan prematurely.** At the beginning, list every idea people have then set them aside until you're ready to create the detailed plan.

- **Don't lay out the tasks before the mission is clearly stated.** Choose tac-

tics from the brain dump to achieve each specific, measurable objective.

- **Do measure.** Select useful measurements for all goals and tactics.

- **Don't avoid measurement because it is hard—especially when dealing with customer satisfaction, employee morale or effectiveness.** Define how to measure these intangibles to gauge progress.

- **Do measure quality of results.** This provides the best information for strategic decision making and keeps you focused on the mission.

- **Don't select productivity measures just because they are easy to define.**

Productivity doesn't tell you about the customer. Focus on quality, reduce costly rework, and be more productive.

- **Do provide resources, training, and coaching to assure everyone's success.**

People can't perform well unless they have all they need to do the job.

- **Don't dump people into situations without preparation.** Understand what the person needs to get the job done and provide it.

- **Do manage by fact.** When you are not getting the desired results, investigate the root causes, and modify your plans or targets appropriately.

- **Don't manage by intimidation, blame, or gut feel.** Find the root cause, devise a solution, and re-plan.

Harness the intellect of all employees and guide them in a clear direction. **SSE**

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ACTION: Learn the Do's and Don'ts of planning.