

How to make marketing pay

“Successful marketing should be cost effective, efficient, integrated and intelligent. Worst-case scenario, it should reduce your cost of selling or customer acquisition. Best case scenario it should be hugely profitable and deliver increasing returns by providing coherent and tangible intelligence about your customer or prospect base.” - Think Smart Marketing

Believe it or not, achieving all of this is not as hard as you might think. Here are a few pointers you may find useful.

Let's start at the beginning. Why do marketing activities fail?

Well it tends to go a little like this:

You send the wrong message, to the wrong people, at the wrong time

To compound the problem, you probably....

Used the wrong tool, at the wrong place in the sales cycle

Then...

It's decided that this approach or indeed marketing itself should be dropped for a while, as it clearly didn't work and because it cost an arm and a leg

If any of that sounds even vaguely familiar, rejoice, you're normal!

To address these common issues, we suggest you follow some simple golden rules.

1. **Set Expectations:** Marketing is an iterative process. FACT: It takes a number of touches, engagements or campaigns before new customers will buy or interact with you. Common marketing wisdom tells us this number averages out to 7. So that's seven instances of them hearing **of** you or **from** you in a range of different ways.

That means that giving up after one approach or campaign is crazy. Leave it too long between "touches" and you'll have to start all over again.

2. **Data is King:** A database is a living, breathing thing. If you don't work it, it will quickly decay and quite possibly, given the Data Protection rules and Corporate Telephone Preference regulations, dangerous. If you don't invest in it, you may as well take 50% of the money you spend on your marketing campaigns and put it on the 2.30pm at Kempton, for all the good it will do you.

Don't be lured by running glamorous events and designing glossy brochures until you've got a good database to communicate with. Every £ of your marketing budget not invested in adding value to your database, should have its own health check and business case!

3. **Get to know your tools:** You have a whole range of marketing tools available to you. Common ones include, Telemarketing, Direct Mail, eMarketing, Advertising, PR and Events. They all have different attributes and virtues. They all carry their own price tag and they all deliver return in different ways, at different stages of the sales cycle. In general, no one tool is the solution to all of your problems.

4. **Right tool right job:** The key to getting maximum return from each of your tools, is to know *exactly when* to use them. Sending your latest glossy brochure to a 10,000 name database you've rented for example, would be a costly exercise likely to net you next to nothing. Running an event aimed at board level decision makers you've never been in touch with before, is likely to net you a tiny turn out rate, some red faces and a large bill for the unconsumed bacon rolls!

Use the costly tools with traditionally low return rates, as you get closer to the "sale" or as you approach your seventh "touch". Use more intelligent, lower cost tools for those people you don't know so well.

You'll find this way you reduce not only the time, but also the cost of getting closer to the customer and to that important seventh touch.

5. **Make your website work:** As far as I'm aware, websites aren't protected by the European Working Time Directive (although I'm sure it's only a matter of time!). So make it work for you 24 x 7 x 365. If you treat it correctly, fill it with useful information and feed it regularly with lots and lots of visitors, it will become your most dedicated lowest cost sales resource.

You can rest assured that your website won't have a "bad day", won't come into work with a hangover, won't answer the phone incorrectly, forget to take down a number or mis-communicate your message – unless you tell it to.

You should be driving *prospects* into your website and pulling them out as **clients**.

If your website isn't doing that for you, ask yourself what it is doing.

6. **Credit your prospects with some intelligence:** You too are somebody's prospect. How do you feel when they send you information that has no relevance to your interests, needs or desires?

How does it make you feel when the things they send you just "flog their product"?

How would you feel if they broke into your office and shouted RING RING, RING, RING until you felt obliged to stop what you were doing and speak to them?

7. **Don't flog beans!** Even if you do happen to work for a bean supplier. People will interact with you because you *give* them something, because you *provide* them with some *information* or because you help them meet their objectives or achieve their aspirations.

It's the old Think Smart Marketing adage. "Be a purveyor of information, not a flogger of beans!"

That means make sure your website has useful information that helps people. Provide information that talks around your product or service not just about it.

8. **Be persistent and consistent:** That doesn't mean being aggressive or irritating. It means doing things regularly. Make sure you're top of mind for when your customer next wants your product or service. You'll only achieve that by being in touch regularly.

9. **Use eMarketing:** Truly, this is a no-brainer. It doesn't matter how complex (or not) your product, your service or your message. Or how highbrow or lowbrow you consider your audience. Intelligent, considered, integrated eMarketing will strip out significant cost and will deliver you staggering returns and intelligence, often without you lifting a finger. And no, eMarketing is not SPAM and it's not illegal.

10. **Don't be afraid to "give away" information:** Sitting on too much intellectual capital isn't good for your health. Have an opinion, be an opinion former, open and own the debate in your market. Very often, telling people a little of what you know, actually helps them to decide to buy from you. It demonstrates an openness to engage in dialogue, a willingness to share information and expertise freely, and without an overtly sales-driven agenda.

And it tends to indicate you'd be a useful person to talk to and great to work with. Wouldn't you agree?

It's really that easy

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