

Marketing your way to success in 2012



It's a classic business problem, particularly amongst small and medium companies. Sales slow down, and you put your

foot on the marketing gas. Sales pick up – putting pressure on operations – you take your foot of marketing.

Is this a formula for success? Of course not, it serves only as a quick-fix to plug short-term sales problems. Part of the reason is many bosses do not truly understand marketing, or the power it wields. They see it as a cost rather than investment.

Yet, marketing can transform a company. It can ramp up gross profit margins and dramatically improve net profit. It can build customer and staff loyalty. In the right hands it can increase order values, sales conversion rates and customer spend. It will help you weather the storm of economic uncertainty, reducing the peaks and troughs.

Marketing should focus on two elements: where you want to be in the future (strategic) and what you need to do right now (tactical). Let's review some of the key issues your marketing strategy needs to include.

Positioning your business
Forget how you see your business. All that matters is how your customers and potential customers see it. Perceptions matter – it retains customers, attracts customers, and creates loyalty. More companies lose customers through "indifference" than they do through bad service.

So how do you position your company and your products to build customer loyalty, value and increase revenue? First and foremost,

develop a strategy for communicating regularly with your existing customers – newsletters, reports, personal contact.

Secondly, develop a strategy to establish your industry credibility. Use good editorial PR (not puff) to achieve this. Local newspapers want to run stories on successful local companies, and the trade press will carry stories that are news-worthy and relevant to their readers. Events, sponsorship, and awards are also excellent ways of building your credibility.

PR works well because readers aren't exposed to a sales pitch, giving you more credibility. It doesn't happen overnight, but committing to long-term brand building will form the foundation of a solid, successful company with better margins and higher customer retention.

DRIVING NEW BUSINESS

Once you have a marketing process for building your brand, generating new business becomes much easier. Prospects already know about your company and have good perceptions, and are therefore more likely to respond positively to your approach.

Before you commence any marketing activity, ensure you have a good database/CRM system to record leads, track prospects and manage sales activity. There is no point wasting time and money chasing new business if you can't monitor the results.

Consider all marketing channels, not just the ones you're most familiar with. This will vary between business-to-business and business-to-consumer markets, but the key is to communicate with prospects in a way they most relate to – not the way you most relate to.

Once you've agreed your new-business strategy, invest in good creative. There's no point spending money on a marketing campaign if your prospect doesn't instantly connect and respond to your message. Change the headlines, test the copy, and

use powerful imagery and photography.

MOVE WITH THE TIMES

Let's face it, digital marketing is here to stay. Developing a digital strategy in tandem with your traditional marketing can be a powerful cocktail. From a regularly updated, fresh and engaging website to social media, email marketing and online advertising - your PR and marketing messages are equally as important online as they are off-line.

In the same way products must continue to evolve and develop, so will marketing channels. This month, for example, sees the unveiling of the Insight Index, the new search engine, supplier directory and product finder that is set to change the way people find suppliers and products in the window industry (www.insightindex.co.uk).

Step back and review your marketing. Companies will spend a great deal of time investing in a new machining centre, glass cutting table or delivery truck evaluating increased productivity and return-on-investment (ROI). The same approach should be taken with marketing. What do we want to achieve? What are the best tools to make this happen? How much should we invest and what will the ROI be?

Market leaders already know this; they do it every day. But for most companies marketing is still a reactive tool used to boost leads when turnover drops. Those companies who do adopt a more strategic approach will reap the rewards of better margins, stronger customer loyalty and a more sustainable business. These companies will be the market leaders of tomorrow.

For more information call Purplex on 01934 803132, visit www.purplexmarketing.co.uk or find us on the Index. www.insightindex.co.uk/in/purplex