

## **Juice Up the Results of Your Marketing Programs ...**

**Have you ever run a marketing program, for example placed an ad. or sent a direct mail campaign (hard copy or email) and been disappointed with the result?** Welcome to the "club" – we've all been there. It's easy to understand why business owners won't commit funds to year round marketing programs – even in the face of declining sales - when experience has convinced them these things don't work.

**Here are 3 tips that have been proven to dramatically improve results.** The trick, as is the case in so many things, lies in the execution. Remember that the goal of all promotional activities is to achieve a response or reaction from specific target customers - for example, a purchase/donation/question/request for more information. The key phrases are "response or reaction" and "specific target customer".

**First tip – test your material on some "specific target customers" and get their "response or reaction".** Too many of us look at the layout and copy for an ad. or a brochure and think "I don't like that". We do this because we – as suppliers - believe we know what our customers think and want. Yet how many of us would be insulted and annoyed if the people who make and market the things that we – as consumers – buy, assumed they know what we think? The usual reaction to that point is "We can't afford focus groups". To which my response is – you don't need them.

**Find 6 or 7 of your existing customers who you can rely on to tell you what they think – as opposed to what they think you want to hear – and test your material on them.** Come up with 4 or 5 questions – you don't want to take too much of their time – and ask them, without "leading" the person you're talking to, in the same sequence each time. For example, if you're considering a new advert show them 2 or 3 different layouts, each with its own headline, illustrations and copy. Then sit quietly and wait for their response. When you get it write it down, staying as close to the words they use as you can. Then go away and think about it – and use it. Try not to use the same customers all of the time (they have businesses to run too).

**Once you have your material, test the "list" that you intend to use.** For example if you intend to use telemarketing to contact 5,000 people who should be using your product but aren't, begin by randomly selecting 500 names and calling them. This gives you an opportunity to control costs while testing the accuracy of your database (and fine tuning your script).

**Unless you test your marketing campaigns, you run 2 major risks.** You may let the best idea you were ever presented with slip away because someone in the office didn't like it. Or you may spend your hard earned dollars on an ad campaign you should have known was not going to work long before you ran it.

**The second tip is – put something unique in the material and measure the response you get.** For example, you can use the same advert or mailing piece

several times (if it tested well) and change the “offer” slightly each time. Or attach a time limited offer to brochures you hand out at a trade show so that you can trace the response to only those people who came to your booth. If you’re using a mailing print the main piece in quantity (to reduce costs) so that you can use it for more than one “drop”. Then use a different “bounce back card” or other customized insert for each individual mailing.

**Train the employees who are going to be the first contact point for the people who are responding to the campaign.** As part of their dialogue your employees must ask how the lead or existing customer found out about the offer. Come up with a method of collecting this information so that it is easy to record (ideally in your database) and so that you can ensure all of the information you want is collected. Then you can compare the actual response (for example, how many times the phone rang, how many coupons came in, how many reports were dispatched) to your target - which should have been realistic! There are well researched and documented response rates for marketing programs such as telemarketing and direct mail.

**The final tip is also about measuring – but this time measuring the ultimate “response or reaction”.** It is essential that you track the conversion rate of responses to your campaign to actual sales. Why – in order to get the real Return on Investment (ROI) for your marketing campaigns. It’s one thing to get inquiries but, at the end of the day, the goal is to sell more products or services. And there’s some really good news here!

**When I ask people at my seminars “What percentage of responses do you think turn into sales?”** most say about 75%. Some are a little more conservative and suggest 50 or 60%. They’re guessing, of course, and most business owners would be guessing if I asked them this question too. However, when owners actually track their conversion rates, it’s often actually as low as 25% to 35%, which is disappointing. Money has already been spent to create those responses - only to see almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them fail.

**Here’s the good news and the opportunity! Can you double 60% or 75%, conversion rate? Of course not, but you can double a 25% or 35% rate.** Converting existing responses into sales could be a hidden opportunity for your business. How do you do this? One way is to give your sales team better training in, for example, how to handle new leads and the most common objections and how to handle them. Another is to systemize the sales process, and a third is to bring a greater customer focus to your entire company.

**Use any 1 of these tips and you’ll reduce your disappointment in your marketing programs.** Use all 3 and you’ll see a dramatic improvement in results – reflected in increasing sales. The trick, as we said earlier, lies in the execution. To share your experiences, to take issue with anything I’ve said or to get some insight in how to execute send me an email [jimstewart@profitpath.ca](mailto:jimstewart@profitpath.ca) or call me at 416-258-9610.