

Inspiring Marketing from Perspiring Marketers for Higher Profits

When I tell people that I am a marketing consultant a lot of them start to discuss advertising – and they often have strong views on whether it works for them or not! Marketing communications (of which advertising is a form) is the part of marketing that we see – but it is only 20% of the marketing process. As has often been said “Marketing is 80% perspiration and 20% inspiration”!! I tend to focus on the perspiration part as without this, the inspiration part can cost a company a lot of money in wasted effort. Let me give you an example.

A client of mine is a manufacturing company that invited me in to write their strategic marketing plan. This is typically how I begin work in a new company. After researching their business, looking at how they are structured, their customers, products and competitors as well as long term goals, I can write a plan that helps them to put marketing campaigns in place that help them to achieve these in the most cost effective way.

This particular company has many different products and although they are doing fairly well are not achieving as much as they can. After the initial research it became apparent that a change in structure of the company as well as getting closer to their customers would benefit them greatly.

They were not really doing any marketing at all but the little that they were doing was not targeted (because they didn't really know who their customers were) and they didn't think they were getting much return – which of course they weren't (but as they had no measurements in place didn't really know for sure). Luckily they were far sighted enough to know that they needed to concentrate on marketing and so recruited a marketing manager and called me in to help kick off the process.

The company was restructured into a number of discrete divisions, each with a focus on their own markets. Work was done to understand the marketplace (customers, competitors and other influencers) that each division operated in as well as the products and services that were marketed and where any gaps were. This resulted in the development of one or two new products which will be available soon. Finally a campaign plan was written for each division up to the end of 2006. This detailed the marketing communications that would take place as mini projects, including timing, budgets, expected returns – and of course, measurements to check these were being achieved.

The marketing manager is now working on implementing these and we are also beginning a programme to understand the customers and get closer to them to encourage long term loyalty. At the moment many customers are unaware of the full range of products and services that the company sells and are likely to be purchasing similar ones from competitors instead. The programme (often known as CRM – Customer Relationship Management) should go further towards helping the company be more successful in the future. It is a fundamental change in the company's focus – from internal (product based) to external (customer led) that has to percolate down from the top and is supported by a number of IT systems.

This work has taken a few months to put together and now the marketing communications part has begun, starting with working with a design agency to re-brand the company and re-launch it into the marketplace with great results. Other campaigns have now begun and are beginning to bear fruit.

The background perspiration work has given the company a good platform from which to inspire their markets with well thought out marketing campaigns, resulting in increased business and higher profits as well as a happier and more loyal customer base. So next time you are trying to decide whether to run an advert or not, do some background work first and get better results from your marketing budget.

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Julie Profile

Julie runs her own marketing consultancy, specialising in producing strategic marketing plans for small to medium sized businesses as well as customer care projects for promoting loyalty and long term profits. She also runs training courses for businesses on many aspects of marketing.

She has published papers on CRM in leading academic journals, works closely with many UK business schools and is an examiner for the Chartered Institute of Marketing's professional postgraduate diploma.

A committed vegetarian, Julie lives with her husband and small son on a smallholding in Shropshire. Her main hobbies include her garden, walking, riding, cooking, reading and looking after the animals.