

ANALYSIS

A CRASH COURSE FOR NON-MARKETERS

HOW TO MARKET LIKE A PRO

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Introduction

According to Hubspot, "Marketing is the process of getting people interested in your company's product or service." Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Let's consider this scenario to start things off: A new print shop is opening in a town that is already rich with small and medium-sized businesses. To attract customers and encourage them to move away from their current print service providers (PSPs), the new shop must **market** itself. These marketing efforts will include **advertising** and **creating brand awareness**. The processes of **marketing**, **advertising**, and **branding** share certain similarities. Although each process will encompass specific activities, the efforts associated with them will often connect and overlap like a Venn diagram in action.

Nearly half of today's small business owners handle their own marketing endeavors, and their frustration with this process is commonly voiced. It requires time and money, often involves learning new skills, and forces the business owner to strike a balance between leveraging available technologies while also staying on top of up-and-coming developments. Without a strong foundation, marketing efforts can quickly become dispersed and weaken any growth plan. Taking a holistic marketing approach can help ensure that your marketing dollars do not go to waste. Uncertainty about where to start is a significant barrier that must be overcome. This document highlights some simple steps you can take to improve your marketing strategy and offers tips on how to market like a pro, even if you're only just getting started.

Equitable Words

When we hear the phrase "Just Do It," most of us naturally think of Nike. This vague yet motivational phrase has become inextricably linked to a product. It tells many stories and can be taken to mean "Just play sports," "Just go outside," or even "Just run errands." Most importantly, though, the phrase simply tells the consumer to keep doing whatever they're doing, and to consider Nike's products while doing it. All of these subconscious ideas can be extracted from the slogan and implanted in the audience's minds, along with the company's history and reputation. This is marketing at its finest because it directly addresses a problem that nearly every potential customer will face—the struggle with getting started. Before dismissing my example because Nike is a huge corporation rather than a local mom-and-pop print shop, consider this—Nike's tagline is the backbone of its business. Regardless of size or influence, all PSPs must take the initiative to deliver powerful and consistent messaging. Taglines or slogans have proven very effective in the promotion of a business. They enable you to show how your offerings can make others' lives easier. You can tell stories featuring the successes that customers achieve with your offerings, and these stories can trigger action. A marketing professional's ultimate goal is to create an



emotional and psychological association so customers and prospects will conclude that your business is the best solution for their needs.

When done well, marketing does not require a huge budget or multiple layers of technology. In his popular book entitled *All Marketers are Liars: The Power of Telling Authentic Stories in a Low-Trust World*, author Seth Godin shares that effective marketing is not about creating noise and making false claims. Instead, it's a brilliant collection of how to tell stories that your prospects actually want to hear.

Before identifying and executing your marketing activities, think about the words that you use to convey the value of your company and its offerings. In today's ultra-competitive world, delivering high quality, superb service, and competitive pricing does not guarantee brand awareness. You must ensure that your messaging paints a clear picture of the experience your customers can expect when they engage with your business.

Think about your audience, then identify words or phrases that will demonstrate the value of your business. Messages that resonate might center upon relating to a customer's individual needs, meeting deadlines, accommodating last-minute changes, or offering solutions that are exclusive to the needs of your industry. There are thousands of words that can demonstrate trust, skill, and value. To naturally settle on a message that will resonate with your customers and prospects, you must start by understanding what your business is proficient in and what you can comfortably deliver. In addition to these internal factors, identify any external factors that might also come into play. Take some time to analyze your competitors and why your intended audience might choose to engage with them. This information can help influence your marketing messages so you can present a thoughtful and cohesive image to your audience.

The Setting

Marketing occurs at every encounter with a customer or prospect. Regardless of whether you are answering a customer's call, making posts on social media, or designing your website, all of these activities shape a customer's narrative of your business. Some of you will be familiar with the five "Ps" of marketing, which include Product, Price Promotion, Place, and People. The fourth "P," Place, is the setting where your prospects and customers intersect with your brand.

Attending workshops or hiring an agency to improve your marketing messages will do nothing if the prospect's experience is not immersive and aligned with your company's principles. For a great example of strategic immersion at every touchpoint, look no further than Disney. At its theme parks, taking care of every guest is every cast member's primary interest. Sights, sounds, and even smells are curated as part of the guest experience. Disney is great at this—so great, in fact, that the enterprise has never been compelled to



offer a discount for park admission. Fortunately, you don't need Disney's clout or marketing budget to achieve a similar result as a PSP. What you must do is ensure that every touchpoint and encounter with your brand centers on taking care of the customer's needs.

Even if you have a fantastic website and invest in the best technologies available, your marketing can still fail miserably if everyone in your business isn't focused on taking care of the customer. Even your most well-intended messages can be erased by the tone with which the phone is answered, a misunderstood e-mail, or a social media post that goes off-script. By establishing operating procedures, you can give your entire team the proper tools to focus on delighting your customers. This can help minimize the effect of any mishaps and protect your marketing dollars.

McDonald's provides another excellent example of marketing like a pro. All customer-facing employees are trained to ask, "would you like fries with that?" This simple upselling method is completely free and highly effective—particularly when dealing with a hungry customer! Some might argue that this form of suggestion is a sales strategy rather than a marketing one, but it's really both. There is no question that McDonald's sells a lot more fries with this approach. If you're looking for a more accessible example, PSPs can ask their satisfied customers to provide reviews on social media. To take this a step further, you might suggest a coined phrase or image, perhaps an emoji that can be included with comments. According to a study by WordStream, adding emojis in social media posts increases engagement. Meanwhile, introducing a signature image or phrase in your correspondence can act as a constant, repetitive reinforcement of your values.

At the Center of Marketing

We have looked at a few examples of big brands and their approach to marketing. Their clients are loyal. Their subtle yet well-defined practices stand out against those of their competitors. These practices don't fit neatly in a column on a content or marketing calendar, and that's precisely the point—marketing is more than creating a solid brand reputation, and more than a list of activities and tasks that are carried out to increase awareness. As you consider your marketing plan, focus on what your audience needs to achieve to be successful. This includes identifying the conflicts you can help resolve and their motivations for remaining loyal to your business. Then establish messaging that speaks to their needs. More importantly, back your messages up with actions that bring those words to life. Buyers want to know what you stand for; they want to understand your story so they know what to expect when they engage with your business.

How we select a hotel is a good example of brand expectations. Based on the marketing message or a prior experience, we can instantly envision what to expect when we see a hotel sign or logo. For example, most guests who choose to stay at a budget hotel



understand and accept that they aren't going to get the same experience that they would if they stayed at a luxury hotel or resort. Budget brands serve their own purpose—they offer clean, comfortable accommodations for price-conscious consumers. Meanwhile, selecting a five-star hotel should leave little doubt about the experience and amenities you can expect by staying there. Most guests recognize that a different level of investment is required based on the accommodations that they select. PSPs are similar to an extent—they have an opportunity to define their specific space in the overall market. Consider the messaging that you're using today—do your prospects and customers view you as a “budget” printer, a “luxury” print communication provider, or somewhere in between? Regardless of where you fall on the spectrum, your marketing message should differentiate your company from its competitors.

The Bottom Line

Going back to the Nike example, “Just do it” can mean many things... but the straightforward interpretation is that doing something is better than doing nothing. The same can be said about how the print industry approaches marketing. Too many PSPs put marketing on the back burner because they consider it overwhelming and time-consuming. Don't overcomplicate things, but get the house in order and determine how to tell your story in an authentic way.

You might notice that this document didn't offer any innovative marketing tactics or tools or cover the multitude of channels that are available for today's marketers. This was intentional—a by-the-book marketing plan is not required if you take the time to lay the proper groundwork. You don't need to be a professional marketer to act like one. A little bit of something is better than a whole lot of nothing, and you might find that the first step you take becomes a scaling butterfly effect.

opinion



author



Karen Kimerer
Director
208-991-4452

As Director of Business Development Strategies at Keypoint Intelligence, Karen Kimerer has experienced the many challenges of expanding current market opportunities and securing new business. She has developed a systematic approach to these opportunities, addressing the unique requirements of becoming a leader in our changing industry.

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