

Lesson 1: From Marketing To Sales

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Unless you've been in the business for a while and have the cocktail napkins to prove it, chances are good that you might consider sales and marketing to be the same thing. After all, they both have something to do with bringing in more customers, and that's the important thing, right?

Actually, without a sense of what each is designed to accomplish, you may very well spend large amounts of time and money with little more than a diminishing bank account to show for your efforts. Like any good project, to get the best results you need to know which tools to use.

The Attention Business

Think of marketing as being in the attention business. While there are some types that directly generate sales, the vast majority of marketing is done simply to get noticed. Sales, on the other hand, is a conversation that results in the customer saying yes to your offer. It's common for the two to work hand in hand, with marketing making people aware of your products so that sales can then close the deal.

Consequently, one of the very first things you need to consider prior to firing up a marketing campaign is what, specifically, you wish to accomplish. Those of you in the back who shouted out "make money" aren't far from the mark, but in order to be effective we need to be more specific than that. If we instead say that the goal is to make sales, we're then on the road to an effective, integrated money making machine.

Choosing Your Marketing Approach

Putting our focus on sales leads us to our next consideration. What type of sales organization do you have? Examples of common models are a retail store, outside sales reps, an online store like Amazon.com or a room full of telemarketers, either smiling and dialing or answering the phone to take orders.

As you might imagine, each of these approaches has its own set of needs from the marketing department. This in turn helps you choose the most effective marketing initiatives for your particular situation and discard the ones that aren't appropriate.

Your promotional options will fall into two basic categories. In the active route, the goal of marketing is to generate the order. The passive approach hand serves as a support mechanism for the sales department. One approach is no better or worse than the other. What's important is that you match the appropriate style of marketing to the sales model that you're using.

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A Working Example

Let's look at a working example. We'll start with a company that sells widgets in a retail store, staffed by a friendly and helpful group of salespeople who guide you through the order process. Now let's pair that up with a form of direct marketing, the notorious TV commercial with an overbearing announcer urging you to call that 800 number now to place your order.

While your customers are scrambling for their phones to place orders, your retail salespeople are all curled up in a corner taking a nap because your store is empty. What they needed was a marketing campaign that would motivate customers to get in their cars and drive to the store.

Meanwhile, customers calling that 800 number are surprised to find that no one is answering. After all, you don't have a telemarketing department. There's probably a phone in the back room somewhere, but the line will doubtless be busy since your bored sales reps have little more to do than call up their friends to pass the time.

You can solve this problem in one of two ways. Either start a phone room or employ a different form of marketing. You might find that offering discount coupons on mobile phones will bring them in the door. Or perhaps you place ads with a strong call to action in the appropriate publications. Either solution is fine provided your sales and marketing efforts match up.

Conclusion

With all the technologies and forms of media out there, we have more options than ever before when it comes to putting together a killer marketing initiative. However, before you rush right out and start spending your time and money, take the time to consider the fundamentals of your business.

Understanding what kind of sales model you have will help clarify exactly what your marketing needs to accomplish. With that in mind, you'll be able to narrow down your options to just the types of marketing efforts that fall in line with your goals, leading to a productive and profitable marketing campaign.