

Lesson 3: Who Are You?

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As we discussed in our previous episode, before you rush right out and take a lot of marketing actions, it's important to first do a bit of deep thinking. In order to hit the target, it helps to know where to aim.

Performing a Knowledge Triangle Analysis will generate a wealth of information that's crucial to crafting an effective campaign. Since the beginning is always a good place to start, today we'll be considering the first maxim, Know Yourself.

Appealing To Instinct

No matter what industry you're in, people make decisions based in part on their gut feelings. While this may not appeal to your intellect, it's worth remembering that in a purely logical world, all breakfast cereals would come in a plain white box.

There are countless reasons for the food in your pantry being packaged the way it is. A great deal of research has been done on the effect of different colors and how to convey quality, novelty, excitement, dependability and a host of other qualities through visuals.

The same can be said for words. The style of your communication says just as much as the intellectual content being conveyed. For example, each new generation comes with its own pop culture, including how they speak.

If you want the dollars of a youthful customer base for your trendy product, you're not going to get very far if you speak to them like a dull, boring corporate drone. Not cool.

Alternatively, if you're in the banking industry, I'm not sure how much I'd trust you with my money if your correspondences were peppered with phrases and perspectives used by kids in grade school. In both pictures and words, it's not just what you say. It's how you say it.

Matching Your Market

All of which brings us right back around to our initial question. Who are you? Before you can brand yourself, before you can build an image that your customers will flock to, you have to know what it is that you're branding.

For instance, you might decide on an image that's light, capricious and full of idealistic platitudes. This may work well if you're selling new age books. On the other hand, if your products are in demand by a bunch of cynical, hard boiled geeks, they're never going to get past your presentation to hear your point. It's not a matter of either being right or wrong. It's all about presenting yourself in the proper light.

Marketing Mischief

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Many otherwise good ventures go horribly wrong by reversing this process. Instead of performing self evaluation first and then applying the lessons learned to an appropriate image, they take a look at the target market and simply tell people what they want to hear.

In a massively connected world, being phony is the closest you can get to suicide. Not only will people discover that you're really not the kind of business you claim to be, they'll slave away days, nights and weekends to make sure that everyone else in the world knows it, too.

Naval Gazing

That's why it's imperative that you start with a completely honest perspective. What's your company all about? What are your values? What do you think you stand for?

Is fast service a staple of your offerings? What about quality – are you the best bang for the buck, or are you expensive and darned well worth it? Do you jump through hoops for your customers, or do you build corporate walls to minimize customer service costs? Are ethics a selling point? Would you actually lose money in the short term to do the right thing?

Now that you have a handle on who you are, talk to your employees and ask if that's the way they see things. Once you're through with them, get on the web and do some searching to see what your customers think about you. While you're at it, check your competitors, too. You can't expect them to paint you in a positive light but you can always learn about yourself by looking through the eyes of others, especially the competition.

Conclusion

Image is the tip of the spear. As long as your customers are human, how they feel about you is going to weigh in their purchasing decisions, whether they realize it or not.

The only way to build an effective persona is to first know who you are. From there it's simply a matter of highlighting the appropriate aspects to make yourself as attractive as possible.