

Lesson 5: Getting To Know Your Customers

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It's important to know who you are and what makes you special. That's why it's the first consideration in performing a Knowledge Triangle Analysis (KTA), the process we use to at the beginning of new marketing campaigns. Like well behaved triangles everywhere, the KTA has three distinct points:

- Know yourself
- Know your customers
- Know your enemy

Once you have a firm grip on your company's image and competitive advantages, you're probably chomping at the bit to start getting your marketing message out there for all the world to see. However, until you know a great deal about your potential customers you won't really know how to reach them, or what they want to hear once you do. For this reason, the second major exercise in the KTA is truly getting to know your customer.

The Perfect Customer

The most important thing to consider when profiling your prospects is understanding the goal of the exercise. You might think that the purpose is to help you make sales but that actually comes later. Your mission at the moment is to know, in mind numbing detail, who these people are, what they care about and where they hang out, both online and off.

The way to perform this exercise is to go as deep as possible, starting with simple questions such as, "who is my ideal customer?" You need to become an absolute expert on the people you want to sell. Therefore, you'll repeatedly drill down, examining each answer to see if it's vague. If it is, you'll consider it in more detail until you can get specific.

Selling Pizza

For example, you might sell pizza. Who is your customer? Well, you might say that it's anyone who likes pizza. Sound vague? That's because it is, and vague is impossible to target. Let's try again.

Who likes pizza? Specifically? One group that's legendary for their love of pepperoni covered platters is computer programmers. This answer leads you to the next step in the exercise. While you don't need to learn how to program a computer, you do need to know all that there is to know about programmers as a culture.

Are there certain age ranges or geographic regions? What technologies do they care about? What do they read, watch and listen to? What web sites do they frequent? What other hobbies do they have? And what does any of this have to do with pizza?

How To Be Cool

In answer to our last question, this sort of in depth knowledge has nothing to do with pizza and everything to do with selling pizza. Starbucks isn't the only coffee place in the country. However, it became the trendy place for techies to hang out, laptop in tow, to consume caffeine and be cool. There's a lesson here.

In truth, most pizza is pretty much the same. You're probably not going to come up with a revolutionary new pizza. Even if you do, most folks will think it's just plain weird. So, instead of selling pizza, what if you sold the experience, for instance, as a pizza joint that catered to programmers? If you knew enough about this potential customer, you could make yourself the coolest place in town for software developers to patronize.

How do you do this? It starts with a single phrase. Know your customer. If you know the basic demographic makeup of code slingers, where they hang out, what media they consume, what they do for fun, and what they care passionately about, you have everything you need to build a custom tailored experience. From there, it's a short step to building a marketing campaign that can't help but get them excited.

Become The Expert

Many people start looking for marketing advice expecting to find a one size fits all answer. There's no such thing. To truly craft a powerful and effective marketing initiative, you need in depth, detailed knowledge about your specific endeavor. No matter what generic advice you get about direct mail, advertising, social media or any other marketing trend, a successful implementation will depend completely on your personal situation.

Fortunately, if you're willing to roll up your sleeves and do the homework, you can do much of this yourself. Take the time to become the leading expert on every facet of your customers' lives and the information you gain will give your marketing efforts more horsepower than you've ever seen.