

The secret to effective marketing begins with the approach.



The reseller's approach to writing a marketing plan



By Greg Aiken,
Partner Marketing
Manager

Making the decision to invest in marketing is a no-brainer for some, but for many small businesses, the choice between investing in business infrastructure or bonuses and running a marketing campaign can be difficult.

So let's start there. Make a list of what you are planning to accomplish during the next 6 months to a year. What are your business and sales objectives? Are there any specific programs or technologies you'll want to focus on? Any specific geographies? Industry verticals?

IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Who are you talking to? What are the challenges and interests of this group of people? The more you can segment your audience, the more effective your

continued on page 16

PLANNING

continued from page 15

campaign will be. A good marketing campaign meets their audience where they are: It's a guy walking around selling umbrellas to people while it's raining.

Specific to many resellers, there are some basic audience segments you might want to speak to this year: top prospective customers, existing customers and all other prospects.

Top prospective customers refers to the list of customers you and your sales team have worked to identify this year. This group represents your customer "wish list," wherein you include any big fish and focus accounts where you know you'll be spending a lot of your time.

"Net new" is not always the way to go. Some focus needs to be given to growing your existing customers. This audience will represent a large opportunity for upselling and cross-selling, as well. There are probably a lot of customers who would benefit from the purchase of complimentary products to what you have already sold them. Same goes for any end-of-life products you have already sold them. But we'll get to that in the next section.



The more you can segment your audience, the more effective your campaign will be.

Finally, the "all other prospects" category represents every other prospect, outside of your top prospects, whom you would like to bring into your circle. This would be lists you have acquired and perhaps some prospects who aren't as high on the priority list, but

HOW TO AVOID COMMON MARKETING PITFALLS

For many resellers who might be seeing a string of ineffective campaigns, you'll notice that consistent themes begin to arise. We have captured some of the most common mistakes people make when approaching their marketing campaigns. We share these with you with hopes that you will beat the learning curve:

DON'T:

Send an email (or even an e-newsletter) without a reason.

Example: "Thanks for attending our event." Also – do you have enough content for that weekly e-newsletter? Lots of valuable emails will become white noise or may even lead to the dreaded unsubscribe, so be sure to have a clear goal in mind before sending an email.

DO:

Always begin with the end in mind. Set your campaign goals and determine your message. Once you have nailed those two items, then you can decide whether you need to send an email. There is nothing worse than someone not taking advantage of the time they have acquired with their audience.

DON'T:

Conduct a single marketing project and expect leads. It's not too often that we pick up the phone to call someone and the prospect on the other end replies with, "Thank you for calling! You are just who we needed to talk to. We just got a huge budget and we were waiting on someone to call us." What a

perfect world that would be! Because we rarely get that lucky, some longer term marketing tactics are warranted. We strongly encourage you to consider running longer term and multi-part campaigns. Rarely will one tactic turn out a bunch of leads. Leads come from a concerted sales and marketing effort that happens over a longer period of time.

DO:

Understand that marketing takes time, just as sales does. It may require several passes before you receive a response – particularly if the audience you're speaking to doesn't know you yet. A variety of factors need to be in place in order for a prospect to agree to make a purchase from you: Among



whom you would still like to sell to. We will talk a little more about how to approach this group in the next section.

Each of the audiences above can even be split into industry verticals and geographies. This way, you can personalize a marketing message to the group of people who are purchasing digital signage equipment from you in Denver, CO. The closer you can get your messaging to your audience, the better chance of success you'll have. That brings us to the next thing you should be considering when writing a marketing plan: determining your messaging.

DETERMINE YOUR MESSAGING

Your messaging should address your goals and the needs and interests of your target audience. For example, if you are communicating by email with existing customers who are up for renewal or whose products have gone end of life, make sure your marketing is doing an effective job at communicating just that.

Another important thing to consider when it comes to messaging is the amount of business challenges or

frustrations your prospects or customers are having in the space in which you're trying to sell. You're speaking with customers on a daily basis: What are some common objections they are having about the technology? Marketing is a handy tool to be able to start the conversation around solving those challenges. Don't be afraid to build your marketing campaign around answering the problems of others. You are in the unique position where you understand why the technology you're selling is great. Now, you just need to be able to communicate it to others.

You also want your messaging to reflect your business goals for the year. Whatever you determined you are trying to accomplish or sell this year should be merged with what you're communicating to others. For example, if you're wanting to encourage your customers to buy more total solutions, instead of individual products, your marketing should be heavy on what solutions you offer.

Something else to consider in messaging is that while a lot of marketing is, by nature, a one-way conversation, ease up on the self-promotion. Your end customer does not want to hear about anything that doesn't directly impact them. That's why getting the target audience correct is so critical.

continued on page 18

these, they need budget, they must have the need and the timing must be just right. A good marketing campaign will meet them where they are and nurture them through the sales funnel until they are ready to make a purchase. So just be patient and keep at it.

DON'T:

Forget to segment your audience.

Once you know who you'll be talking to, you need to figure out how best to narrow your audience so you can talk to them individually. If you are selling scanning equipment, your message will be different to those who currently purchase scanning equipment vs. those who have never purchased it before.

You'll have a lot more success when you segment your audience and focus your messaging to their specific needs.

DON'T:

Forget to follow up after you run a marketing campaign.

You spent time and money on putting together a marketing program. You and the executives huddled and decided to make the investment. You pooled subject-matter experts and got the messaging just right. The tactics seemed to have a successful engagement rate. Don't neglect your progress by moving on to your next task. Those leads need to continue to be nurtured until they are interested enough to make a purchase. Leads

need to be handheld through your funnel until they are ready to have a conversation.

DON'T:

Forget to track the success of your campaign.

There are a variety of ways to track success. Here are a few: open rates, click through rates, total responses, appointments and resulting sales. Even when campaigns are not perceived as successful, make sure you document the suspected reasons so your future campaigns will benefit.

Avoid these pitfalls and be mindful of your audience and you'll be turning prospects into leads in no time. **C**



continued from page 17

Speaking of target audiences, assuming you're wanting to craft messaging to each of the audiences we outlined earlier, here are some examples of how you could consider approaching each:

- 1. Top prospects:** What is the long-term approach? How long are you willing to chase this prospect until you give up? How long will it take to sell the solution you're wanting to sell? Use that time frame information to back into the length of your marketing campaign.

What would you like to tell them most? Prioritize your messaging and be patient, but consistent. A good lead generation campaign takes months.

- 2. Existing customers:** Your existing customer base represents plenty of opportunity to split your audience into "sub-sets." For example, if someone purchased scanning equipment from you, you can talk to them specifically about scanning. You can inform them about what's new in the scanning world and furthermore, what else they should be including in their total scanning solution.

You can also take a look at this audience to separate those who are purchasing a lot from those who haven't purchased in a long time. You would certainly speak to these audiences differently if you were to have a conversation with them in person.

- 3. All other prospects:** This audience can be tricky, but use the audience segmentation rules we discussed earlier in order to break down messaging to this audience. The more you know about them, the more those facts should be used. For example, if all you know is their industry vertical, start there. Why is your solution so great for their industry?

Additionally, take note of what your competitors are saying. If they are saying the same thing you are, it's time to change what you're saying, or else you're just another company trying to sell something.

Create tactics that align with your goals. The final step you'll need to take in creating your marketing plan is to determine how you'll get your messaging out to the selected audiences. Be sure this is the final step. You don't ever want to decide the

Addressing concerns or challenges is a good way to get the attention of your customers and prospects.

medium of communication before you decide the message.

Listen to your audience, too! If your target audience has told you they like live education, you'll want to be sure that you are creating plenty of opportunities for live education. If you're having trouble determining your medium, take a look at it from your own perspective: How would you like to be communicated with?

Diversify your tactics, too. If email isn't working, move on to something else! An old fashioned phone call can still open a lot of doors!

Once you have segmented your audience, determined your messaging and created the tactics you'd like to use, you can start customizing your marketing plan.

Your plan can be as simple as this: mapping out your year and what you'll be saying to who and when. Once that plan is in place, make sure it aligns with what your sales team is doing.

And finally, don't forget to measure success. Each marketing campaign will get smarter once you apply what you have learned to each new campaign.

This should give you the framework from which to begin your planning. Give this the time it deserves. Your marketing is a direct reflection of your company to people who aren't as familiar with all of your services as you are. Happy selling! **c**

