

Keys To Successful Marketing ©

By Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

This month's article was actually inspired by a sales book. I read Ferdinand Fournies's book, *Why Customers Don't Do What You Want Them To Do—And What To Do About It*. The first part of the book describes six main differences between sales professionals and also-rans. I realized that in many ways, these six differences also apply to great marketers/marketing plans and also-rans. Using Fournies's model, here are six ways to improve your marketing.

Better Than Anyone Else: Are you able to identify, then market, the one thing you do better than anyone else? From a marketing perspective it is always better to hang your hat on one versus several things because your clients will remember and identify with one thing. Give them too many choices and they'll be confused.

Tip From The Business Lab: Specifics are the key to success when identifying the one thing you do better than anyone else. If you say something as general as customer service, you won't be heard in the marketplace. With your team, ask them what your company does better than anyone else. Keep asking, "why," "what is it about that that makes us better" until you get to something very specific and concrete.

Know What You Need To Know: Do you know what needs and challenges are facing your clients and top prospects today? Do you know all the ways in which your product/service will help solve your clients and prospects problems today?

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team, gather your marketing materials and messages and compare them with what you know about your clients (their needs, challenges, etc.). Determine whether or not you have the right message, are saying it to the right people and in the right way.

Inspect What You Expect: Improvement is a huge part of all business activity. The only real way to know if you are improving is to monitor the performance, make adjustments, and try different things. It doesn't and shouldn't be complicated but it is a good idea to identify goals and, where possible, specific action steps for your marketing efforts.

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team, list all the marketing activities you have planned for the next 12 to 16 months. Answer the basic questions of: What are we doing? Why are we doing this? What do we expect from this activity? How will we know when we achieved it?

Consistent and Predictable: Successful companies, just like successful marketing campaigns/plans, are always consistent and predictable. Think about it. If you walked into Starbucks tomorrow to order your Vente No Foam Latte (just as you do every day) and they told you they weren't doing Latte's today, instead, they were trying a new drink from Brazil, would you be happy? Have you ever been to a McDonald's where the service was slow and the bathrooms were dirty? You're disoriented, angry, and very disappointed — this can't be McDonald's!

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team, determine whether or not your marketing materials, sales materials, and team members are all in sync. Identify any gaps and make a plan on how to become more consistent and predictable.

Act As If: Even if your company is just starting out and you are small in number and have a limited budget for marketing, there are many things

you can do to "act as if" you were the number one company in your industry. One of the stories we share when showing our portfolio is our OPCO Story. After we get through showing all of the fabulous marketing pieces that OPCO has and telling them about the numerous awards they've won, we end the story by telling them that OPCO is a company of five people. This typically blows people away. What a lot of people don't realize is that much of this was done as a partnership, an alliance between OPCO and us. We both made a commitment to help grow each of our businesses and with minimal cash outlay we maximized our resources.

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team, determine what area of your business would most benefit from "acting as if." In the OPCO example they needed to showcase their printing work by having unique, well designed pieces. If you need to, find alliance partners to help you accomplish this. For an excellent book on the subject, please read *SmartMatch Alliances* by Ernest Oriente and Judy Feld (www.coachingsuccess.com).

Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan: Marketing, especially for small businesses, can be one of those things that just comes and goes when the time or feeling is right. If you market this way your chances of sustained success are much less. Start by developing a plan that is small, narrow and extremely focused. This will help you realize the most "bang for your buck" and will help ensure you keep working your plan, even if unexpected expenses or downturns occur.

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team create your marketing plan for the next 12 to 16 months. Use calendars and time lines so you can get a visual of your overall reach and client contact. Make a wish list of all the things you'd like to do, then begin to narrow the list by choosing those things the team agrees will be the most effective. Identify the resources you will need (including time, money and talent), then see where you are at with respect to your budget. Create your final marketing plan and budget. Make a note (mental or otherwise) of the core marketing activities you will commit to, no matter what happens over the next 12 to 16 months. Check your progress along the way; make adjustments when and where necessary.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about this important topic or would like to receive our FREE Service Ideas Booklet, please send an E-mail to kathy@thebusinesslab.com, visit our Web site at www.thebusinesslab.com, or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-374-0569.

Author's Note: Kathy Ellis is a Marketing Coach and the owner of The Business Lab, a full service marketing and graphic design company. We specialize in creativity and helping you think outside the box. We then help you implement those creative ideas through programs including database marketing, Web sites, interactive CD brochures, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials. We share our FREE newsletter with you to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques, and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, TX, at 281-374-0170 or by E-mail at kathy@thebusinesslab.com