

Why Marketing Works[©]

By Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

Marketing can be one of those difficult terms to define. Sometimes we have a hard time distinguishing between sales and marketing. Here's one way to look at it though: Marketing to new prospects is like dating your boyfriend. You want him to notice you, and you want to share all the wonderful things you have to offer. Marketing to existing clients is like dating your husband. You still want him to notice you, and it's a good idea to remind him now and then of all the wonderful things you have to offer. Sales is about the commitment and all the nuts and bolts that go into making the relationship work, day in and day out, including fulfilling the obligations and contracts you make along the way: who will take the trash out? Who will do the dishes? Marketing is the celebration of the relationship, before, during and after the sale.

It's the celebrations that keep relationships alive. Some celebrations are more elaborate than others, but celebrate we must in order to maintain existing relationships and acquire new ones.

Here's how it works:

Suppose two companies place an ad in the local business publication. Both companies are very similar in their service offerings and both ads are very similar (message and professionalism are equal). Company Z receives 100 responses from the ad but Company Y only receives 20. Why?

A more detailed look at the two companies reveals major differences in the way they "celebrate" their companies. Company Z has a fairly consistent approach to marketing. They send out postcards each month to their clients and prospects, they attend major trade shows, they write articles to be published in trade journals, they have a quarterly get together for clients and prospects. The look, feel, and messaging of all their collateral items (brochure, Web site, direct mail, trade show booth) is consistent and is a perfect fit for who they are as a company.

Company Y on the other hand spends much less time "celebrating" with their clients and prospects. They do have a company brochure and Web site but they don't look anything like each other. They have gone to trade shows in the past but feel they are not beneficial. They've never stayed in touch with their clients and prospects through direct mail or E-mail or advertising. They feel this is the responsibility of their sales staff. This is the first ad they've ever placed in a publication.

So, what just happened? Phil Morabito of Pierpont Communications calls this phenomenon "the law of increasing returns." Simply put, those who have, get more! It's the "familiarity breeds familiarity which then breeds success" lesson that we've heard before.

Because of their consistent marketing program, Company Z had already begun to build relationships with those 100 respondents, well before the ad came out. By the time the ad hit the streets, enough people knew enough about them that the ad became the catalyst to help the prospect "take the next buying step."

What can you do to celebrate more with your clients and prospects? In order to create and maintain a consistent approach, you'll need a well developed plan that also includes a realistic budget.

Tip from The Business Lab: With your team, determine all the ways in which you can "reach out and touch" your clients and prospects. Next, make a list of all your clients and prospects. It's important to understand how many people you'll be marketing to because of the cost involved. If you have a very small but exclusive list of prospects, then you can afford to meet them face to face more often. However, if you are targeting thousands of prospects, consistent contact through direct mail might make more sense. Determine which methods are the most realistic given your prospect list. Now put the plan in action by placing the items on a calendar and coming up with a budget and steps to proceed.

When creating your plan, use the following as a guideline:

- Deliverables — What specifically is to be delivered? What will be done?
- Steps Involved — What steps are necessary to bring about the deliverable? List all the steps one by one.
- Measurement — How will you know when you have accomplished the objective?
- Investment — What are all the costs involved?
- Date — When will it be done?
- Person responsible — Who will do it?

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 website at www.thebusinesslab.com, or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-374-0569.

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