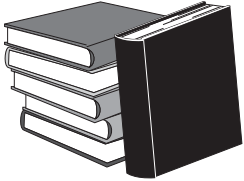


Marketing 101

BUSINESS BASICS



By MJ Gilbooley
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Simply stated, marketing is the process of building a brand-based competitive advantage by promoting your Unique Selling Position (USP). The first step in your market-

ing effort should be an assessment of exactly where you (and your brand) are now and where you want to be. For example, consider the following:

- What is your USP (or what sets you apart from your competition)?
- Who does your company serve?
- In which service/product areas have you seen the most growth?
- Who is your immediate competition?
- What are your specific sales goals for the next 12 to 36 months?

You can easily assess this information by downloading a free "Marketstarter" questionnaire at www.growpro.com.

Once you have determined where you are and where you want to go, there are various marketing avenues to consider. The following is just one marketing question to ponder.

Phone solicitation or direct mail?

Direct mail requires less effort and is more likely to result in the quality sales leads you are interested in obtaining. Consider these known facts:

- Many calls must be made in order to acquire just one lead.
- Telemarketer training requires time and money spent.
- Sales closing percentages from telemarketing leads are typically very low.
- Customers gained from telemarketing tend to spend less in this price-sensitive industry.
- Long-term customers obtained through telemarketing are rare.
- Unlisted numbers and no-call lists can prevent you from reaching qualified leads.

Direct mail enables you to bypass unlisted numbers

and no-call lists, giving you more access to potential customers. And, when leads contact you after receiving your direct mail piece, you will know they are already interested in learning more about your products and services.

Whom should you target?

To ensure that your direct mail campaign yields results, you first have to make sure you are targeting the correct demographic.

Demographics consist of a variety of factors (e.g., age, income, etc.) that can be used to describe your ideal potential customer. One of the best ways to define your target demographic is to gather statistics on your best customers. The more you know about your most loyal customers, the easier it will be to find, and target, others like them.

After determining your demographic, you can have a mailing house compile a list for you on the basis of the statistics you provide. A basic list might include nothing more than incomes and ZIP codes, whereas a more targeted list can include age, income, home value, number of cars, and number of children.

Once you have your mailing list prepared, your next step is to design the perfect direct mail piece. If you are outsourcing your print material design and production (and this is recommended for the best quality), be sure to select a company that has a firm grasp on your overall plan, audience, budget, and timeline. Whether it is a postcard, a brochure, or a simple flyer, be sure to focus on your USP throughout the piece. You may also want to include a special offer or incentive for calling.

Good luck! And remember ... the time you spend defining and marketing your USP will be well worth the effort. ☺

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