

Stupid Marketing Tricks And Other Topics

Dave Brock. Partners In EXCELLENCE

Dimensions of EXCELLENCE™ is based on the four dimensions of performance and organizational excellence. These are the foundation for our development programs oriented to achieving performance and organizational excellence in sales, marketing, and customer service.

These white papers provide concepts and ideas based on the application of these principles of these programs and our work with our clients. We welcome your comments and observations on these topics.

For more information on our products and services, contact:

**Partners In EXCELLENCE
22715 Barlovento
Mission Viejo, CA 92692
PH: 949-305-7146
FAX: 949-305-7164
Email: info@excellenc.com
www.excellenc.com**

© 1997-2003 Partners In EXCELLENCE, All Rights Reserved.

We are deluged with SPAM and direct mail pieces daily. Market researchers claim each of us is exposed to 100's of advertising and related messages daily. My skin has gotten pretty thick, I have become very effective in filtering out 99% of what I receive, much to the chagrin of marketing professionals and agencies.

It seems, however, rather than getting smarter about marketing programs, companies are “dumbing down” their marketing, substituting volume, gimmickry, and noise for clear and compelling messages. They lose impact through shoddy and unfocused execution. They adversely impact their brand equity through poor fulfillment.

Over the years, I have kept files of some of the worst examples of marketing I have been the victim of.

- There is the German automotive company, focused on creating the Ultimate Driving Experience, and excelling in serving their customers. Actually, they do excel in serving customers, but every time I have my car serviced, I am instructed on how to complete their customer satisfaction survey. They actually provide a copy of the survey with every answer filled out, indicating the best service experience.

If an organization is serious about getting feedback on customer service, it should seek the real views on customer experience. Without these unprompted responses, organizations cannot understand what their customers want and how to respond.

- Recently, in the space of 24 hours, I received four emails from a very good software company. While each message was different, the intent was the same: “Thank you for your interest in our products. Buy them now at.....” There was no attempt to communicate the value I would get from their software, no attempt to tell me anything about their features or why I would want to use their software, and no offer to motivate me to buy it now.

Even the junk mails that offer products to improve my sexual performance offer a value proposition. The mail was simply a directory of the outlets (direct and retail) where I could buy the software. This was a lost opportunity to communicate something meaningful about this company and its products. It could have separated the company with a very good product from its competition. Instead, it was simply an attempt to “peddle” software products.

However, it got worse. I simply deleted the first message, shrugging off the bad attempt at email marketing. With the second through fourth messages, I clicked the “Unsubscribe” button. It didn’t work, there was no site that enabled me to unsubscribe. I was on a mission, I went to their website, eventually found their privacy page, waded through all sorts of legalese, and finally found a statement saying I could Opt-out by sending an email to support@companyname.com. I sent the email, getting a response that it was undeliverable. The final insult; each email was sent from “U-r-valued@companyname.com (I’ll disguise the company name.). Clearly, I wasn’t valued.

This is a massive failure in execution! Not only was the marketing program meaningless, but none of their support mechanisms worked! If this is the quality of their performance with prospective customers, can real customers expect anything better? This CRM company offers its customers the promise to mine gold—perhaps they really mean fool’s gold.

Opt-in email marketing can be a powerful tool. It is easy, fast, and inexpensive to send a strong offers to your customers. However, the ease of doing email marketing is causing many marketers to become lazy. Sloppy, poorly thought out programs, executed at the speed of the Internet will produce negative results. There has been strong backlash from businesses and consumers on this type of stupid messaging. Not only will customers not buy, they will withdraw from future relationships, eliminating the opportunity for the company to reach out in future marketing efforts.

- Another software company, a giant in its industry, offered a “webinars” on its products. The subject of the webinar was interesting. I responded to the link to register for the webinars. Guess what, the link did not work. After trying several times, I ended up going to the company’s website. I eventually found the webinars and registered.

How many prospective customers are going to spend 20 minutes trying to sign up for a webinars where the objective is to sell something? For any email or direct marketing piece, make sure the fulfillment channel you have chosen works! If you ask people to click on a link to respond to an email campaign, test it and make sure it works.

Response rates on many direct marketing programs are dropping. Don’t lose valuable leads by not being able to fulfill the response.

- Over the Christmas and New Year holidays, I was visiting the sales executives of a good client. They were frustrated trying to manage an initiative the marketing people had thought of in the last two weeks of the year. They were calling customers who had made purchases at a certain level, offering a discount on 2004 purchases if an agreement would be signed by year end.

It was a great offer! It could save regular customers a good amount of money and created commitments for 2004 that would drive good sales growth. The problem in implementation was the timing. Customers were being asked to make a decision committing them to certain purchase volumes in the coming year. The problem was, they had to make the commitment within about 36 hours—yes, the offer was being made in the last few days of the year. Even customers who wanted to take advantage of the offer could not get the approvals in time to meet the deadline.

This program could have been a very strong program. It presented clear value to the customer. However, the implementation made it impossible for most of the customers to take advantage of it. In some cases, the offer created a negative impact. Frustrated customers wanting to take advantage of the offer but could not became upset with the company. The sales people were frustrated because they knew this would create additional hurdles in working with these customers in the future.

In any marketing program or offer, make sure that you understand the customer decisionmaking processes required to accept the offer. Your offer needs to accommodate the timing required for the customer to act on the offer. Anything else is, at best, a wasted opportunity, or, at worst, creates negative customer feelings.

- Recently, we were involved with a client considering purchasing a reasonably expensive software tool (\$25K/seat). The software company arranged a web conference, demonstrated the program and answered all our questions. We asked for follow up to go the next step in the buying process, tossing the ball into the software vendor’s court for the next step. Several days went by and nothing happened. We sent an email for follow-up and received a nice response. More time passed, but we still haven’t gotten the response. In the meantime, our client is now considering other alternatives.

While this is not a stupid marketing trick, failure to jump on “hot” opportunities on a timely basis results in lost sales. When customers are in a “buying cycle,” your selling cycle needs to be synchronized with the customer. When these cycles are out of sync, the likelihood of winning business declines dramatically.

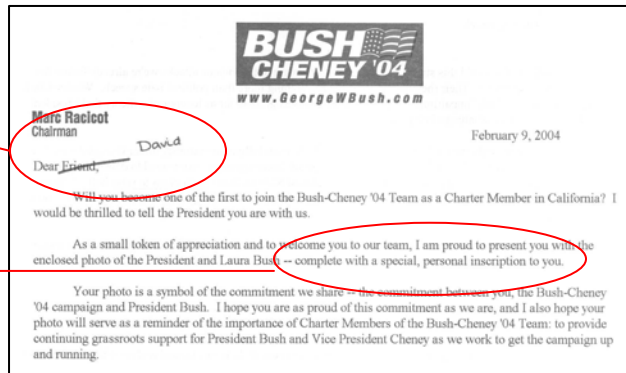
- I am amazed at how poorly professional marketers market themselves. Every day, I am deluged with resumes from various services. The latest techniques are sending them through email, with a nice note like: "I enjoyed our phone discussion, thanks for asking me to send you my resume." The problem is, they are always addressed to info@ourwebsite.com. Last I checked, we don't have anyone named Info in our company who had a conversation with a job applicant. Our phone records don't indicate anyone at our offices having conversations with these people. Pretty soon, I expect to be getting resumes from deposed Nigerian government employees who are willing to give me some percentage of the \$75 million they have gotten if only I would give them a job.....

For those searching for jobs, marketing yourself in the most professional manner possible is critical. It is the only way to make yourself stand out for the few jobs that are available. Don't let the lure of the internet and the ability to deluge thousands of people with resumes adversely impact the most important brand you have to market—You!

- Finally, today, I was the subject of a stupid marketing trick from none other than our President and Vice President—yes, of the United States. Or at least it was sent on their behalf by the Chairman of their re-election committee. It was so bad, I had to include pictures.

If they already had my name, why did they fake the mistake in the address, why not just address it to me?

I hope the President and First Lady have more important things to do than to personally inscribe a thank you picture for me.



To: David H. Book, Thank you for your early commitment and dedication as a Charter Member of the campaign in California. Grassroots leaders like you are the key to building a winning team.
Sue White,
Laura Bush *Gov. RL*

I also got this great picture, personally addressed to me!!! I'd like to thank the President and the First Lady for taking the time to do this, even though I have not yet made a donation!

Final Thoughts:

Professional marketing is tough. Creating and implementing programs that resonate with customers requires strong thinking and disciplined and flawless execution.

The spammers and junk mail marketers make it more difficult for professional marketers. All customers are filtering the messages they receive through all channels. They are less responsive to advertising, direct marketing, email marketing, and other programs. Only the strongest and most compelling messages will be effective.

Some of the newer marketing channels are seductive in their speed and low cost. There is a temptation to be sloppy since the financial cost of poor results is low. However, the long term cost of bad programs on the value of the brand is very high. Don't let the speed of the internet and related channels adversely impact the quality of your messages and brand.

Good marketing communicates a message that resonates with the target audience. Strong and compelling messages that address real needs and communicate meaningful value to the target customers will produce results.

Professional marketing can be simple, though not necessarily easy. In your programs, make sure:

- You have a well defined audience that you want to reach.
- You understand the needs of the audience and have a compelling message that addresses those needs directly.
- Your message is simple and to the point. Clear messages do not require tricks or gimmickry.
- Your offer is compelling, motivating your audience to act on the message.
- You can fulfill their response in quickly and professionally.
- If you approach your customers as "idiots," with dumb messages and tricks, the only customers you will attract are "idiots." Treat you customers and prospective customers respectfully and professionally.
- Throughout the process, you create value for your customer and your brand.

It's a shame that so many so-called marketing professionals think so poorly of their intended audience. It's also a shame that so many business executives let these "marketers" foist these terrible ideas on them.

Let's stop the stupid marketing tricks, they don't produce business, they create customer dissatisfaction, and they waste money and brand equity. Raise the bar on your marketing programs to improve the results produced.

For more information on how Partners In EXCELLENCE can help you develop and execute marketing and sales programs that produce real results, contact us at: info@excellenc.com, or call us at (949)305-7146.

Partners In EXCELLENCE is a boutique consulting company, helping its clients produce profound results in the development and execution of their business, marketing, sales and customer service strategies. We support a global client base including current and emerging leaders in technology, financial and professional services, consumer products, retail, printing and publishing, not for profit and other industries. More information can be found at our website: www.excellenc.com.

©2004, Partners In EXCELLENCE, All Rights Reserved.