



Ask not what your customer can do for you...

IN 1961, JOHN, F. KENNEDY FAMOUSLY SAID, "ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU - ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR COUNTRY." THIS QUOTE EASILY APPLIES TO MARKETERS WHO KEEP ONE EYE ON THE BIGGER PICTURE AND FOCUS ON MORE THAN MERELY THE FINANCIAL PROFIT TO BE GAINED FROM THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE, SUGGESTS ACXION'S **JOANNE DOUGLAS**.



Some campaigns are purely and needlessly self-serving.

When it comes to CRM, it is the customer, be they business or consumer, who calls the shots. The customer decides where, when, and by which channel we communicate with them. Though we rely on them to keep us updated of changes in their fast-paced lives, like a surly teenager reporting to parents, those notifications may not always be comprehensive or forthcoming.

It is good practice to have systems and methodologies in place that allow us to follow the trail of crumbs that our customers leave behind. We can learn from the things our customers and prospects do, and, equally important, what they do not do. Apply this information well, and your marketing can become more proactive through trigger-based activity.

Whereas a slick advertising campaign would once have generated sufficient brand or product awareness to boost sales, the market has evolved in leaps and bounds.

As vast mass-marketing machines have given way to relevance and more nimble pinpoint targeting, we as marketers are challenged to work exponentially harder to capture the attention of our target audience.

Today, with the help of developments in modern technology, you can far more easily apply specific marketing strategies to smaller customer groups to run test campaigns or release appropriate, specific offers to those with a greater propensity to purchase certain products and services. Developing greater knowledge of your clientele also enables you to distinguish your high value customers, who your next top 10 per cent are likely to be, and who you may not want to market to.

Put yourself in their shoes

At times marketing seems to be little more than a numbers game. We are each held accountable for our marketing expenditure and ROI. In the struggle to maximise profitability our sole focus is likely to be on planning and implementing certain communications strategies, and on achieving optimum distribution and take

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up on those campaigns.

Beyond assessing campaign relevance to target in order to calculate the likely rate of return, how often do we put ourselves in the shoes of our campaign recipients? Do we genuinely concern ourselves with the relevance and substance

of the marketing material we are about to send?

If we take a closer look at our communication strategies we unfortunately discover that some campaigns are purely and needlessly self-serving. Though we all primarily market for the good of our own organisations, by considering the benefits that we may additionally be able to provide our customers and prospects, we may find unexpected, supplementary rewards.

Today's customers may indeed be more price-driven, but we should never underestimate the value of trust and reliability. There are few more powerful sales and marketing tools in this world than good word of mouth. Whether this comes in the form of willing reference sites, personal recommendations from customer to customer or effective marketing campaigns that enjoy a longer

life span than their counterparts, it is more desirable to be the company with the positive reputation.

Yes, our given range of products or services dictates our marketing content—but only to a certain extent. There is no reason that our target audiences should immediately seek the opt-out button upon receipt of our latest offer. By keeping our content fresh, compelling and educational we are more likely to find our customers and prospects, if not looking ahead to our next communication, at least more accepting of it.

Your marketing can provide the means by which you establish a more rewarding relationship with your customer via all touch points and across all channels. Below are six practical tips that can help.

1. Be open and transparent

Do not underestimate your audience. Your customers and prospects will immediately sense insincerity, so be willing to operate without guile. Granted, we all have an agenda, which includes maintaining contact, boosting brand awareness and hopefully generating sales leads. But you can also find reasons to communicate with your target audience that can genuinely benefit both parties. With forethought you can gain your customers' confidence in the quality of your marketing material over time.

2. Have the right tools in place

As with any marketing or communication strategy, endeavouring to work with data that is obsolete, aged, inconsistent, and of otherwise poor quality will only impede you. Achieving and maintaining a high level of data quality will enable you to gain the holistic view you need for fully integrated marketing campaigns. If utilising a campaign management tool, it will hopefully provide the flexibility to view and manipulate accurate and insightful data and rapidly respond to market requirements.

3. Integrate your campaigns and communications

It may sound basic to say that continuity is a key component of effective communication. But it can sometimes be lost, particularly in the bustle of multichannel

marketing. While the consumer at home or in the high street may be more easily influenced by price alone, needing only a sale sign to generate interest, business customers are likely to require more touches to build the required trust in your brand and organisation. Take care when rolling out marketing strategies that all possible touch points, potential customer interactions and future campaigns reinforce the same fundamental message and serve the same goal. For example, ensure that the direct marketing that drives website traffic does not contain a conflicting message, or that the 1300 number has somebody who is aware of the current offer available to take the incoming calls. Here again, there are multichannel and campaign management tools available that can aid in brand, campaign and communication integration.

4. Extend offers to make your customers' lives easier

Instead of focusing only on what you can get from your marketing, spend time considering what you can offer that will make a difference in the lives of your customers and prospects. Our marketing can serve both our purposes and those of our customers. We need not limit ourselves to extending specific product discounts; what else can you offer that might help to decrease your customers' costs, increase their profits, or save them some time? Do you have access to an instructional article or white paper? Have you seen a webinar that you believe would interest your customer base? Do you know of a global or interstate visitor who could provide insight on upcoming marketplace trends at a seminar or event?

5. Ensure your marketing both educates the recipient and works for you

At the same time nobody could expect you to be completely altruistic. If you are dedicating time and resources to creating marketing campaigns there are certain fundamentals you would expect to achieve. This is where your campaign management

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tool comes into its own, making it easier to update your contact lists, create test groups to gather valuable customer insight, quickly and easily execute campaigns, maintain templates that can be used again with minimal adaptation, measure and analyse response rates and cost per campaign, and report on results.

6. Enter into a partnership with customers

Investing in any kind of marketing activity that develops your customer knowledge will enable you to differentiate and identify those of your customers who are likely to be of greatest value to your business. If you work on the basis that the top 10 per cent of customers who provide the greatest revenue opportunities, it therefore makes more sense to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with those high value customers by taking a strategic approach to relationship marketing. Opening the lines of communication with your customers, and listening to the information they provide concerning their business issues and requirements, will give you invaluable knowledge that will help you provide better service, both now and in the future.

It is easy to become absorbed in the success of the ROI directly gained from our last campaign. But each round of marketing activity is also a single piece of a far larger jigsaw puzzle. It is only when the pieces come together that the full picture becomes visible. Similarly, when we adopt an approach to marketing that requires us to give as well as take, serving both the customer's purpose and our own, the long-term rewards increase exponentially.

Ask not what your customer can do for you, but what you can do for your customer. ☉

Your customers and prospects will sense insincerity, so be willing to operate without guile.

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