

AUGUST 2013

## Hook, don't sell: securing customer interest in your company

The effectiveness of marketing your product or services can seem hit-or-miss. Often well thought out marketing – informative, clear and accessible to your customers – falls flat, landing with a thud without the desired impact. Which factors cause a marketing effort catch on or result in a complete flop?

Marketing success often has less to do with informing the buyer and more to do with finding a way to connect. Whether your marketing is targeted to a business-to-consumer or business-to-business buyer, the first job is to spark interest with a message that resonates and will stick. Once actively engaged, your buyer will take the time to get any additional information needed.

Here are three ways to maximize your marketing by grabbing and holding your customers' attention.

**Be relatable:** A MIT study concluded that the most effective Twitter marketing involved "humanizing" the brand – incorporating itself into its customer's day-to-day, alluding to popular culture, and avoiding off-putting direct sales pitches. The key factors the study identifies behind successful tweets have more to do with relatability than information. Starbucks, ranked the second-most powerful brand on Twitter by Business Insider, doesn't bombard its customers with promotions and sales. The secret behind its enormous following is posting short, catchy tweets – a picture of a home-brewed pot of coffee, an upbeat phrase or quote that customers relate to. A simple smiley face, which in 2011 generated over 1,500 retweets – did a great job at keeping the brand fresh in customers' minds.

**Be relevant:** Marketing is as much about building a brand as it is about promoting a product or service. Indeed, customers will be more interested in striking a deal,

### Executive Insights



Cheryl Isen

if they perceive your company as more than whatever you're selling. Establishing relevance requires a broader point of view. Cisco Systems, for example, has used YouTube to establish itself as a relevant company in people's day-to-day lives. Often publishing several different types of videos – including demos, how-to videos, CEO interviews and more – per day, it uses YouTube to generate discussion and thereby interest in the company. Although Cisco isn't always marketing a specific product, they understand the importance of establishing the brand as helpful and useful. This simple technique increases exposure and subsequent business opportunities.

**Make it stick:** Don't underestimate the power of effective phrasing. To get your marketing to stick in your customers' head try a memorable line, a rhyme with the company name, or even a catchy tune. Each has a lot more staying power diving deep into a boring pitch. Take Sleep Country USA's famous jingle at the end of their commercials: regardless of whether you like it, the brand name sticks. The goal is to get your customer to recall your marketing later; whether or not they are immediately sold on your product isn't important--yet. In both business-to-business and business-to-consumer marketing, it is unlikely a customer will decide to purchase the

product or service immediately. They want time to consider options. If you're successful in making your marketing stick, your company will be on their mind when they decide to buy.

Before using marketing to try to make a sale, ask yourself – do I know what my buyer cares about enough to create marketing that captures their interest? Know that your customers' first exposure to your company isn't your only chance to make a sale; your marketing should be aimed at making your company or brand stand out. Once you've piqued their interest and they're hooked, your marketing has earned the right to move to the next step. Smothering potential customers with details and specifics before that point is a fast track way to lose your prospect by confusing and overwhelming them.

This column is written by Cheryl Isen, founder of Isen & Company, a strategic marketing and public relations firm that helps companies increase visibility and brand awareness. Contact Cheryl at (425) 222-0779, Cheryl@IsenandCo.com.

Visit IsenandCo.com to learn more.

---

---