

October 2013

What a “Drive By” Marketing Audit Could Reveal

Congratulations. Your ad, tweet, press release or mailer piqued your prospects interest. This usually translates into a visit your website for more information. Now, its time to ask--will the rest of your marketing keep them engaged?

One way to increase prospect engagement is to make sure your marketing starts from the buyer's point of view. A “drive by marketing audit” can help you quickly assess your buyer's broad marketing experience and help you identify gaps or problems.

A drive by audit is different from a full communication audit where all marketing materials and channels are assessed against detailed objectives, positioning, target market needs and wants, company strengths, weaknesses and market threats and opportunities. Assuming you built your marketing on that foundation, the drive by audit offers a simplified, shortcut view into how your marketing translates relative to your buyer's broader experience. It is a useful tool because it is quick and easy to complete and can help identify and close marketing gaps.

As you start refining a marketing plan for next year, now is the perfect time do a drive by audit. The process begins with a cruise through your buyers shopping experience and involves four easy steps:

1. Identify your top three-to-five competitors. Keep it to the short list that your prospects typically consider when purchasing. Your objective is to review their marketing just as a prospect would. For most businesses, you can limit this to the website. Remember you will be thinking and acting, like a buyer. This is about capturing impressions, not about analyzing details.

2. Assess the experience from the customer point of view. Take note of the experience and the messaging. Acting as a buyer, how easy or hard is it to find and understand what you need to know to

make a decision? Consider the messages directed at you. How clear is the information? What impressions are left? Is it believable? For this exercise, avoid placing relevance on whether claims are true. Repeat the experience with each competitor as a buyer might, perhaps in a single sitting.

Executive Insights



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3. Translate the overall impressions into a collective takeaway. For example, as a buyer are you left confused or overwhelmed because every site says the same thing? Is there too much industry jargon, identical claims, or do you feel barraged by exaggerated claims? Do you have to muddle through too much complexity? What is your experience? Take note of your emotions afterwards. Are you excited, wary, overwhelmed, frustrated or confused?

4. Now determine how your marketing needs to change to address the broad emotional issues experienced. Your big picture goal is decide how to modify your marketing so that the buyer experience leads to your desired next step. You want your marketing to uniquely stand out, resonate, be believable and keep prospects from moving on to competitors.

Every drive by audit will be insightful and should reveal marketing gaps that you can work to close. Here are some issues often discovered:

- **Confusion:** It is not crystal-clear to the buyer how your offering will meet their specific needs or is different or better than current approaches. This is a red flag to ratchet up your positioning and value proposition.

- **Overwhelmed:** Does the buyer have too many similar market choices? Is your marketing just bombarding them with more? If so, consider a differentiating approach anchored in removing burdens. Make things simple and easy. Your experience will be akin to a breath of fresh air.
- **Too many barriers:** Hurdles can show up in a variety of ways, from wordy copy, non-engaging techno-speak or too many forms and clicks. Barriers are issues that require too much work from the buyer. These are usually the easiest issues to see and resolve after a drive by audit.
- **No reason to act:** Did you discover that your benefits are buried deep, hidden behind features or that you lack a compelling offer? Break through buyer apathy by identifying clear pain points and create engagement by demonstrating how to solve these problems. Try a free trial or make customer stories that show a fast path to progress visible.
- **Lack of believability:** Perhaps compared to the market at large you discovered that your claims lack proof, relatable testimonials or third party validation. Now is the time to reach out to clients, ramp up PR and integrate expert industry voices.

When your marketing is assessed through the lens of what your buyer experiences as they shop around, it's easier to see the adjustments you need to make to keep your prospects engaged. This knowledge is a great way to identify objectives and tactics for next year's marketing strategy.

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