

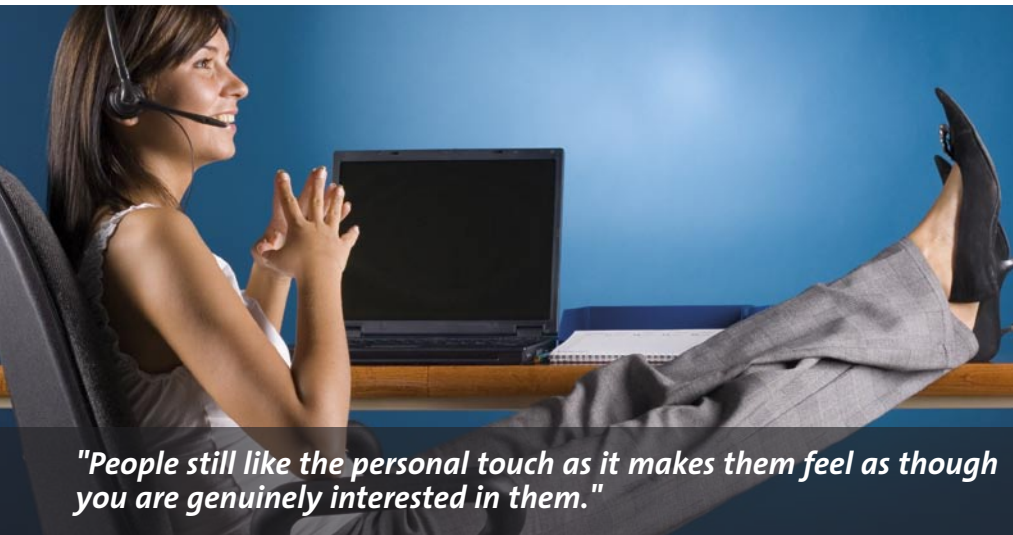
10 Minute Marketing Makeover

A winter spring clean

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"People still like the personal touch as it makes them feel as though you are genuinely interested in them."

Although it's not the traditional time of year for a spring clean, this is a very busy time of year for most marketing professionals. After the lull in advertising over the summer months, promotional space is once again at a premium in the run up to the (dare I say it) Christmas season. For those of you who are involved in nationwide advertising campaigns you will be acutely aware the some providers of advertising space take advantage of the high demand period between now and the end of December and inflate their prices accordingly. Therefore now is a good time to have a quick look at your marketing practices and take some simple steps to ensure that you are maximizing your marketing potential.

OBJECTIVES:

Redefine the objectives of your marketing campaign. The marketing objectives of any company are dynamic, so it's not enough to just stick to your original objectives and presume that these should be your targets as your business becomes more established. What do you want to achieve through your marketing strategy and have you managed to achieve your previous objectives? If you haven't achieved your objectives to date then it's definitely time to update your marketing strategy. If you have achieved what you set out to do, give yourself some credit and identify any strategies that worked particularly well and work them into your new marketing agenda.

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION (USP):

Re-establish what your unique selling proposition is. Your unique selling proposition needn't be

earth shattering but it does have to be something that sets you apart. For example you may be producing a product that many other competitors offer but if your product is accompanied with top class customer service then this is your USP. This should be the key message in all your marketing material, so it's worth ensuring that you are telling customers why you are different and superior to the competition, even if your product or service is already well known.

COMMUNICATIONS METHODS:

Have a look at the communications methods that you have used to date to interact with your customers and critically assess each of them in turn. If you have been using a method for many years but it just isn't working for you anymore then you have to make a change. Sometimes change is difficult particularly if you have a good relationship with a particular advertising sales person or your business has always historically always used a specific newspaper or other medium. However, you need to focus your resources where they best work for you. Therefore for example, if a radio campaign worked particularly well for you in the past you should consider a greater spend on radio going forward and fund this by freeing up a budget that has historically been given to another less effective medium. The most effective marketing medium for you will depend on your product or service and more importantly the target market you are hoping to capture.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH:

People still like the personal touch as it makes them feel as though you are genuinely interested

in them. Therefore it's worth taking some time to make some calls and engage in some personal correspondence. Networking is perhaps one of the best marketing opportunities that you as an individual will have for your company. Referrals from existing clients are also a valuable method of gaining a new customer. Take some time out to phone former clients and ask them if they have any further requirement or if any of their colleagues need anything from you. This is particularly important in the services industry where customer relationship management is an essential aspect of marketing. Get yourself noticed by speaking at local business events – however you don't want to be known as the person who would go to the opening of an envelope - so try to keep involvement to events that are relevant to your industry and will have an audience which represents your target market.

PREPARE A MARKETING BRIEF:

Your marketing brief should outline your objectives for further marketing activity and should be broad enough that it can be used by any suppliers that are going to help you in achieving your marketing objectives. This would include any marketing consultant, media sales personnel, printers and designers. Once you have an all inclusive brief, it will save you time in the future preparing a brief at each step in the marketing process and will give your suppliers a clear understanding of what you want to achieve. Remember that unless you know what you want, you can't expect others to know.

CONCLUSION:

Each of the sections outlined above represent quick marketing exercises that you can undertake to ensure that you get the most out of your marketing strategy. Doing just one of these tasks in isolation will help somewhat but in order to really makeover your marketing strategy you would need to look at each of these aspects on a regular basis. This by no means is sufficient as a marketing plan but it does serve as a template of a quick assessment of your marketing policy and even by spending ten minutes on one of these aspects you will be surprised what you will reveal.

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