

Powerfully Funny January 2010 News from Kathy Klotz-Guest

I help companies innovate new products and services and then creatively market their innovations to the world. Innovation is essential to business survival, and it should be fun. If you're not having fun innovating or marketing your business, let's talk!

Hello all,

Happy New Year! I love this time of year because it represents a chance to do things differently, to start fresh, and to fix things that aren't working for us. In short, it's about starting over and better! One of the things we can all do better in 2010 is to commit to being more of who we are and are meant to be. That means taking risks and daring to go **BIG** and **BOLD**! The meek may inherit the earth, but not in business.

What better way to start off 2010 than committing to marketing leadership in your business. Want to stand out? Focus on making your customers stand out. Stop blaming your customers and the economy for soft business. Make 2010 the year you exercise marketing leadership. That starts with you. So get your marketing leadership game on!

Here's to your health, happiness, and levity, and business success.

Kathy

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How Do You Innovate? Let Us Know

Share your stories of creativity. Email us at: Kathy@powerfullyfunny.com

Feature: Get Your Marketing Leadership Game On!

Great marketing strategy also hinges on great marketing communications to help customers understand your benefits. Notice, I said benefits. Marketing is not about offerings. No one cares about offerings. And you shouldn't get so tied to offerings either because they will change. Customers have needs and they don't care what package is used to fill that need - they only care that they get results. Want to stand out? Focus on making your customers stand out. This is where most marketing fails.

How many times have you heard fellow business owners lament, "my customers just don't get it," or "I'm just not getting traction." You may have a target market issue - that is, your ideal target may have changed. However, it is more likely that what isn't working is your marketing. Leadership means taking responsibility for better strategy and communications. Granted, some of your target won't get your marketing. Sometimes they don't have an immediate need, or maybe they're just not that into you (it happens). But, if time and time again your IDEAL and BEST customers and prospects fail to "get it," the shortcoming isn't with them. It's with your message. You own that. Stop blaming your customers and the economy. Make 2010 the year you exercise *marketing leadership*.

Every year I commit to bettering my business. Below is a list of one dozen ways you can demonstrate marketing leadership. By implementing even a few of these, your company, too, can "stand out" and get better results. You'll also have more fun, and delight your customer - and that's what marketing is about, after all.

1. Review all target markets. Make sure you are targeting the right customers. With the economic climate, much has changed. Your target may have changed and certainly their needs have. Remember, what worked for you in good times will likely not work now.

2. Talk to your customers frequently. Ask the tough questions including what you could do better. Yes, their needs have changed and this could be an opportunity for you to uncover new areas of potential business. Also ask why they buy from you - they may point to something you had not thought of. Your best customers care that you stay in business, and they will tell you the truth: the good, the bad, and the really (2 AM at bar close!) ugly. Align your messaging with client needs as they change. Make sure you also stay top of mind and understand how customers want to be communicated with. You have to "touch" your clients many times before you touch their wallets. There is no end-run to the checkbook here. Relationships are a

long-term game and that's how you increase the lifetime value of your customers. If you don't know how needs are changing, you cannot build recurring revenue.

3. Review all your marketing materials. Are you focused on your services? Customers care about results - they don't care what you call 'service X.' Forget "services" and focus on customer case studies, quotes, testimonials and results. Can your materials withstand the customer honesty test? Ask your best customers and listen.

4. Segment customers according to need and profitability. Margins vary across customers and you must understand which customers are most profitable. Do you know the lifetime value of each customer? You must. You can try to convert the least profitable, but not all customers will upgrade. So the preponderance of your resources must be spent retaining and growing your profitable segments. But if you don't do the analysis, you don't know who is profitable.

5. Benchmark all your results. Figure out a way to document the situation as you come into a client project. Then, figure out how you will measure success after you have implemented your program or services. If you are not documenting results/metrics, you miss an opportunity. Coming back later and trying to capture those nuggets is difficult. Time, like customers' memories, is fleeting. Always measure how you perform for a client. Outcomes are what matter, and tangible results make it far easier for your customers to refer you.

6. Review all "messaging" for the heart of your story. Is it clear to your audience how you help clients? Can you articulate it succinctly? Is it memorable? Great marketing is about real stories you can feel good about and stand by. Fancy materials will not save you if you do not have a solid message/story to tell. People think in stories and metaphors. If prospects and customers roll their eyes at your marketing, take notice. Body language does not lie.

7. Be different. Too often in business to business marketing, we play things "safe." You will never stand out this way. And, if you are jumping into marketing tactics because your competition is, you are missing huge opportunities to stand out. Lead the pack; don't follow it. The view isn't so great with the latter!

8. LIGHTEN UP. Stop taking yourself so seriously. Have some fun with your communications. Your customers want to be "delighted." And dry, boring, "you-centered" marketing is as far from delightful as you can get. Have fun and your customers will, too.

9. Review all marketing for return on investment. Marketing IS about results. I had a prospect who spent years and lots of dollars buying ads from a local magazine without ever examining results. I asked him how many leads he got from that source over several years (and tens of thousands of dollars later) and he said "not one lead." Not one lead! And you're still spending with that magazine? That's

insane. When I asked if he communicated with customers regularly with a newsletter or by phone, he said no. To summarize: this prospect flushed tens of thousands of dollars down the toilet, when he could have saved money and spent a fraction of that creating a newsletter, calling his customers to check in, and updating his outdated website. Good marketing generates qualified leads and, over time, lowers your cost per lead. Know your marketing spend and measure results consistently.

10. Review your marketing mix. Are you over-invested in any one area of marketing? For example, if all your money is spent on advertising, think twice. Understand that ads are about building awareness. They are NOT a tool designed to generate trial of your product. There is a high correlation between trial and purchase. You must find a way to get prospects to try your services - that's how you get them up the adoption curve. Here's the thing about ads - they are a tool with a "lag" time. Remember, to even register on someone's radar, he or she must have exposure to your marketing (what we call "impressions") or to you personally an average of 7 to 10 times. It might take a year before they even really know who you are. If you are hurting for cash flow today, you CANNOT wait for ads to work. You need to induce trial of your product soon. You also need some good old-fashioned PR and publicity as well. If you can write and speak well to illustrate your domain expertise, do so. Articles and speaking are low-cost, high-impact ways to increase both awareness and trial.

11. Create a communications plan. Don't scattershot it. The best-executed marketing is planned. Create a calendar of topics for your newsletter, for blog, twitter / RSS feeds, etc. The point is you need content and a messaging strategy. Create a plan for your talks. Create several key talks or keynotes that you can market to the right target audiences. Leverage your communications. Write once, and publish many times and in many places to achieve a multiplier effect on your efforts. Help your partners and customers talk about you as well.

12. Add social media tools to the mix in *reasonable* amounts. Tools are only ways to facilitate the dissemination of your message. Don't be "taken in" by social media hype. I am a founding board member of a think tank that studies social media, so of course I think social media applied reasonably is important. But if your business is hurting, it isn't because you don't have a blog! Most of the millions of so-called, self-labeled "social media experts" out there know nothing about marketing strategy. Attend to the fundamentals of your business first. Social media magnifies your strengths and your weaknesses. Shore up your marketing strategy BEFORE you get on the bullhorn. What will you say about your company? What are your customers saying about you? Before you blog, spend time LISTENING to customers. Monitor to see what people say about you, and monitor the industry to see what the burning issues are. Set up a feed using Google Alerts to notify you of news based on particular key words including your own company name. Know which blogs are critical in your business (what your customers read) and know who the influential voices are in your industry. Then, when you are ready to jump in,

you'll have a greater impact. There's enough noise out there; so make your efforts count.

Innovating a Better Customer Experience Starts with a Marketing Review

- How hard is it to access a live person when a customer calls? Have you called your own voicemail? What's your turnaround time on email? Ordered from your own site?
- Is your marketing (website, collateral, etc.) consistent in tone, look, and message?
- Are your messages falling flat? Are sales?
- Do you know who your key target is? Do you need or have multiple targets?

Now is a great time for a marketing review. We'll review all the ways you touch your customer - website, voicemail, emails, direct mail, collateral, etc. - and make recommendations to improve your customers' experience and your bottom line! *Call 408.578.8040.*

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