

So What's So Important About Marketing Anyway?

The idea that marketing is the central function of all business has long been displaced by business owners who, at best, view marketing as a necessary evil. The challenge is, perhaps, born of the frustration experienced when sincere efforts at good marketing fall short of expectations – leading business owners to conclude that the marketing activity (and not the program and its execution) were flawed. No business – not MacDonald's, not Coca Cola, not Microsoft – is immune to the need to market its products. Most certainly, your company isn't immune either.

The importance of marketing is wrapped up in the role it plays in the business equation. While many misunderstand marketing to be sales, the true purpose of marketing is not to close the sale, but rather to create the environment in which the sale becomes possible. The marketing precedes the sales effort and, when executed properly, creates a welcoming and knowledgeable customer, willing to consider the sales pitch because they have been sufficiently conditioned by the marketing to be receptive to the notion of buying.

Under this purpose, marketing's objective is to (a) raise awareness, (b) create interest, and (c) shape and deliver the offering. Raising Awareness can mean letting your target market know that your products or services are available. Creating Interest involves demonstrating the benefits of the product or service and connecting it to the market need (or desire) that it addresses. Shaping and delivering the offer includes establishing the value, quality, and personality of the product and service so that the customer is able to determine your "unique selling proposition" within the marketplace (how you compare to your competitors).

Imbedded in these three steps are functions you typically would not realize are associated with marketing, but in fact are pure marketing functions, such as product features, pricing, delivery timetable, availability, customer service guarantee, and even sales channels. All of these business tasks, even when handled outside the marketing department, are marketing considerations because they influence how customers view a company's products or services, affecting perceptions and levels of interest.

The question, therefore, is never whether or not to market, but rather how to market, what strategies to pursue, and what tactics to use to realize them. The strategies will determine who you market to, what channels you deploy, and what messages you communicate. The tactics will resolve how you place the message in front of the target market, what tools you use to communicate, and the proportion of the mix (of the various tactics).

The idea that marketing takes a backseat to sales because sales is what brings in the revenue is a critical error many companies make either because they don't completely understand the role marketing plays in supporting (actually creating) sales, or because they lack the discipline or patience to engage in marketing and prefer to go straight to sales. The denial of marketing as a central task within your business will restrict your sales potential and reduce the revenues you could be bringing in. Conversely, by conditioning your market, and maintaining communication with it, you are creating the recognition and comfort required to drive sales, and the momentum and loyalty needed to sustain them.

And that's what's so important about marketing.

Craig Frank is CEO of Tudog Creative Marketing, an advisory and implementation firm offering a broad range of marketing related services designed to increase revenues and create value. Craig can be reached at craig@tudog.com

Editors Note: Marketing Matters is a new monthly feature in The Source. Questions regarding marketing are welcome and can be sent to