

The Integrated Plan

Although the idea of the integrated marketing plan is not new, the degree of compliance among companies large and small is still somewhat negligible, meaning that the usefulness of such an activity is not as apparent as those of us who espouse it believe it to be. This, naturally, leaves open one of two conclusions; we, the fans of the integrated marketing plan are overly enthusiastic, or, those failing to conform are not looking closely enough. In our enthusiasm we can't fathom the former, and so we present the logic of the integrated plan herein to alleviate the latter.

Tudog is a big supporter of the integrated marketing plan because the Firm promotes the notion that marketing is a company's primary activity and purpose. As such, marketing is greatly enhanced when a plan is established that makes certain that all functions of the company are operating in furtherance of the proclaimed marketing objectives. This is the purpose of the integrated plan and its development and execution is most likely much easier than anticipated by those companies hesitant to undertake its development and implementation.

To make it even simpler, Tudog presents here the 5 steps to the creation of an integrated marketing plan. They are:

1. Create a Powerful Message

What does your company stand for? What are you trying to really accomplish as you sell more and more of the widgets you sell? What is your genuine passion and reason for being? Consumers like to have relationships with companies and the only real way a relationship can develop is if your company stands for something the consumers can relate to and adopt as their own. You need to examine your purpose and condense it into a message that ignites your spirit. Then pass it on to your customers and ignite their spirit as well.

2. Spread the Word

The distribution of your message has two critical fronts. Firstly, you must make sure your message (or mantra as it is now being called among the "cool" business set) is understood and accepted by your employees (management especially). You need to make sure that the message, in spirit and how it translates into action, is reinforced by processes and policies. This will bring the message to life, and make certain that the experience you deliver to the consumer is consistent with the message you deliver.

The second front on the spreading of the message is to your market. You can have some fun with the market and mix up when and how you get your message across. Make sure everything communication you have – whether through an advertisement, an event sponsorship, or your packaging – reinforces the message. Consumers will not commit to anything you have not demonstrated your commitment to, so make sure you are consistent in presenting your message.

3. Include Your Benefit

Often companies create their message without sufficient consideration of the drivers that lead consumers to buy the product – that is, the benefit your product delivers. Whether real or imagined, consumers are buying your product because it satisfies a need or a desire in a manner that the competitors do not. Sometimes this is because your product is better, cheaper, more available, or marketed more competently. The competent nature of your marketing has a lot to do with the message you convey, how you reinforce it, and how well you deliver on the promises your message makes. The combination of these three elements is makes easier when your approach to them is integrated throughout your enterprise. So make sure that when you construct your message you are keeping in mind (and communicating) the benefits that lead consumers to you in the first place.

4. Lead, Don't Follow

There is no such thing as two companies owning the space idea in the market place. Coca Cola is the Real Thing no matter how genuine Pepsi might try to be, and Burger King serves it up Your Way no matter how accommodating Wendy's may be. When you develop your message and go through the process of integrating it throughout your enterprise, make sure the message you have created is truly your own and that you have constructed a message that positions you as a leader and not as a company trying to borrow a bit from the ideas of other companies. Consumers see through borrowed marketing and are never quite certain why they should go to an imitator when the genuine market leader is making a similar proposition (in terms of price, quality, and availability). Make sure you lead the market in your message, and you will find that consumers will react to your communications with interest.

5. Draw in Your Market

Once you have developed your unique message, tied it into your benefits, integrated it into your operations, and announced it to the market, you are ready to begin to attract customers to you. The final aspect of an integrated marketing plan is the same as any other (less effective) marketing plan, and that is to draw customers and generate sales. So too, for the integrated plan, although Tudog would suggest that the end result – the number of consumers drawn to your company – will be much greater than had you engaged the market in a haphazard or come-as-it-may approach. The act of reaching out to the market and declaring “here we are, this is our message, this is our product, and here is why you want to do business with us” is a powerful and compelling step. Once you have done it, the fact that your message is integrated well into your operations means that the consumer will have a great experience, learn to believe your message and feel safe enough to invest his or her loyalty in you.

Integrating your marketing is not all that much different from the more traditional marketing activities you are mostly likely currently developing and initiating. The core difference is that in the integrated plan the message is transmitted and accepted internally before it is broadcast to the market, and the processes and procedures inside the organization are reconfigured (to whatever extent necessary) to be certain that the promises being made by the message and the spirit being announced by the message are experienced by the consumer when he or she interacts with your company. The reward is that, in this era of hard fought competition, once you gain a customer, you are more likely to retain him or her (as long as you continue to meet your promises).

Now, finally, go integrate your marketing.