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A Rebranded Concept - New B2B Strategies Spark Brand Excitement

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Integrating a new business model doesn't need to be a dull endeavor

By Zachary Smith, Account Manager, True Influence Inc.

The Internet has made B2B marketing difficult. Very few will argue that the Internet has given customers more buying power through instant access to product reviews, social media updates, chat rooms and email blasts. Companies large and small must keep abreast of technology and buying trends simultaneously if they want their product or service to stand out.

To summarize: It's no longer about promoting the product; it's all about the message.

That means teams must incorporate research, analytics, case studies, customer personalities, executive testimonials, Webinars and the like into their marketing efforts consistently. As daunting and time consuming as it appears, online marketing does not have to be dull and tedious. Planning, researching and executing new concepts has proven to yield generous results. For example, modify a landing page to include a registration page for buyers to view your content, or promote a backup storage platform by combining eye-catching print collateral with a flash drive loaded with product demos and a link to register for a Webinar.

Several professionals are willing to share how their revamped marketing platforms have yielded lead generation numbers their bosses almost thought impossible. They are experts in their field who have invested time in research, planning, and getting to know their target audiences before launching campaigns specifically tailored to the audience they desired. The successful campaigns integrated online promotion, Webinars, direct mail and telemarketing.

1. Create a "Yes" environment from the get-go

Logic, appeal and reasoning are less effective at getting people to act than commonly believed, according to marketing experts. When we analyze customer interest, we tend to create a disconnect between what we want to do and what we actually do. Flint McGlaughlin, Managing Director for MECLABS, said people may think about their organization's objectives to propel their decision-making, but if they lack the critical urge to act, they probably won't make any decision to buy or sign up.

"It's not that we don't have goals," McGlaughlin said. "It's just that they don't really matter that much (at the time we want them to)."

He said marketers should pay attention to their target audiences' behaviors and take notice of any trends.

"What are they doing? How are they looking at it? What are the chances they will take a different behavior?" McGlaughlin said.

Going back later and evaluating behavior traits will most certainly give marketers a leg up in competition, he said.



Choice positioning generates leads

Successful online campaigns tend to strategically place questions and limit the number of response options on their marketing pages. Too many choices tend to turn potential customers away, says Dan Ariely, Economics Professor at Duke University. The solution is choice architecture, by which he means that a marketing professional arranges content in such a way that will generate the most hits possible.

Take, for example, a check box on a Web page:

“Check the box if you want to receive product news and information”

People don't check box and don't sign up.

“Check the box if you don't want to receive product news and information.”

People don't check box and sign up automatically.

The arrangement “architecture” will dictate decisions we make, Ariely says.

Language of persuasion

Perhaps the desire to fit in is more prominent than realized. In their 2004 book *Persuasion in Advertising*, father and son communications experts John and Nicholas O'Shaughnessy offer a sociological approach to persuasion in advertising and marketing. As social creatures, the duo maintain, people have the intrinsic desires to feel accepted by others and to make choices based on what matches their individual beliefs, wants and needs. To summarize their perspective, to be truly persuasive from a marketing perspective means integrating both of these traits.

Noah Goldstein, Associate Professor of Management and Organizations at UCLA Anderson School of Management, offers a similar psychological context. He says people look to others to guide their behavior when they are uncertain about buying products and services. This is where crafting well-researched collateral based on customer behavior is critical.

“Customers don't want to let down positive reputations,” Goldstein says. “If you label them as loyal, they will act accordingly.”

Practically every successful business employs persuasive tactics to target their audience. Most likely, this includes creating multimedia campaigns through print, online and TV ads. The combination of visual and testimonial content usually features loyal customers who seemingly resemble the target audience.

“Don't lose your airline miles!”

Another way to validate positive reputation is through showcasing customer participation and potential loss. Social media and sites that require a customer to create a personal profile have perfected this strategy. When a customer leaves the creation page prior to completing a profile, they are shown the percent completed and encouraged to resume profile setup.

“People are more affected by the idea of loss than the idea of gain,” Goldstein said. “A ‘Don't lose your airline miles’ message is much more effective than a ‘Keep your miles’ message.”

2. Make subscribers feel like part of something special

In its simplest form, this is tailoring content to engage readers by making them feel like they are part of a bigger experience. Customer feedback options, newsletters and product/company updates are effective assets that engage customers.



Brian Clark, Founder and CEO of Copyblogger Media, saw the benefit of making customers feel more connected to his company's brand. To begin, Clark wanted to track buying and behavioral habits about his company's target audience. He also re-organized the Copyblogger Media newsletter to include a content library. Accessing the content, however, required users to register as opposed to simply entering an email address. If a subscriber was identified as a target customer, Copyblogger Media would include them in their newsletter and product updating platform, thereby steering customers to the company instead of the other way around.

"They will feel more connected psychologically to your business when they have regular updates to relevant content," he says.

3. B2B marketing does not have to be boring

Traditional direct mail marketing still serves a useful purpose; usually it is combined with social media to engage an audience.

The following abstract details how to make your marketing campaign compelling and relevant:

Company X wants to promote a cloud-based solution and the importance of backing up data in case of a natural disaster. To do this, Company X sends out a physical "disaster preparedness kit" to customers from a list. The kit includes a brochure detailing the financial and physical toll a flood, fire or earthquake could inflict upon a company. The brochure contains pictures, charts and case studies from past disasters and other relevant materials. It also contains a "checklist" for disaster preparedness. Recipients also receive a flash drive with detailed information on Company X's cloud-based solutions which contains a hyperlink to read more. The hyperlink takes the recipients to a landing page where the company obtains another relevant lead list. Participants also have the option to share their results via Facebook and LinkedIn pages.

The point here is to not be afraid to get creative or to integrate old marketing methods with new methods like social media.

"Boring is a choice," says Christine Nurnberger, VP of Marketing at SunGard Availability Services. Creating a marketing campaign that gets noticed and generates revenue potential oftentimes means looking outside of traditional business models for inspiration. Nurnberger says it is good to get creative with marketing, so long as you can still say "Yes" to the following three questions:

- Can it communicate the right message?
- Can it reach the right audience?
- Will our audience be able to relate?

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While thinking outside the box can help businesses engage with more customers, laying the groundwork through research, evaluation and testing still matters. Chris Hawver, Team Leader of America's Marketing at Tennat Company, says companies that maintain a traditional, direct-mail, pound-the-pavement approach may struggle in marketing and lose out by not staying competitive.

To assess and remodel Tennat's strategy, Hawver researched lead-generation techniques that have worked and also considered other approaches that could draw in new clients. He tried the traditional, direct-mail method, a non-traditional method that relied heavily on new media strategies, and a hybrid method which encompassed both traditional and non-traditional techniques.

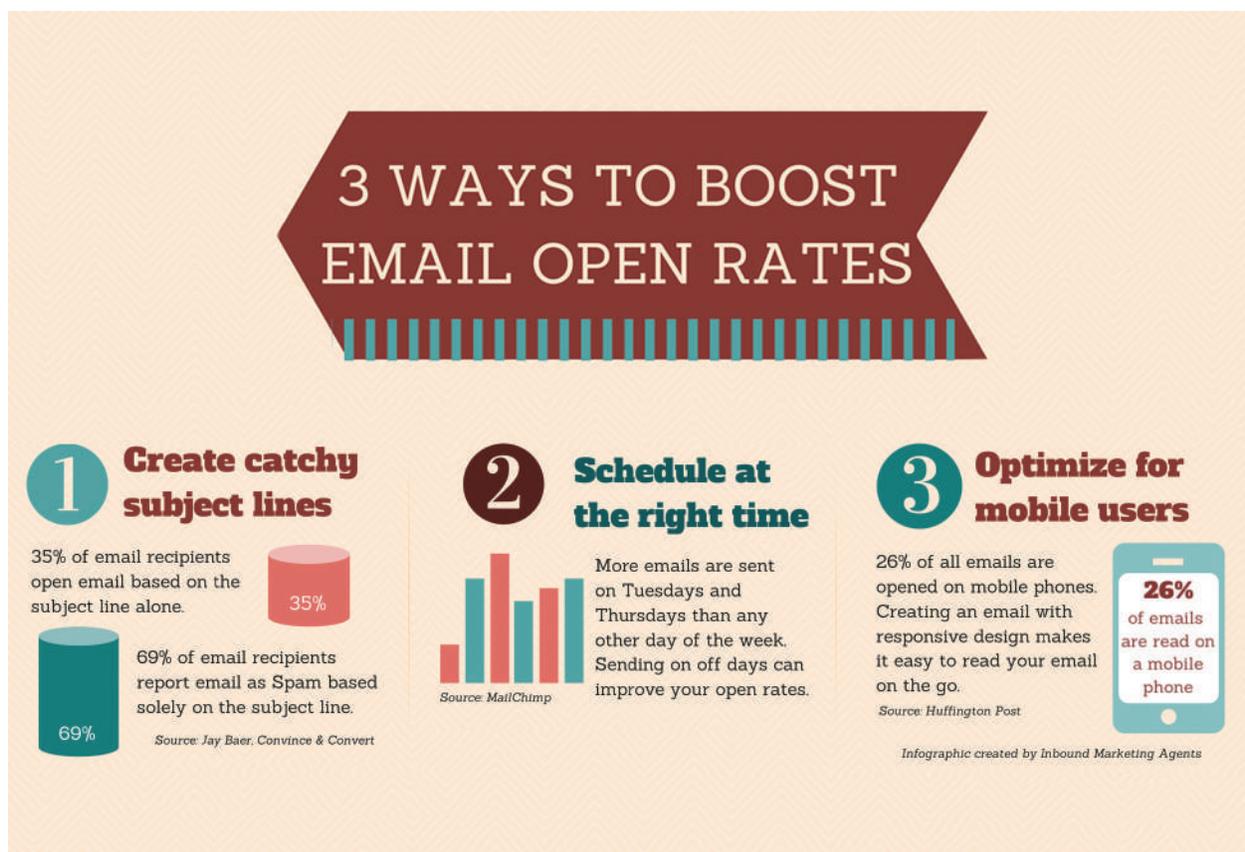
The hybrid yielded the highest lead generation because it included demographics from the target audience and at the same time introduced new elements that the audience could relate to.

"Change has to translate into results, because numbers talk, words walk," he said. "If you can't report on what you're doing for the company, what are you doing?"

4. Ensure value through relevancy

The last two strategies are more an emphasis on marketing principles that have always been true and always will be. Generate content that will best suit your audience. Determining campaign relevancy includes evaluating your lead-generation process. Is it through telemarketing? Email campaigns? This is where appropriate scripting/lead-generating material for your campaign comes in handy.

The earlier on in a campaign you can identify target audience, the better suited you'll be later in the nurturing process. This can be as simple as considering the customer "persona," or that which makes them the key decision maker in the buying process. Are you targeting IT professionals? PR/Media? Finance? Human Resources? We certainly don't want to market network storage services to a finance associate!



5. Tried and True Methods

As marketing has become increasingly complex, getting your message to the right audience may seem like traveling through deep space without communication or hyper-drive capability. We in marketing are not suggesting that you abandon your trusted equipment and processes. We need to find our bearing and map a trajectory to the lead generation world. And most companies may find they have useful marketing content already on hand.

A Trustworthy Old Ally

GIFs, those effervescent blips on the screen, either make people smile and harken back to the 1990s or cause marketers to cringe. Surprisingly, companies like Dell still use GIFs in some of their email campaigns, and they still yield tremendous results. There's no need yet to delete those GIFs.

Pound the pavement

Go to customers; don't make them come to you. Evaluate the best engagement times. 9:00 am or 7:00 pm? Get to know your audience and take notes on what their schedules are like. 9:00 am on a Monday morning may not be the most effective engagement time.

"Smart" capabilities

Mobile marketing is where much of the industry is heading. Marketers should continue to provide mobile friendly campaign content. Though this technology is expensive and time-consuming, this strategy will, if performed properly, produce impressive lead lists.

Mobile-friendly marketing content should incorporate three elements:

- Incredible photography
- Video
- Short, concise content

Remember: online marketing has further challenged traditional endeavors and brought about a "not interested" mentality, but even so marketing is a not a lost cause. And we are not here to reinvent the wheel; we are trying to utilize information already out there and determine a new course of action. You may find your company already has components in place needed for a marketing strategy revamp: Print marketing collateral, listings, newsletters and online presence, to name a few. It's now a matter of re-evaluating how the components can better be utilized to spark new brand excitement.