



Marketing Myths Exploded What Your Customers Don't Want

BY TERRY BROCK

It is a new era. We've heard that before about the new economy, the dotcom wave and how things are not as they used to be. Well, surprise; they have changed once again. The old ways of marketing have gone the way of the manual typewriter, the ink blotter and the fast-talking, cigar-smoking salesman with the derby hat.

Customers today want to have companies there to help them, not badger them. Even new economy companies think that by sending a barrage of unwanted email messages, they'll get through and penetrate the minds of the customers. Not true. Here are some old marketing myths and some new ways of looking at the world.

Marketing is telling and selling. The old way of reaching customers was to tell your message in front of a bunch of people hoping that someday, somehow, some way, some of them will buy. Today that is different. Today we listen and learn. I recently spoke with Hans Peter Brondmo of Netcentives about the subject of customer attraction and retention. He contends, and I have to agree, that companies have to be more in tune with what customers are asking for. Successful companies are those that provide a bona fide solution to real problems without forcing something on the customer.

Customers want more technology. This is coming after the demise of several dotcom companies and the plunging stock market in high tech in 2000. 1999 was a great year to invest in technology. 2000 brought about an interesting concept called reality! Customers don't care about the gizmos and gadgets as much as they do about finding a solution to real problems. Be aware of these high-tech companies and market accordingly.

Customers want to be on your mailing list forever. One of the best marketing strategies you can have, according to Brondmo, is to let them unsub-

scribe to your list quickly and easily. This flies in the face of traditional, "keep telling and selling 'til they buy" marketing styles. Companies are more successful when they quickly let customers opt out of a mailing list. Find out what is going on and why they don't want to receive email from you anymore. Is it because of your message? Are they fed up with too many emails coming into their mailbox? Did you do something to irritate them? The "why" of their leaving is critical. Find this out, give the customer what she wants and do it politely, quickly and graciously. Don't leave them on a mailing list they don't want to be on forever, even if your cost is close to zero in dollars. Your cost in customer aggravation could be in the millions of dollars.

Customers detest technology. In contrast to what was said above, customers look at technology as a useful way to get things done. Even the most skeptical have come around to seeing the benefits of technology in most cases. Think of it like a telephone. We want the telephone. It is good, it is nice but we don't want to spend all our time figuring out how the thing will work. We just want it to work easily, do the job and let us do more important things with it (like communicate). Use technology. Explore new ways that the technology can assist you and your customers, but don't think that it will solve the problems by itself. We see this over and over this time of year with the dotcom retailers that don't have sufficient infrastructure to support sales, provide answers and deliver the goods as promised. Technology that helps detect problems before they develop provides customer service.


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Customers want a marketing relationship. Customers don't want a marketing relationship. They want a service relationship. Brondmo asserts that customers want a way for you to help serve them when they want and not bother them. A good technology for this is from a company called Questa, which bills itself as an A to B company. They call A to B Appliance to Business. Their technology is software that is built into various equipment that detects when something is about to break down or needs servicing. Think of an MRI at a medical facility. That machine can generate several thousands of dollars each day when running properly. If it goes down, the medical facility loses great amounts of revenue, not to mention pa-

tients that are inconvenienced or worse yet, harmed. Questa technology will detect problems way in advance and notify technicians of what is going on. This is a great example of using the technology to better serve customers. They couple the technology with the human touch to achieve optimal customer service. This is a web site you want to visit and learn about what they are doing and how the principles can be applied to your business. (questa.com).

Companies have to send messages to customers. This old style thinking is one way marketing. It is advertising where the company takes a message, crafts it to get through to potential customers and then blasts it out

through TV, radio, print or some other form of advertising. On the net, this simply doesn't work. Today customers want a relationship and want to have a two way communication. This benefits companies as you get real, bona fide feedback from people that are buying or thinking about buying your product. You can tailor the message accordingly. Think interactive, not forcing. Think communication, not sending propaganda.

The old ways are changing. Successful companies are those that embrace the customer relationship to provide services, messages and items as dictated by the customer. Using the technology driven by customer demands will be the key to success. 



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