



Marketing Messages

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Ready, aim, fire: Too many companies not hitting marketing targets

Ready. Aim. Fire!

It's a sequence of actions familiar to anyone trying to hit a target. Be it for the purpose of scoring on an opponent or eliminating a pesky wasp nest, execute it in the wrong order and you'll fail to achieve your goal, or worse, get stung!

Then why is it that many businesses mess up their marketing by getting the order wrong, or even missing one of the steps? They fire off in all directions with the latest "got to have" tools in their marketing arsenal. They've got to be on Facebook and LinkedIn. They're Tweeting stuff and following others. They're creating Youtube channels and posting video. They're blogging, sending e-newsletters and building an email database and tracking website traffic. They're playing with location based mobile applications. Heck, they might even be creating their own app, because as everyone knows, apps and mobile media are the future of marketing.

What's wrong with all this? Nothing provided the preparation work of READY and AIM has precluded it. I am a huge advocate of e-marketing, social media and mobile applications in particular. These are great tools, provided they're used with focus and preparation. But if you FIRE before you're ready, and if you don't AIM at a target, aim at too many, or choose the wrong one, the results are bound to be less than what they could have been.

Let's take a look at each area:

READY:

Although most people assume they're ready, there are some big picture questions to ask. What am I selling? What is our expertise? Who will buy it? How am I positioned in the marketplace compared to my competitors? What is my distinct competency? - What is it that I do better than anyone else that is desirable to the marketplace and is not easily copied?

AIM:

Once you're ready, then it's time to take aim with your marketing. Your marketing needs to reflect the benefits of dealing with your business and what makes your brand different and special. You might ask the following questions. What is the essence of my brand? How are we different? What is my brand promise? What are the outcomes of dealing with my business? The goal is for your target customer group to say, "Yes, we need that!" And just who is your target audience? Define your perfect customer. You need to go beyond a demographic and geographic definition here, to define how they think, act and feel as well as what they value. The more specific the characteristics the better, since these will help you determine how best to reach the audience in the FIRE phase when you finally reach out to your market.

FIRE:

This is where you get to be both creative in your execution and media choices. But the key is to tightly correlate the behaviours of the group you defined in the AIM phase with the techniques you choose to reach out. You may use traditional media, new social and mobile media or a combination of the two. Or you might use direct selling techniques. It really depends on who your perfect customer is and how you are best to permeate their world.

The key point here is this: do not fire before you are ready and have taken aim. It confuses the marketplace and frankly it can be a waste of money, time and effort. In a media world with lots of new toys and tools at our disposal it is tempting to FIRE off in all directions trying stuff out. But the same marketing rules still apply. Do your preparation work first!

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