

Getting The Most From Your Marketing

Our research suggests that many technology businesses are dissatisfied with the results of their marketing effort. Too much spend, not enough sales leads, not enough awareness, not enough revenue. But it could be different. **John Savage**, Managing Director, of 4sight Business Development has some practical advice on how to overhaul your marketing and maximise the return on your investment.

What Is Marketing?

The primary role of marketing in SME's should be to generate high quality sales leads. Anything else is a luxury that requires a strong justification. For technology companies this often means translating the capability of the core technology into strong end-user propositions and then choosing the best route to communicate with the right audience.

How Much Are You Spending And What On?

The sad fact is that lots of companies don't know the answer to these questions. This is partly because they just don't keep track of marketing as a separate line item and partly because they don't recognise what is a marketing cost. For many businesses YOU are the main marketing cost. The time you spend talking to prospects, to channels, to partners is marketing. Is it money well spent or are there ways to delegate or outsource?

The 'P-word'. Planning

You get a call from "Software Weekly". Opportunity to get full page spread for half the normal price. Well it might be cheap but does it fit with your business objectives or market focus? If you buy this what won't you be able to do later on? The only way to resolve these issues is to develop a marketing plan, in advance, that sets out clear objectives, specific activities and a budget. If a new opportunity arises you can then take a considered view and either substitute it for a planned activity or find additional budget.

Sharpen Your Focus

All marketing activities benefit from clear and tight focusing. Deciding where to focus is a major challenge for any business but once a market focus has been determined target audiences can be identified and you can adopt

the rifle as opposed to the shotgun approach. Focus may mean that some marketing activities become more relevant than others for example direct mail and telemarketing as opposed to advertising.

Make It Relevant

Closely linked to focus is the ability to make your marketing messages relevant to the target audience. The more clearly defined the target the more specific and relevant can be the message used in your direct mail or on our website. Of course relevance can go further than marketing messages and can extend into the offer you make to the customer.

Choose The Right Approach

There are lots of marketing communications approaches. Choosing the right one, the one that is most appropriate to the message and the audience isn't easy. Here is *4sight's guide to the pluses and minuses of just a few marketing approaches.*

Advertising

For B2B marketing this is normally only an option where the advertising medium is highly targeted. Otherwise you are spending lots of money talking to people who have absolutely no interest.

Direct Mail

Can be the most effective form of focussed marketing communications in terms of leads per pound spent. But it requires rigorous preparation to be successful. The most common problem is not checking your database or mailing list before a mail shot. "Gone aways" mean wasted budget. Inaccuracies can mean lost leads.

4sight has successfully used variations on direct mail to achieve above average response rates.

Exhibitions

Offer the opportunity to get face to face. But exhibitions consume marketing budget, and particularly man-time, like nothing else.

If you do use exhibitions then set up a good data collection system to see who has visited and why. Use the data to qualify a particular event in or out next time around.

Literature

All companies need literature whether it is in hard copy form or available for download. The most important question for any literature you produce is, 'does it focus on the things that matter to those who will be reading it?'

Think about client relevant case studies, white papers or articles as alternatives to a glossy brochure. To get best value try and make the content of your literature multi-purpose: for use in handouts, letters and on the web-site.

Telemarketing

Telemarketing can be a highly effective way of generating new opportunities. As with direct mail its vital to have a cleaned-up, qualified database. It is also important to have a clear story for the telemarketer to work with: a story where you have thought out the answers to possible questions before a call takes place. Finally choose your callers very carefully – if your product isn't cheap and cheerful then make sure it's not sold that way.

Web-site

For most technology businesses developing a web-site may not be a technical challenge. Creating a web-site that attracts and interests your customers may be more of a challenge.

It may be obvious to say that you need to define the role of the web-site. Unfortunately we all know sites that say nothing about what the company can do for us but plenty about their Flash animation skills!

Make It Effective

Each element of your marketing expenditure has a key role to play and needs to be reviewed regularly against target to ensure that it keeps delivering for you.

Create The Linkages

While each marketing activity has its role to play, overall effectiveness can be increased when the activities are integrated together in a marketing campaign.

Measure The Results

When planning any marketing activity it is important to think through how you will be able to measure the results e.g. response rates to different sales letters, qualified leads from an exhibition. It is also important to ensure that all the costs are taken into account when comparing effectiveness – for example not just the cost of the exhibition space and stand but also the days spent manning the stand.

Use The feedback

Marketing communication is a 2-way process and systematically capturing feedback gained from your marketing activities can provide important input into your future communications planning.

In Summary

To get the most from your marketing:

- Decide where you are going to focus before doing anything!
- Make your communications relevant
- Choose the right approach
- Make it effective
- Make linkages work for you
- Measure results
- Use the feedback



About The Author

Prior to establishing 4sight John held a number of high-level marketing posts at AT&T and AT&T ISTEEL, including Directorship of the Industry Systems division. His experience covers both strategic market planning and tactical campaign implementation. John has also held senior marketing posts in both local government and industry.

Contact Us

4sight has helped companies like BT, Digica, Dynistics, ITNET, Ramesys and Telewest. For further information on how we can help you get the most from your marketing please contact John Savage on 01384 444899 or by email at john.savage@4sightltd.co.uk

Or visit the 4sight website for more information at <http://www.4sightltd.co.uk>