

“Three Core Marketing Principles”



When I began coaching small businesses on marketing, I had requests from entrepreneurs who never marketed, but were facing bankruptcy if they didn't bring in customers immediately. Sadly, these business owners might have built highly successful companies if only they'd put marketing programs in place. Often they'd struggle to bring in customers without prospect databases, website, marketing tools or materials, and often with little or no name recognition in the marketplace.

If this story seems a bit familiar, it's time to take a proactive stance with the marketing of your business. If you're a new business, consider this a cautionary tale and begin marketing your company today.

Your first step is to identify what your marketing message should be. It's critical to create a benefit-oriented message that'll resonate with your prospects and then carry it through all your new tools, from your company website, brochure to advertising and PR.

Start by answering these three fundamental questions:

1. What are you really marketing?

Chances are there's a difference between what you think you're selling and what your customers really want. Suppose you own a furniture restoration business—you might think you're selling a two-stage, long-lasting finish for worn furniture—while that may be an important *feature* of your service, what customers are really looking for are the *benefits* those *features* deliver. In this case, that would be a beautiful piece of furniture that looks like new again.

Features are the characteristics of your product or service, while *benefits* tell customers what they'll get from those *features*. As you build your new marketing message, lead with the *benefits* and explain them with *features*. For example, the furniture refinisher might promise to make old furniture look new again thanks to a two-stage, long-lasting finish.

2. Who wants to buy what you market?

It's always easier for a marketer to fill a need than to create one. So for the shortest route to success, identify prospects who already want to buy what you sell.

3. Why will people want to buy from you?

Prospects that need what you market will be shopping—and probably buying...with your competitors. So to succeed, you must take market share away from someone else. What can you do or provide that'll add

sufficient value to make buying from you more attractive than purchasing elsewhere? Whatever that something may be, embrace it and turn it into your competitive advantage. This may require a bit of creativity, such as bundling a group of features or products together to create a compelling package. Or if you're a retailer, you might need to change your hours of operation to make shopping more convenient. Or a small restaurant could add takeout services.

Take time today to answer these three important questions and formulate a core message that'll resonate with your prospects. Then develop a family of materials and select media tactics that'll help you reach your prospects on an ongoing basis. Since it takes multiple impressions to move prospects through the sales cycle, be patient and persevere. You'll find that proactively building your business keeps it on a more economically even keel.

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