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A Sales and Marketing Plan Can Multiply Results

By Mike Williams

Building your company's brand by defining it through a well thought out sales and marketing plan, and then backing it up with an excellent customer experience, will multiply your results. We're not talking about brochures, logos and slogans as the beginning and end; rather, the focus is on the quality of the brand in terms of execution of mission measured by results (the real stuff).



Every company has an image or reputation whether they like it or not, even if it is merely local, and not widely known. But taking on a proactive strategy to build brand and disseminate a firm's mission will increase the profitability of your company. So what kinds of sales and marketing initiatives are important to be taking full advantage of during these fast-changing times? Here are five to consider.

Market Analysis

Do an analysis of the customers you're serving today and the returns you're making versus the effort expended. Chances are you'll find that one third of your customers produce a return that's within an acceptable range for you, while another third are over-producing or yet another third are under-producing when it comes to margins. Identify those customer types that are over-producing (or providing the highest margins) and focus more sales and marketing effort toward them. For those customer types you define as under-producing, reduce your efforts in their direction or set a plan in place to get their margins up.

Better Brand Awareness

A brand is a name used to identify and distinguish a specific product, service, or business. People engaged in branding seek to develop or align the expectations behind the brand experience, creating the impression that a brand associated with a product or service has certain qualities or characteristics that make it special or unique. Work to improve the awareness of your brand and don't overlook the fact that the brand is also you – and what you bring to your customers' experience when they do business with you. In our industry, there are a small number of large

players and a large number of small players. Because of limited resources, the smaller ones have to rely mostly on the quality of service they provide to be recognized as a brand.

Viral Marketing

Just about everyone has a web site today, and many are taking advantage of email as a form of direct marketing. But are you taking advantage of the viral marketing opportunities that are out there? Viral marketing is a buzzword that refers to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness or achieve other objectives (such as product sales) through self-replicating viral processes. The more commonly known social networks out there today include Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn. At least with Facebook and LinkedIn, be sure you have a profile of yourself posted as well as one for your company that others can join or link to. This will create a communications bridge that allow you to present yourself and your services in a more targeted manner, rather than the typical “scatter gun” advertising approach.

RFPs and RFIs

Be both selective and professional in your responses to Requests for Proposal or Requests for Information that you receive from prospective customers. Sometimes RFPs are sent out simply to benchmark pricing and an incumbent already has the business and there aren't planning to make a change. Don't spend the time or effort responding to these until you know more about the company, their people, their goals and objectives, etc. When you determine that the RFP is the “real deal” and you have a valid opportunity to gain new business, then put your best foot forward and spend the time and resources needed to present a first-class RFP response.

If you following some of the suggestions made here, they will go a long way in helping you to grow your business with the right kinds of customers and help ensure that you maximize your margin potential at a time when the pressure on margins is likely to be very intense.

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Note: Mike Williams is chief operating officer of Sunteck Transport Group. Sunteck is a non-asset based transportation services company, providing transportation capacity and related transportation services through its agent network to shippers throughout the United States and Canada. Sunteck's services include ground transportation coast-to-coast, local pick-up and delivery. Sunteck has strategic alliances with less-than-truckload, contract carriers, truckload common carriers and independent owner-operators. For more information, visit www.sunteckagent.com.

