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Are You A Fragmenter?



By Duane Carey

Riddle: When does something plus something equal nothing?

Answer: When the “something” is fragmented marketing and advertising.

A fragmented approach can result in wasted money and disappointing results; in other words, a whole lot of nothing. So it's a real shame that so many of us are fragmenters. Are you a fragmenter? With apologies to Jeff Foxworthy, let's find out:

If you've ever bought an ad because the salesperson was cute, you might be a fragmenter.

If you will “try anything once”, you might be a fragmenter.

If you assume that the effectiveness of an ad is directly proportional to its cost, you might be a fragmenter.

If you allocate your marketing funds according to the “deals”, “specials”, and Ravens' tickets offered by salespeople, you might be a fragmenter.

Come on, admit it, you're a fragmenter aren't you? Well the good news is, you're not alone – many of your colleagues and competitors are too. And the better news is that there's a

cure, which is almost guaranteed to work. Just follow these three easy steps: Plan, Measure, and Tweak (and repeat).

Plan

By planning ahead, you can minimize emotion and stay on track. Although there are plenty of guides at the book store to get you started, it's always best to work with an experienced professional who knows what typically works for your industry and location. A well-crafted plan will minimize your chances of becoming a fragmenter. In a nutshell, it will contain strategies for increasing revenues and market share. It may contain elements of advertising, public relations, client- and referral-source relations, collateral (printed materials), and direct selling.

Each of these elements are important and interrelated. For example, a restaurant might spend 5 or 10% of its revenue on advertising, but if the food and service are sub par, those funds will be wasted. Conclusion: the best marketing is always word-of-mouth, so make sure that product quality and service are always the highest priority – everything else is supplemental (but also very important).

A plan will also help you maintain discipline and stay on track toward reaching your objectives. Too many business owners invest their scarce

resources in marketing and then bail out before achieving the desired results because they had inflated and unrealistic expectations. Finally, the plan will help you maintain message consistency across various media and customer service approaches.

Measure

How do you know if your marketing is working? After you have implemented the primary elements of the plan, it's time to measure the effectiveness. If you use coupons or vouchers to entice customers, it's fairly easy to track the results. But what if you use a combination of, say, cable TV and newspaper advertising, combined with a renewed emphasis on customer service? How do you measure the effectiveness of the approach? The best way is to watch your bottom line. Are your sales increasing? If so, by how much? Are you getting a reasonable return on your marketing dollar.

Many business owners assume that the best way to measure the effectiveness of their advertising efforts is to simply ask “how did you hear about us?”. But this approach has many flaws. The most important flaw is that people really don't know the answer even though they're sure they do! In his book *The 33 Ruthless Rules of Local Advertising*, Michael Corbett recounts a grand opening of a lumber yard, at which he and his boss stood

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at the front door with the lumberyard owner and asked each customer how they had heard about the new store. Roughly 50% cited radio, 30% said TV, and 20% said they saw the ad in the newspaper. There was just one problem: they had never run an ad on TV. So nearly a third of the respondents cited, with confidence, an advertising source that was never used. Another significant problem with the “how’d you hear about us” approach is that it is applied in such a limited manner. Most employees and business owners forget to ask, although they’ll often insist that they ask everyone.

The only true measure of effectiveness is the bottom line. Are sales or profitability rising? Does the trend exceed the background trend that would be expected regardless of marketing efforts? Tough questions, indeed, but a little analysis can usually uncover the answers.

Tweak

It makes no sense to measure results if you’re not prepared to do something about them. This is where you need to think like a scientist, adjusting one variable at a time and gauging the results. You can start by cutting back

on the things that your gut says don’t work and increasing the things that you feel (or observe) are working. After you make your tweaks, step back and objectively view the results again. Eventually, through this iterative process, you will find your optimal marketing mix. And best of all, you will no longer be a fragmenter trying “a little of this and a little of that” with no real results to justify your investment.