



InGenius

Review

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A review of
great thinking
from

INGENUITY MARKETING GROUP

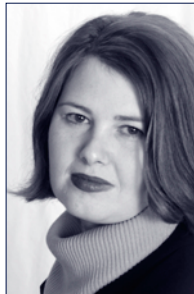
a marketing and training firm that works primarily with professional service organizations and small businesses.

We offer strategic marketing planning and coaching, marketing program development, and curriculum and training mainly in the areas of consultative selling, professional service marketing, and customer service.

Wendy Nemitz



Dawn Wagenaar



MARKETING IS NOT A FOUR LETTER WORD, but it is highly complex.

By Dawn Wagenaar, Principal

Marketing, selling, advertising, public relations, sponsorships, sales promotion, business development and especially branding are terms that can be confusing and expensive to people who are committed to growing their firms. Unless you have a good grasp of what each of these areas is supposed to do to help you gain clients, you might be confused.

MARKETING

Marketing is anything that puts you in front of someone you want to do business with, do business with again, or refer others to you. This definition frees you up to be creative and acknowledge that any contact you have with clients, prospective clients, and referral sources is marketing.

Marketing should be considered any kind of interaction that you or the firm has between clients, prospective clients, referral sources, prospective referral sources, everybody (including salespeople, UPS, the postal service person—anyone that steps into or calls your office or comes into contact with you and your firm’s employees).

Every contact must be considered marketing. This includes telephone conversations, financial statements, how the tax return looks, work done at the client’s office, choices about dress code, voicemail messages, and office decor.

What are you really marketing? In promoting accounting, legal and consulting services, what you market and sell is you. Marketing is everything that involves you, your clients, your referral sources, or the community.

Marketing is also the most encompassing of these terms. If your job description reads “Marketing Director,” you could wind up doing nearly anything (or closer to the truth, nearly everything).

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BRANDING

Is it a logo? Is it a color? Just try this quiz.

Four words that tell you about a great household product:

“Don’t squeeze the _____.”

Three words that tell you that you have just bought a great sporting goods product:

“Just ____ ____.”

The one word that lets you know that these two products are leaders in their industry is: “Brand.”

Here are some great brands. What do you think about when you think of?:

- a. Tiffany’s
- b. Hallmark
- c. Coke
- d. Pepsi

Branding means different things to different people. If you are a manufacturer of a product or in a service industry, the one word that sums up branding is PROMISE. You make a branding promise to your customers to deliver products at an acceptable standard and quality; these are the claims you communicate to your clients about many features and benefits. It’s extremely important to keep those promises.

If you are a customer, you have an expectation that the product or service will meet or exceed the quality, value, standards, features, benefits, attributes of the product, or service you intend to purchase. You have a brand expectation that the promise will be kept.

The last important part of the branding equation is that brands are emotional. They are feelings—in the customers’ and prospects’ minds. These feelings can make the difference in the way your customers feel about you as opposed to your competition. If you have a bigger share of your customer’s mind, you probably have a bigger share of the money they are willing to spend on that type of product.

How do you brand a professional service firm? Start with a great and memorable tagline. Skip words like “quality,” “excellence,” and “professional.” They are overused and so

consequently mean little. Choose a color and font. Use them consistently. Most importantly, teach your people how to talk about the firm in ways that back up the brand.

If you hire a firm to do “branding,” make sure you know what the deliverables are. It can be a very expensive new logo or it can be a whole new way of communicating what is unique about your firm to the market.

SALES

Because our services are “invisible,” many firms go out of their way to distinguish their services from the competition’s. That is difficult because you can’t see them. This inability to touch our products means that who we are as service providers is critical to the sales process. We are the product.

We don’t want to expect results from marketing that can only be accomplished through active selling. Marketing gets you there. Selling is what you do once you get there to convert the prospect into a client. You can really improve your comfort level with selling by taking some classes and having a process you follow.

If you looked up selling in the dictionary you may see something like “to persuade others to accept.” Not a surprise. But let’s look at it in a new light. Try this: Selling is about “motivating client commitment.” This suggests more of a pull than a push approach. The key to selling successfully with this approach is presenting your “case” in a way that is easy for the client to accept. It’s about focusing on the buying process, not the selling process. In the buying process, it’s the client that matters, not you. Selling professional services is much more about finding out what the client wants to buy than pushing anything on them.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business development is the process of establishing and enhancing long-term business relationships, where all parties involved benefit and profit. More or less, it’s the initial part of the sales process. Many firms are hiring outsiders to do business development, which, with the right expectations, can be a perfect fit. Find someone who is good at thinking

strategically and great at meeting new people. They can help your professionals select the right trade associations, keep up on industry news, and introduce you to the right contacts.

People who are good at business development are not always “closers.” Think of them as “openers.” They give you opportunities you could probably not have created without them.

SALES PROMOTION

Another tool is sales promotion. According to the Institute of Sales Promotion, sales promotion comprises a range of tactical marketing techniques, designed within a strategic marketing framework, to add value to a product or service to achieve specific sales and marketing objectives. Or in other words, it is a short-term incentive to encourage the purchase and/or sale of a product or service. Sales promotions can include anything from discounts to offers of extra services or gifts.

Some CPAs promote their tax services by giving clients a copy of their tax returns on CD-Rom. Sometimes other professionals give away items such as coffee cups. These are tangible ways to promote invisible products to clients.

ADVERTISING

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, and services by an identified sponsor. Television, radio, magazines and the Internet are among the media used. Advertising can reach more people cheaper (per exposure) and faster than personal contact efforts, and it can help make those efforts more effective. Clients may be more receptive to personal selling initiatives after exposure to an advertisement.

It is hard to sell to clients who have never heard of you. Advertising is a quick (but rarely cheap) way to make sure that clients you would like to acquire know your name.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships of events or causes in the community involve giving money or in-kind services to a nonprofit so that they can create something. Many firms sponsor public TV or radio because it is more prestigious than advertising. When choosing what to sponsor, most firms consider:

- Will my prospective clients and current clients see the sponsorship?
- Is it a cause that means something to us?
- Is someone from the firm active in the organization?

PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

PR is building good relations with the firm’s various publics by obtaining favorable publicity, building a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavorable rumors, stories or events. PR should essentially be used to maintain and enhance an organization’s image. While many PR activities stimulate inquiries or even buying by clients, the main purpose of these activities is to form, maintain or change attitudes.

PR helps position you and your firm as experts. It is worth about six times as much as an advertisement in terms of being read and being credible. Generally you do not pay to be included in a story or featured in an article.

You can improve your chances of being in the news by creating and maintaining relationships with local reporters. However, PR is now usually in the hands of professionals. PR people “pitch” story ideas to business periodicals, newspapers, and broadcast or Internet media and help writers and editors find good sources.

In addition to all you have to know in your profession, marketing a professional service is a complex business in itself. If you would like some help planning the best and most cost-effective approaches, contact me at 651 690 3358 X 2 or Dawn@ingenuitymarketing.com

Cutest Baby in the World Turns One!



Bella Meier celebrated her first birthday June 16th with parents Scott Meier and Dawn Wagenaar. The unbiased experts at Ingenuity have voted her world’s cutest baby. Since the apple does not fall far from the tree, we expect a Bella world-takeover by 2040.