



SOFT MARKETING STRATEGIES

Whether you are marketing on-line or off-line, your potential customers are scared, scarred, and skeptical. Consumers, today, are quite resistant to sales messages.

In the mid 70's, a store could run a "10% off" sale and people would flock in. Then the big stores got into the discounting mentality. Now it is common to see "70% off" sales - especially in jewelry. The consumer is not too long a fool. These promotions do not produce the wanted response anymore.

Repeated, high powered sales events create a downward spiral. Eventually you cannot offer a big enough "deal" to get the public excited. The big three car makers played this game for three years. By January 2006 they found themselves in deep financial trouble. They had borrowed customers from the future by offering a bigger, better sale every couple months. It is a deep grave from which to crawl out.

Successful businesses, now and in the future, will be practicing what I call "soft marketing". To make sales today, marketing efforts have to come in under the consumer's sales-pitch radar.

Many of the big companies have known this for some time because of their on-going marketing analysis. You can take advantage of their research for free.

Look at Coca-Cola for example.

Coke was famous for their flashy, high-powered TV ads. Today you seldom see such ads. Have they cut back on their marketing expenditure? No. In fact, they are now spending more using soft marketing techniques. Most people do not even realize they are being advertised to. That is the beauty and power of soft marketing.

Here are two ways Coke is using a soft marketing approach to build profits and market share.

1. You may have seen Coke products displayed on TV shows and movies. "American Idol" is a popular TV show, with about 35 million viewers. The three judges are a big part of the success of the show. In front of each judge is a tall Coke cup. These characters, in effect, are recommending Coke to their viewers. Coke pays a lot of money for this and sells a lot of product based on this endorsement type advertising.

2. Coke brings new loyal customers in the "back door" using nostalgia products. Coke collectibles are a huge market today. And once caught up in the hobby of Coke collectibles, a person, and the whole family, become avid Coke drinkers. And Coke is being advertised to everyone who enters that home.

Coke's soft marketing techniques have made them almost bullet-proof in the soft drink market. They have built an image of being the most popular soda. Since it is human nature to want to be on the winning team, swarms of new customers are joining the group every day.

Here are three powerful soft marketing tactics you can start using today.

1. Become known as an expert. Credibility and trust are the two most important ways to succeed in any business. Write and submit articles and press releases. If you cannot write, hire someone to do it for you. There are several good writing service web sites on the internet. They are very cheap. Also, you should join a "Private Label Rights" content site. They provide already written articles that you can put your name on as your own. This is pure gold for on-line or off-line marketing.

If you have a business on Main Street, your local newspaper should be your best friend. Do whatever you can to develop a relationship with them. You may or may not be able to get your news articles and releases printed for free, but even buying the space will return big dividends.

2. Give away a free report on the topic of your product or service. Your local newspaper will probably give you some free editorial space in the beginning if the report is of interest and free to their subscribers. A real life example is a realtor in this area that offers a free report - "10 Ways To Get Top Dollar For Your Home". It reveals what is valuable, and what is not, when getting your home ready for sale. With this he becomes the expert in the consumer's mind and a person who cares about them.

You can get a book or report written for you for a few hundred dollars by the same on-line companies that ghost-write articles and press releases or from your "Private Label Rights" membership site. This realtor has been using the same report for over ten years now. It is estimated this report has generated about \$1.6 million in profits.

3. Partner with related, non-competing businesses. One dry cleaning operation partnered with clothing stores in the community. The store, when selling a garment, would give a gift certificate to the customer. The gift certificate was good for a free first-time cleaning and pressing of that new garment.

The customer thought the store was paying for the dry cleaning. The fact is the dry cleaner was giving the service for free. The customer saw the store as being a "hero" and the store saw the dry cleaner as being a "hero". Both stores gained a load of new and repeat customers.

Use these soft marketing strategies or think up your own to fit your product or service. Have some brainstorming sessions with other energetic, savvy business people, like you. The resulting ideas will amaze you, and your traffic and profits will increase as if by magic.

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