

7 Steps to Marketing Success

The Simple Rules to the Selling Game

by Greg Tozian

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INTRODUCTION

Being good at marketing is like dominating at basketball, or playing righteous blues guitar. The rules of the game are simple to describe and understand, but your success at the endeavor all depends on the right moves: excellent execution.

To market almost anything to almost anyone, the game entails seven steps. Whether someone at your company (if you have an in-house marketing department) or an agency/consulting partner is going to execute is up to you. But here is what you, or they (in partnership with your feedback and approval) have to do:

THE 7 STEPS

1. Define your target audience(s)

You may have one type of customer, or numerous types. If you are in the business-to-consumer (B2C) space, you may sell to such “demographics” as men and/or women, people of a certain age group (we call cohorts), people with particular interests (sailing, video game playing, street fashions, etc.).

If you're in business-to-business (B2B), you are going to have to know the specific industry verticals, job titles, job descriptions and the day-to-day responsibilities of the people who are the influencers and the decision makers in the purchase process for your products and services.

2. Know whether your targets want to fill a need, or fulfill a desire

In most cases, there are only two types of target audiences. First, there are people who actually need something (they are eager to solve a pain of some kind). This type includes people who need better ways to do their taxes (you could sell them your services, or software), those who must find a way get to work in the morning (looking for a low-end dependable car, commuter bike, or monthly bus pass), or those seeking some kind of continuing education so they can get a better job, etc.

The other kind of buyer is looking to fulfill a desire, or a dream. This entails, in the common parlance, “selling people stuff they don't need.” Most people who buy a Fender Stratocaster electric guitar, for instance, are either a young teenager who's seen a Jimi Hendrix video on YouTube, or an older weekend warrior who thinks it would be cool, or make them a better guitar player to have that specific instrument. (They don't earn their living from guitar slinging, like Eric Clapton does.) Selling them a guitar requires marketing geared toward punching the button of a dreamer.

3. Know the benefits of your products/services

Once you know “who” your targets are and what they “need/desire,”

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you must be able to describe what the benefits of your products and/or services are for that specific person and that specific pain or dream. We call this crafting value propositions for those people/goals. You should have value propositions articulating what each specific target persona gets from each specific product or service. What's the take-away for them?

4. Decide what evidence you have that you can actually deliver

When you know the value propositions you have for each target, you need to be able to back up your claims of value with what we call proof points. How do you deliver on what you promise? You need one or more proof points to backstop each value proposition.

5. Describe what's so special about you

If you are selling a product or service that lots of people actually need, or many dream of having, then there are no doubt scads of people selling exactly the same kind of solutions/widgets. And with this thing called the Internet, accessible to the whole wide world, you are putatively competing against a mind-boggling number of other businesses. You need to differentiate yourself from the pack. Nail down what makes your product or service unique. I mean, really unique. Why are you special?

6. Know the calls-to-action

Knowing what you sell, and the value, benefits and uniqueness of it for exactly who is no good if you don't drive your target audience members to action that is mutually beneficial for them and your company. This may be news to you, but if you don't tell or show people — in no uncertain words, and hopefully also no uncomplicated still or (moving) video pictures — precisely what to do, they not only won't do what you want them to, they won't do anything (except move on at lighting speed to the next website, ad, etc.). Calls-to-action might be to make a purchase online, call someone, send someone an email, download a PDF, join your social network presence, come out to an event you are attending/speaking at, etc. (Don't place more than one, possibly two calls-to-action in close proximity to one focused marketing "touch." If you do, people will often be confused by too many choices and do nothing.)

7. Craft your marketing pitches well, and track their effectiveness

All six steps above could fall into or at least have one foot firmly in the "brand and business clarity" bucket. But crafting and delivering marketing messages entails expert execution (just as doing a good free throw, or playing soulful three-chord guitar does). You may need excellent copywriting, or a compelling explanatory video to articulate your value propositions, proof points, benefits and calls-to-action. You may require a simple-to-use website, as easily visible on mobile devices (such as tablets



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and smartphones) as it is on computers. You might need pay-per-click ads, or a great social media presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest and/or YouTube. But the marketing pitch is all about execution, bolstered on the front end by terrific brand learning (again, see steps 1 through 6), and then keen-eyed analysis of your reporting data/metrics.

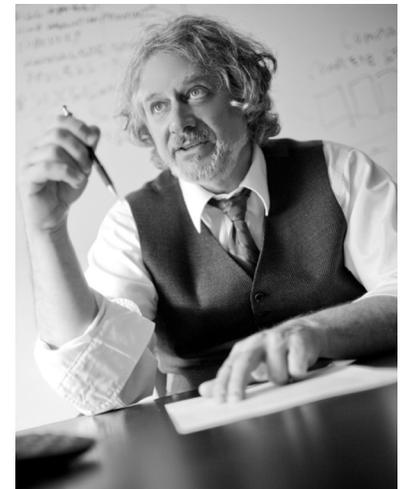
However you put your messages out there, make sure you look at the data coming in from tools such as Google Analytics and other simple to acquire mechanisms (there are many free ones attached to popular social media platforms, for instance). You should be looking for not just direct “sales,” but also the leads coming in, and the level of engagement in target conversations and feedback on your brand.

CONCLUSION

If you correctly take these seven steps to selling well, in all likelihood you'll be many times better at promotion than the bulk of your competitors, because most companies either drop the ball or flub the guitar solos in executing on their marketing initiatives. If you get the seven steps right, you should be giving your brand a shot in the arm. That pleasant sound you'll hear in the background will be the cash register singing your favorite song.

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