

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

REPORT

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Greater Maryville
Chamber of Commerce

Strategies and Trends for the Successful Business

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IDEAwatch

Tips for Growing Your Business

■ **You may have a brilliant new business strategy**, but it could be doomed unless your employees are excited about it, says leadership guru John P. Kotter. He suggests a counter-intuitive idea to build support for a new idea: encourage employees to criticize it. This grabs their attention and creates excitement. If you are good at playing defense, you will win them over. Provide honest, commonsense responses that are clear and concise so that employees won't get bored and tune you out. The most common argument is "We've been successful, why change?" To which the best response is: "Life evolves, and to continue to succeed, we must adapt."

Source: www.inc.com

■ **Do people look forward to receiving your e-newsletter?**

Create a powerful communications platform by implementing these ideas: Consider giving readers an incentive for reading your news, such as a free download, credit or gift. Highlight customer success stories. People love to read about other people, so show how real people make use of your product or service. And showcase your community spirit. Customers love doing business with companies that support local charities and initiatives. Share what you're doing to help out and invite your customers to join you.

Source: www.marketingpros.com

■ **After someone has done a professional favor for you**, such as introducing you to an esteemed contact, don't make the mistake of leaving them hanging, wondering about the result. Be sure to follow up and close the loop, no matter if the news is good or bad. This simple practice shows respect and helps to maintain a positive two-way relationship.

Source: blogs.hbr.com

MARKETING

Injecting Urgency into Your B2B Marketing

by Doug Kessler

WE TALK A LOT about the battle for attention in B2B and about "buyer attention deficit disorder" and the relentless Mississippi of info-dreck that gushes through us all every hour of every day. And we recognize how the best-laid campaigns of the humble B2B marketer don't stand a snowball's chance in Haiti anymore.

But what about one of the most important implications of all of this? The new challenge facing every B2B marketer — the need to create urgency.

In today's multi-threaded, multi-tasking multi-verse, it's no longer good enough to make a clear, compelling case about why someone should do something. You have to make a case about why they have to do it *now*.

It's no longer good enough to change someone's mind (difficult as this is); now we have to change their very next action. We need the click *now* or we'll never get it. We need the download *now* or the chance is gone. We need the engagement *now* or they're off into the ether (or to a competitor). And, ultimately, we need the sale *now* or we have to start all over again.

Of course, part of this is about identifying the people most likely to be urgency-sensitive — the ones who are ready to move to the next stage but need a nudge (or, let's face it, a kick). If you're talking to a tire-sniffer with a three-year timescale, no amount of urgency-injection will make a difference (that's where lead nurturing comes in). But if you're talking to someone already leaning forward, already swaying back and forth to our plaintive ballad, already tripping toward the next step in the rocky road to revenue, then a sense of urgency really, really matters.

Here are five ways to inject urgency into your B2B marketing:

1. Make the cost of delay tangible.

This is probably the single most important thing you can do in the urgency-injection process: show people how much their dithering is costing them.

One of our clients, Reevoo, can show exactly how much a prospect is wasting

It's become harder to get prospects to take action now. Here are five ideas for giving them a nudge.

every month they delay their decision. Their service improves conversion rates for e-commerce sites. They know exactly how much that means to each prospect, based on their traffic, current conversion rate and average transaction value. So they do the math and show how delay is quite simply burning money. They can make powerful statements like "If you do this now instead of in three months, the extra profits you make will pay for the whole service. It will be free."

Every B2B marketer needs to do these calculations. If your product or service saves people time and money, then delaying the purchase loses that time and money. If you can help people seize profitable, new opportunities, then delay means losing those opportunities and that profit.

You can't be shy about this. If you believe in your product, you can look anyone in the eye and show them the cost of delay.

2. Drive down the sense of risk.

People won't overcome their inertia if they feel they might get a smack in the head for doing so. It's safer staying on the sofa. Part of injecting urgency is reducing perceived risk. And that means leveraging all the risk-reducers and credibility-builders in the B2B kit bag: killer testimonials, great cases, awards, reviews, analyst endorsements, etc.

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■ **Test your value proposition with a PPC ad.** The value proposition (VP) is simply defined as the answer to the question: *Why should your ideal prospect buy from you rather than any of your competitors?* It's a basic element in today's marketing plans, but how do you know that you have a winning VP? One way to find out is to test it as a pay-per-click ad on search engines. PPC offers a unique testing environment because it keeps the VP in isolation, provides strict constraints on the amount of words you can use and pits you against your top competitors. To do this, create multiple PPC ads using different VPs. From there, take the top two or three winning ads and integrate the concepts into your landing pages for final testing.

Source: www.marketingexperiments.com

■ **Hiring family members could offer significant tax advantages.**

For example, if your company is a sole proprietorship or partnership, wages paid to your children under age 18 are not subject to Medicare or Social Security taxes, and wages paid to children under 21 are not subject to FUTA tax. Before hiring any family member, discuss the issue with your accountant to make sure you follow all the rules.

Source: www.networksolutions.com

■ **Are your banner ads being ignored?** While banner ad blindness is common, you can improve this malady by giving consumers what they want. According to a report from strategic communications agency Cone, the vast majority of consumers (77%) were motivated by coupons, discounts and other incentives, and nearly half (46%) appreciated efforts to solve a problem or provide more information on a product. Entertaining ads were farther down in the rankings (28%), as were widgets, games and online contests (26%). Also, realize that click-through rate is not the only measure of an effective banner ad. After analyzing more than 100 million conversions through thousands of campaigns worldwide, MediaMind reported only 20.4% resulted from clicks, meaning that 79.6% were the result of viewing the banner without clicking.

Source: www.emarketer.com

Hiring the overqualified pays, study claims

Contrary to conventional wisdom, not every overqualified job candidate will want to leave your company the minute a better offer comes along. In fact, some may stay longer and perform better on the job.

That was one of the conclusions of a recent study published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* by Anthony Nyberg, a researcher at the University of South Carolina. The study, co-authored by Mark Maltarich of St. Ambrose University and Greg Reilly of the University of Connecticut, was based on the analysis of the labor-force behavior of more than 5,000 U.S. adults over a 25-year period.

The authors found that in positions with low cognitive demands, such as garbage collectors or car washers, employees with higher cognitive ability were less likely than others to volun-

tarily leave. "We presume that a lot of people do not want to work in a job that was less demanding than what they were capable of doing but, in fact, a lot of people want to devote a certain amount of brain power or time to other ventures," Nyberg says. Overqualified candidates also may take a less-demanding job for a lifestyle or health choice, an affinity for a company's values or the simple need of earning a paycheck, he says.

When considering an overqualified candidate for a position, ask open-ended questions about what motivates the candidate both at and outside of work to determine whether or not they are consciously acting on what is important to them. Otherwise, you could hire someone who doesn't yet realize the job doesn't truly match their overall objectives.

Source: www.hreonline.com

SBA launches procurement program for women

The U.S. Small Business Administration is encouraging more women small business owners to apply for federal contracts.

The Woman-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program will allow contracting officers to set aside specific contracts for women-owned businesses for the first time, which will help agencies reach their goal of awarding 5% of federal contracting dollars to women.

To qualify, a firm must be at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more women and considered "small" by SBA size standards. The owners must be U.S. citizens. And a woman must manage the day-to-day operations, make long-term decisions for the business, hold the highest position at the business and work there full time.

To apply, visit www.sba.gov/wosb.
Source: TheStreet.com, February 4, 2011

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3. Turn the big leap into mini-steps. Instead of asking for one big jump into a new world, ask for a step. Instead of asking for a 10x-sized commitment, ask for a 1x-sized one.

One example: We helped App-DNA create a Launch Pad product that lets prospects taste their fantastic application compatibility software on a few apps instead of the entire estate.

4. Create a time-limited offer. Creating artificial scarcity is an oldie but still a goodie if done properly. The key is to have a good explanation for why the offer "must end by December 21." If it's just an artificial, marketing-driven offer, the B2B buyer will just roll his eyes and make that vulgar hand gesture that refers to self-abuse. He knows he can get the deal on December 22, too. But if you're about to do a major product release, offering a discount on

the old release, and time limiting the offer, makes sense.

5. Show how fast your solution gets to payback. It's easier to delay things that you feel will take a long time to deliver benefits. If your marketing says, "Get on the 90-step, five-year road to salvation now!" you'll be on the list called "One Day, Maybe." If you can say, "Start now and be swimming in money in two weeks!" you're in with a shot.

So when you write the next piece of content or design the next campaign, ask yourself: Have you done enough to add urgency to your story? To make people act *now*?

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■ Do prospects consider your company to be trustworthy?

Eighty-three percent of well-informed, well-heeled, college-educated people rate a company's trustworthiness as extremely important, according to a survey by Edelman. Trustworthiness ranked even higher than having high-quality products or services and offering fair prices. Some ideas for boosting trustworthiness: 1) Enhance your expert status through publishing and publicity. 2) Make sure reality matches your claims and promises. 3) Seek endorsements from trusted experts. 4) Communicate often with customers and be talked about by credible sources. Survey respondents said they needed to hear something about a company three to five times before they believed it.

Source: www.yudkin.com

■ Want to speed up collections?

The greatest leverage you have when collecting past-due bills is guilt. And people feel the most guilty right around the time they've missed their payment. Let more than a week go by, and the guilt is history. Make sure you send out a late notice within four business days of the due date. You can always add the phrase, "If you've already sent your payment, please disregard this notice."

Source: www.ithinkbigger.com

■ Boost sales by speaking the same language as your prospect.

When you ask prospects about their top priorities and objectives, listen very carefully and record their exact words and phrases in your notes. Later, you can weave their words into your presentation. They may not even realize they are hearing their own words, but the emotional connection will be automatic. Listening is not a guessing game. Be exact in your note-taking, and you will be able to make strong connections with prospects' needs.

Source: *The 12 Best Questions to Ask Customers* by Jim Meisenheimer.

Businesses capitalize on microworker trend

Increasingly, companies of all sizes are using the Internet to access workers across the nation and around the world for short-term projects, or small segments of projects, that pay a few bucks to hundreds of dollars per hour. The tasks might require a few minutes or a few days to complete.

The trend, which goes by many names — crowdsourcing, the human cloud, microwork — benefits companies by finding large numbers of workers to complete projects quickly, finding niche expertise, saving money and making better use of in-house resources. For many freelancers, microwork gives them unprecedented flexibility to work almost anywhere at any time.

A variety of companies have emerged to facilitate these connections. For example, uTest connects companies with software testers. Tongal, which attracts mostly U.S. workers, facilitates the creation of video content and runs the projects like contests. Elance and Freelancer.com facilitate a wide variety

of skills, from creative to administrative to technology, and cater to a global audience.

There aren't any statistics yet as to how much micro-outsourcing might impact the U.S. job market, but there's growing evidence that the movement of work to India and other developing countries is contributing to the jobless recovery in the U.S. Specialization in niche skills by Western workers, even those in cities with a high cost of living, allows them to compete directly with those in developing markets.

For example, Mavenlink offers an online workspace that allows high-level independent workers to collaborate with others on projects, keep track of multiple projects and network with other high-level professionals. Maven Research links experts in various fields with companies needing specific answers, such as an investment firm needing answers about a new market. A typical member makes \$250 to \$500 an hour.

Source: *Businessweek*, February 1, 2011

What's popular now in local marketing?

A new report says small businesses are flocking to Facebook, but turning away from discount deal sites like Groupon despite not having much money or time to spend on marketing.

That's according to a report by MerchantCircle, which surveyed 8,500 small business owners nationwide. The typical local merchant in the survey spends less than \$2,500 a year on marketing, and they tend to spend that small pot of money on cheap campaigns like Facebook and Twitter, as well as tried-and-true methods like search and email marketing.

Facebook continues to be a popular way for merchants to market their business, with 70% using the social network for marketing, up from 50% one year ago. Facebook has now surpassed Google (66%) as the most widely used local marketing method amongst merchants, and is almost tied with Google search (40%) as one of their top three most effective marketing methods.

Facebook Places has already soared past Foursquare to reach a 32% current usage rate. Twitter has also grown in popularity over the past year, with nearly 40% of merchants using the microblogging platform for local marketing.

Mobile marketing isn't perceived as being ready for prime time as few small business owners (15%) do any sort of mobile marketing or advertising. And "daily deal" sites like Groupon or LivingSocial fare even worse with only 11% of respondents having tried these services. Of those that have, 55% would not do it again.

Print advertising, Yellow Pages and direct mail continued their decline, but that doesn't mean they're even close to death. Nearly a quarter of businesses surveyed listed coupons or direct mail in their top three most effective marketing tactics, while 23% listed Yellow Pages and 20% listed print ads in newspapers.

Sources: *Dayton Business Journal*, February 15, 2011; MerchantCircle.com