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HOW DOES YOUR MARKETING *MEASURE UP* IN TODAY'S DOWN ECONOMY?

Business is tough right now. Whether you're selling widgets, launching a new product (you brave soul) or soliciting donations, you're probably feeling the effects of the economy. Advertising and marketing budgets have been slashed because you or your CFO does not see the immediate value. Sales have been cut back to one guy who's Bluetooth is permanently affixed to his ear.....but still no results.

At a time when you need to sell more, cutting your budget is causing you to reach far less people....and that guy in sales won't sell anything if your company doesn't have enough reputation to enable the buyer to buy/donate without perceived risk. Your customer - who may or may not have heard of your company - may like that sales guy but without marketing, has not heard of your company.

Digital marketing is the answer! Ok....one of many answers that could include a giant pile of money or endless supply of customers dropping from the sky but that probably isn't going to happen so let's be realistic. Here are a few tidbits about digital marketing:

1. It's often more cost effective and action-oriented than other media
2. **It's Measurable!!!**

You may think of digital or online marketing as those banners on your favorite websites that you largely ignore. If you do, there's a lot more going on online. Depending on your audience demographic, they are most likely somewhere online. Whether they're creating content, participating by reviewing or commenting or simply gathering information, there is a way to reach your target(s).

Digital marketing can include everything from SEO, PPC, social strategies, community building campaigns and if done right, banners. Within those strategies, you can use your website, syndicated content - such as existing white papers - or create content such as pictures, video, interactive widgets and micro-sites that will appeal to your audiences. Strategies are limitless and largely depend on your market, audience, current online inventory and goals. Always make

sure that your vendor gains a thorough understanding of your business and goals, both online and offline to configure the best results-driven campaign.

Advertising with other media:

When advertising in print, your metrics are basically the circulation of the publication. You need to trust that readers are seeing your ad and responding to it. For television ads, you often need to trust that viewers aren't DVR-ing their show and fast-forwarding through your commercial. According to a Wall Street Journal article from 2007, over the next three years, one study forecasts that the number of cable homes with DVR devices will roughly double to around 32 million, versus the current 17.6 million. That's 32 million cable subscribers potentially forwarding through your costly television commercials.

Television advertising metrics are cryptic in relation to ROI. According to a Bloomberg.com article published in January, 2008, a 30-second spot on "American Idol" was going for \$780,000. A New York Times story in December, 2007, said that the ABC show, "Grey's Anatomy" was getting \$400,000 for a 30-second spot. During the 2003-2004 seasons, a 30 second spot on "Friends" went for \$473,500. In 2006, you could buy a 30 second spot on ABC's "Monday Night Football" for \$323,000. The smaller audience for the CW meant less money for spots: "Smallville" only received \$111,700 for ads on their show (televisionadvertising.com). This does not take into account the strategy behind the commercial or the cost of production. In addition, how do you measure the action of your potential customers?

Of course you could template produce a TV commercial for little outlay and pay for a middle of the night cable timeslot but unless you are targeting insomniacs and understand that ROI will be difficult to measure, this is not an effective use of your marketing dollars.

Measurable Digital Media:

In a time where proof of effectiveness in terms of accomplishing primary goals is of the utmost importance, measurement should be an essential part of every marketing plan. However, other forms of media don't allow the same type of accuracy in measurement. With digital or online marketing, you are able use your website as a means to measure online campaigns through analytics. Not to say that this measurement is entirely lost with offline marketing. If you utilize your website or landing pages on your website in offline advertising to filter your potential customers, you can also measure those results through analytics.

If you have an analytics program like Google or any other program, start to use it to look at referral traffic from various advertising sources. Look at the keywords that your users are inputting to find your company. Look at what pages users are spending time on. Look at your bounce rate; benchmark before you embark on anything new. Stop treating your analytics like

the neglected pickle in your carry-out sandwich box and consume the information. It will be valuable in determining the best use of your limited marketing budget.

The Happy Medium:

According to Marketing Sherpa's recent survey on priorities and pain points for 2009, many marketers still find Web 2.0 development and digital marketing endeavors a challenge. They are comparatively confident in their abilities to execute traditional campaigns and develop traditional content, such as white papers and webinars. But Web 2.0 channels and content are still relatively new to most marketers.

Integrating social media channels and content into traditional campaign activity can be an excellent way to address the need for additional nurturing. Creating blogs and podcasts, and participating in online communities can help you engage with your prospects and customers during the time between outbound marketing campaigns.

Participating in those online activities can also tie into your marketing analytics task by helping you determine the biggest challenges and questions your prospects and customers face in this environment. For example, a blog post that generates a lot of interest and chatter among readers can help you identify new subjects for a webcast or white paper.

In conclusion, the best way to utilize the remainder of your marketing budget is to create a strategic, integrated online campaign and tie in offline endeavors, making your online campaign the central hub. Using this strategy can not only potentially maximize your ROI on typically hard to measure offline media but allow you to measure what endeavors are most effective. By measuring everything, you can adjust your marketing strategies accordingly to accomplish your business goals.

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