



What Has Changed about Marketing?

Answering that question holds the key to spreading your message in the most effective way.

By Andy Slipher

There has been so much technological innovation in recent years that marketers are faced with choices beyond measure. It can be bewildering for anyone charged with allocating marketing dollars on behalf of an organization. And that's what has caused marketers to go awry.

This is an age of unprecedented communications, and yet many still struggle to connect with one another. But this problem isn't the real problem.

The true problem is that too many marketers fail to recognize that only one thing has changed in marketing — technology. That's it. Yes, you now have social media and tweets and followers and apps and branding and re-marketing and analytics and focus groups and ROI and CRM and customer personas and digital and so on. It's all certainly true. But, what has enabled nearly every bit of it is technology.

So prolific is the role of technology in marketing that it has become for some an alluring distraction. Panic and peer pressure set in, and organizations pursue the latest technology-based marketing tactics without taking the time to thoughtfully consider a strategic approach. As legendary philosopher and strategist Sun Tzu once put it, "Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

Marketing must ultimately get the message to the customer — a real person. It's way too easy to distract ourselves (via technology) from what's central in marketing — connecting with a real person and repeating that process again and again to the customer's delight.

Marketing strategy is about a system. Build your marketing around a strategically-based, customer-centric system; then technology becomes a true and valuable tool and not a distraction.

If you want to plan your marketing communications on a more strategic level and with a more integrated and seamless approach, consider the following methods and means to do so:

Strategic Marketing Plan

A strategic marketing plan answers both, "What are we trying to do?" and "How are we going to achieve it?" in a thorough, resolute way that doesn't miss a lick (broad-to-specific). It facilitates a systematic way of measurably and methodically moving your overall marketing activities from point A to point B.

Strategic Brand Plan

Marketers love to talk branding these days, but few truly understand what a brand is. At its core, a brand is simply a

(strong) promise. Everything after that is embodying the promise or not. A brand plan helps an organization answer the why's and how's of their brand in a way that actively demonstrates its value.

Brand Landscape

You need a document that combines visual (graphic, photographic) and conceptual (written) elements to express what your brand is, and what it's not, to your internal audience. It's vital to have such a document to familiarize everyone in your organization on the concept of their own brand so that they can articulate it to others.

Vision

Your organization needs to aspire to something greater in order for its marketing to become something that inspires others. Sometimes there's no inspiring vision – an expression of what the organization aspires to reach or become in the next five to 10 years. Other times, the vision reads as flat, academic, or long-winded. A good vision statement isn't fluff. Rather, it helps all stakeholders reach to something higher.

Public Outreach Strategy

It's also essential to formalize a communications approach for the public at large. This strategy goes beyond communicating with your customers. It's about respecting and interfacing with the general public as influencers, opinion holders, social activists, and supporters of personal, political, and economic interests. The purpose of this strategy is to demonstrate credibility. Once you've built credibility with the public, you'll find it much easier to

respond to criticism and to opposing or competing points of view.

In conclusion, plan your marketing. Don't be led by technology or allow it to distract and overwhelm you. Know who you are, what you want from your marketing, and how you're going to achieve it. Only then will technology become a navigable means to achieve your goals. 

Andy Slipher is founder of Slipher Marketing (slipher.com), a consultancy where strategy comes first, followed by tangible marketing results. He is an accomplished strategist, interim CMO, speaker and writer on marketing strategy, and author of The Big How: Where Strategy Meets Success.

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