



Looking for additional marketing support - hire a customer

By Edward F. Nesta

If you are looking for additional marketing support for your organization look no further than hiring a customer, well okay, not literally.

The current economy, stock market excluded, has been termed many different things, from Digital Economy, Internet Economy, Experiential Economy, etc. The underlying tie to each is Marketing and getting your product or brand in front of people. There are so many different marketing concepts that have grown out of this economy, though many of the concepts are not new but are either repackaged or they have been resurrected. So, if we peel the onion, so to speak, we see that among the many different ways to attract attention, there is the single entity called the customer. I read a recent article where a common marketing concept was "Slash Marketing," which is the act of slashing prices to reach more consumers and attract attention, now who is controlling who in this equation?

Well, back to the single entity customer to look at the question of, "How to get additional marketing from this entity." One of the most powerful marketing channels in today's economy is social networking, which in basic terms is where a group of people convene (electronically or in person) to share common interests or activities. With the advent of the Internet we now have the ability to acquire a tremendous amount of detailed data about a specific type of person, and when you target a specific network that matches the demographic of your product, this should lead to an increased awareness and conversion rate for your product. When you access this social network either directly or indirectly you are accessing a group of people who have built a common bond and trust. If the indirect access is through a satisfied customer, then you are working the trust factor and word-of-mouth promotion of your product, but there is more.

In the past, marketing was geared towards mass marketing, marketers now focus their efforts on micro-targeted marketing to clients who elicit similar interests, traits, or activity to the product they are marketing. Small and midsize companies are always looking to maximize their marketing dollar, and as such, if they have successfully attracted a customer, they need to maximize the information they are providing them, as well as they should be eliciting the customer's involvement and inputs via contests, blogs, wikis, and other creative methods. Consumers are excited to be asked their opinion on something, and even more excited to contribute their ideas to promote a product that they support. An empowered customer becomes an empowered evangelist for your product, thus adding to your dynamic marketing team.

The Internet is an interactive medium, and in this respect the next wave of tools and technology are geared to providing the consumer with interactive opportunities while in the background new statistics tools try to understand more and more about every visit to a website. The idea is to interpret trends and provide information about a product to a customer before they know that they need it.

A top tier website will open a dialogue with their customers to ask for their opinions and in some cases opening up the company's doors and asking for design changes or new creations. The old statement that "Many hands make light work" fits perfectly into dynamically hiring a customer for your marketing team. These are very competitive times, and we need to think beyond our means to stay ahead, so how about some OPM (Other Peoples Marketing). A company can become more innovative when they collaborate with their customer.

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