

No magic bullet to marketing success — answer is consistency, balanced mix

By: Andrea Young



The world is buzzing with tweets, blogs, fans, friends, likes, shares, and a wide array of social media options. The World Wide Web has ushered in a variety of new marketing opportunities and continues to evolve, daily it seems. Online marketing is definitely part of today's landscape and here to stay. However, with all the opportunity and advantages online marketing brings, it doesn't, in and of itself, provide a magic bullet to marketing success.

Marketing, like culture, is evolutionary. Technology, media, values and mores evolve and change over time, and so do marketing practices. What works one year, or for one company, may not be the right formula the next year, or for another company. Successful marketing is a combination of research and planning to determine the best "mix" of online and offline tactics to reach your target audience and your marketing goals. The magic bullet lies in marketing consistently and employing the best mix of tactics and mediums. This is how you achieve marketing success.

No one marketing tactic alone serves as a magic bullet ensuring campaign success. You shouldn't expect stellar results from a once-a-year mailing or a blog that never gets promoted or updated. A successful campaign will be the result of a combination of both online and offline marketing tactics reinforcing one another (not in lieu of one another), consistently over time, that brings the results you desire.

For example, email campaigns are a useful tool in any marketing toolbox and offer many advantages. They are fairly easy to implement, are relatively inexpensive, and provide another avenue to your audiences' inbox. Although there are positives, email doesn't replace other marketing tactics.

Even with its advantages, email is becoming the new junk mail. Email addresses change often, emails land in spam folders, they bounce back undeliverable, they're quickly deleted, they're ignored...they don't provide a marketing panacea. Email marketing supports direct mail and other marketing tactics. It should be used in addition to, not in place of, as to balance out the negatives and reinforce other tactics. You structure a successful marketing plan by integrating all the tools in your marketing toolbox — one marketing method reinforces the other.

A study by Fordham University College of Business Administration revealed that a family of four is bombarded with 1,500 to 3,000 advertising messages per day. In order to rise above the competition, it's imperative that you differentiate your business to existing and potential customers. Taking advantage of as many digital and traditional marketing tactics as possible will get you closer to succeeding in our sensory-overloaded environment.

Another example of how our cultural and marketing landscape has changed is how people search for information. Today, the majority of consumers search for goods and services on the Web before they open the Yellow Pages. This changes how we should allocate marketing dollars. It makes sense to invest dollars in a quality website rather than expensive Yellow Page ads. A website is now your virtual storefront and a necessity for businesses today — and not just a website — a quality website (this is another article altogether, stay tuned...). Occasionally re-evaluate how you're allocating your marketing dollars. Do you have the best mix? Can you reallocate dollars to get more bang for your buck? Test and track. A website may provide a better ROI annually than a Yellow Page ad.

Don't sacrifice one media tactic for another. Integration is important. Consistency is important. A combination of appeals through a variety of channels will yield results. It's about using a mix that ensures messages reinforce each other thereby establishing results. Test it. It's about using all the tools in your marketing toolbox.

Andrea Young regularly consults with retail propane companies regarding their comprehensive marketing strategies. She is responsible for evaluating retailers' marketing efforts as well as creating and implementing custom marketing plans. She consults on websites and other tactics that help marketers increase their net profit. Andrea is a regular contributor to industry publications and speaker at industry events. She holds a B.A. in Communications Studies, Journalism and Mass Communications from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and has more than 20 years' experience in marketing, communications, and public relations.