

14 IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS OF A COMPETENT MARKETING PROGRAM **based on an article by Trey Ryder – www.treyryder.com**

If you want to evaluate your own marketing effort -- or if you're looking for effective ways to market your services in a down economy -- here are 14 points to consider about any marketing program:

- 1. Does your marketing program attract genuine prospects?** Your marketing message should attract calls not from tyre kickers, but from genuine prospects who want solutions to their problems. The most effective way to attract inquiries from genuine prospects is to offer educational materials that identify and explain your prospects' problems and the solutions you can provide.
- 2. Does your marketing program increase referrals?** Your message should educate your former clients and colleagues so they clearly understand the services you offer and how you can help prospects they send your way. If you don't keep referral sources up to date on your activities and services, they may start referring to others who openly invite referrals.
- 3. Does your marketing program cement loyalty?** Loyalty results from value delivered over time. The more you educate former clients, current clients, prospects and colleagues, the higher they perceive your value -- and the more likely they are to return for services and refer their friends and associates.
- 4. Does your marketing program build your image as an authority?** A competent marketing program should turn the spotlight on you so clients, prospects and referral sources respect you for your knowledge. The most effective way to demonstrate your knowledge is by marketing with education through media publicity, articles, seminars, newsletters and web sites.
- 5. Does your marketing program screen out prospects you don't care to represent?** Any marketing program can make your phone ring, but attracting calls from more and more prospects can translate into a big waste of time if you have to spend hours (or days!) screening calls. The more information you offer in your marketing message -- both in printed materials and on your web site -- the more you help prospects see whether they are candidates for your services.

To be an effective screening tool, your marketing message should offer information about your business that explains your services, fees, the types of clients you serve, and geographic boundaries, if any. The more information you provide, the more prospects know when they do and do not fit the profile of the clients you want to serve. In most cases, if they do not fit your profile, they will not call you, which makes your marketing program much more efficient.

6. Does your marketing program establish urgency so prospects act now, rather than later?

Long ago, salespeople learned that the way to get a prospect to act was to apply sales pressure. But when you market with education, you don't need such disgusting methods. Instead, you simply educate your prospect so he understands what he gains by acting now -- and what he may lose if he chooses to delay.

The most effective ways to establish urgency are to (1) describe a case history of someone similar to your prospect who decided not to act and the terrible consequences that resulted, and (2) describe a case history of a client like your prospect who followed your recommendations and achieved the result he wanted. In most cases, one compelling example of each should provide the urgency your prospect needs to make a decision.

7. Does your marketing program build the highest level of credibility as quickly as possible?

The fastest way to build trust is to use education-based marketing to (1) explain your prospect's problem in terms he can understand, (2) recommend the solution that best suits his needs, (3) describe other clients you have helped in similar circumstances, and (4) provide testimonials and letters from clients and colleagues who attest to your high level of knowledge, skill, and experience. The fastest way to destroy your credibility is to act like a salesperson and try to sell your services.

8. Does your marketing program spell out important differences between you and competition? Prospects don't hire you because you're the same as other suppliers. They hire you because you're different. Make sure your marketing program emphasizes how you differ from others in ways that prospects believe are important.

9. Does your marketing program emphasize the value you bring to clients so the value/price equation always tips in your favor? The value/price equation says: Prospects will hire your services -- and clients will continue to use your services -- as long as they believe that the value they receive from you is (1) greater than the price they pay, and (2) greater than the value they would receive from another company for the same fee. In most cases, unless both of these conditions are met, you'll lose clients.

10. Does your marketing program generate interactions with prospects so you can begin a meaningful dialogue? Your prospect may trust you -- and know how you can help him -- but unless the two of you interact, your prospect will never hire you. You can interact by e-mail, phone, or letter -- at a seminar, over lunch or on the golf course. The way you interact isn't important as long as it leads to a discussion of your prospect's problems and the solutions you can provide. Interaction does not happen by accident; it happens by design. Make sure you design your marketing program so you generate interactions with prospects.

11. Does your marketing program gain your prospect's commitment to begin working on his behalf? You can have discussions until the cows come home, but unless your prospect hires

you, you've probably wasted your time. A competent marketing program should move your prospect closer and closer to retaining your services. The most effective way to gain your prospect's commitment is to make sure he knows what he gains by hiring you -- and what he loses if he doesn't.

12. Does your marketing program reach prospects during the first stage of the decision-making process? If you are the fifth supplier your prospect calls, you can assume he isn't a desirable prospect -- or that he is not inclined to make a decision in your lifetime. You're in a strong marketing position when your prospect calls you before he calls other suppliers.

The first stage of the decision-making process is to gather information. When you offer educational articles that help prospects understand their problems, you reach prospects early, often before they call your competitors

13. Does your marketing program answer all the questions your prospect might ask? Many people think FAQs (frequently asked questions) first came to life on web sites. But savvy marketers have used FAQs for decades. The more questions you answer in your printed marketing materials and on your web site, the less time you spend answering the routine, generic questions nearly every prospect asks.

14. Does your marketing program generate specific responses that you can count? If your marketing program does not attract direct responses from prospects, how can you tell if your marketing effort works? An education-based marketing program allows you to count the number of prospects who respond -- and the number who go on to become clients. That's the only kind of marketing program that makes sense.