



Advertising, Direct Mail, and Marcom

Marketing communications (marcom for short) is always challenging. Why? Because we know it is an essential (and expensive) element in the marketing mix, but often cannot quantify its value. What to do? Optimize it.

First, remember all marketing activities including marcom fall into one of two categories; segmentation or differentiation.

Segmentation is dividing your end customers into groups based upon their purchasing habits, product/service requirements, access to resources, price sensitivity, geographic concentration, or other sort criteria. Then prioritizing the segments.

Differentiation is communicating to one or more segments how your product offering is different from that of your competitors in a way that is valuable to them.

With that in mind we offer the following.

I. **The most common B2B marcom vehicles** in order of effectiveness per dollar spent are:

- *Websites*
- *Direct mail*
- *Direct email*
- *Advertisements in trade publications*
- *Public relations*
- *Trade shows*

II. **A good marcom program** should make your target market aware of:

- *Your product offering*
- *Its value proposition*
- *Where it can be obtained*

III. **The three elements essential to a marcom program's success** are:

- *Knowledge of your end users, what they value, how they receive information, and how they prefer to purchase.*
- *A value proposition that really resonates with these end users.*
- *An understanding of how marcom influences their purchasing decisions.*

IV. **You need a short, but strong value**

proposition. It should articulate what is valuable about your product offering and how it is different from products offered by your competitors.

V. **What about creative?** In B2B marketing the less "creative" the better. B2B buyers are spending "someone else's money" and often have to justify their choice of supplier to their boss. Don't get too fancy.

- *Present data and information, facts, and figures regarding your product offering and its benefits.*
- *Use colors sparingly, only to highlight the data, facts, and figures or salient benefits of your product offering.*
- *Craft your value proposition carefully, in as few words as possible, and repeat it several times in the creative.*
- *Make sure the creative communicates your value proposition in a manner consistent with your brand's promise and corporate culture.*

VI. **What about websites?** Your website is perhaps the most important element of your marcom mix.

- *Is it easy to find?* How many search words direct individuals to your website?
- *Does it allow your customers to search by product number, product type, and category?* What about by industry or application?
- *Is it really easy to use?* (try Amazon or Zappos for a comparison)
- *Does it allow your customers to place an order?* Even if you don't sell direct, take the order and give it to a distributor. Don't make your customers "jump through hoops" to buy your products.

The Point: Manufacturers' field sales forces are smaller and distributors are no longer surrogate salespeople for the manufacturers. This means you must communicate directly with your customers and marcom is often the best option.

