

Brand and Deliver

The greatest marketing advice I was ever given was to quit focusing on what local marketing should look like and focus instead on what local marketing should deliver.

As a manager, ponder this question: What do your agents do to build a personal, unique, central, distinctive theme that attracts targeted prospective clients to them?

Marketing is not about what you do in a selling encounter, and it is not about your advanced training. It is not about increasing your company's name recognition, creating a great brochure or even picking a target market. It is about what you do that delivers you to the local market, builds visibility and creates preference above the competition.

With agents from all walks of life, different religious and political beliefs and varying social values, you cannot really "brand" your firm. But you can "brand" individual agents in their personal market where they want to build presence. This means that you need to deliver them to the local marketplace with such distinction that it eventually reflects on your agency or firm and company. Agent success requires that you, and they, create superior local visibility that is personal, relevant and regarded as "outclassing" the competition. Prospects want "linkage to the heart." They want to know about you—before they will agree to let you in for an appointment.

Consider Mark, an agent who specializes in working with seniors. Mark understands the importance of market strategy. He shows up quarterly at four hospitals (one per month) to do a 90-minute evening seminar called "Medicare, Health, and Money—The Facts and the Secrets." That's where he has accumulated, for his prospect database, more than 1,100 names of people over the age of 55.

The four hospitals do all of the promotion and advertising through their marketing departments, which are responsible for making the hospital "prospect friendly." They offer yoga, exercise, health, painting and other classes—all intended to personally touch their "future clients" and help people become comfortable with their hospital. Then, when those people need a hospital, they are likely to choose the one that they already feel a commonality with.

But delivering himself to the seniors in his market via these highly successful seminars that the hospitals promote for him is only the first step in Mark's successful marketing strategy. Next, he e-mails all of his senior clients and prospects, whom he has met at the seminars, 10 to 12 times a year. More than 52 percent of all seniors are active e-mail users—in fact; they are the fastest-growing segment of e-mail users in the United States.

Consistent communication—keeping connected with your clients and prospects—is the hallmark of dominance. Yet it is the most overlooked element by most salespeople. Why? Because most salespeople think that keeping connected with prospects requires a lot of traditional mail effort or making phone contact with people who are harder than ever to reach. That's no longer true. Mark is one of our EmailConcept™ subscribers, an e-mail connection tool designed specifically for the financial professional. To his database of 230 clients and 1,100 targeted senior prospects, each year he sends E-Birthday Cards, E-Anniversary Cards, four E-Holiday Cards and four E-Financial Story Boards that accentuate his business image. An amazing 15 percent of the recipients respond with thank-you notes or request more information. And half of them purchase products!

Remember; stop doing what everyone else is doing. What will set you apart from the competition is what you personally deliver that is exceptionally unique.

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