



Bigger Megaphone Doesn't Mean Better Marketing

By Laura Patterson

Maybe this story sounds familiar to you: The marketing team at a mid-size, global B2B company that operates globally offers products for the health care, life sciences, and medical device industries is putting together their marketing plan. Their plan includes producing a number of videos for YouTube and their Web site, conference papers, white papers, contributed articles for key publications, blog posts, case studies, Web site demos, webinars, slide shares -- well, you get the idea. Lots and lots of content will be pushed out into lots and lots of channels. They plan to use their email lists, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and blogger ecosystem to spread the content and get the word out. Intensifying and amplifying their reach is their goal.

So in the course of a working session, we asked them: "What is the buying process for each of your segments, who are the buyers and what key content is relevant to them and when?" There was a very long moment of silence. This is a company that has the ability and resources to leverage a bigger megaphone, but could be even more successful by simply doing better marketing. Which brings us to an important point: A megaphone, no matter what the size, is not marketing.

The AMA redefined marketing in 2007 as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." The key concept here is the ability to communicate and deliver value. To deliver value, you must know your customer. A critical part of knowing your customer is understanding their buying journey. Not all customers are the same, which is why we create segments, profiles and personas to differentiate them. In turn, there is the potential for different segments, profiles, and personas to have different buying journeys.

If you have not mapped your existing and prospective customers' buying journey, then do not pass go, do not collect \$200 and do not start producing great content to push out across your channels. Take a step back and map the customer buying journey. Why? Because this step will illuminate which touchpoints, content and channels are needed and when they are needed.

Mapping the journey and life cycle

There are different approaches to mapping. Regardless of the approach you take, it is important to include input from all internal people in contact with customers (sales, marketing, customer service, and product marketing) as well as the customers themselves. The mapping process should take into account:

- Initial triggers that lead to first contact.
- Steps that customers and prospects take (industry reports, product reports and reviews, white papers, demos, etc.) and the conversations (analysts, colleagues, event encounters, call centers, salespeople, etc.) they engage in to solve their problem and find a specific solution.
- Steps and experiences leading up to their purchase (the RFP, reference calls, pilots)
- Steps associated with the purchase and consumption (the onboarding process, purchasing processes, implementation, invoicing)
- Ongoing experience and reaction to their purchase (problem resolution process, new product offers, community participation opportunities)

Once you have mapped the process and organized each step into the appropriate stage, you can now begin to match marketing content with the buying process and life cycle. Two important benefits of this initiative are improved marketing and sales alignment, and a more behaviorally based opportunity qualification process.

Matching mix, content, channel and life cycle

The link between marketing activities, content, and the customer buying process and the life cycle will become clearer once you complete the mapping process. It will become obvious that different programs and content will be more valuable and appropriate at different stages depending on the customer process. The map will serve as a guideline for improving:

- The utility of your mix
- The content you use to connect and engage with customers and prospects
- Existing customer relationships

For example, you may learn through the mapping process that traditional in-person events and presentations are far more effective at creating contacts and connections for a specific segment than social media and blogs. Your map may reveal that webinars with industry experts are a viable touchpoint for consideration for some customer segments, while online chats with existing customers and traditional telemarketing are more effective for other segments. Through this process, you may learn that traditional e-newsletters are ideal for staying connected with one set of existing customers and an online community with guest posts is better for another. As a result, marketing will need to select the program and build content that supports the preferred channel for that touchpoint at the right time in the process.

We have all felt personally connected to a brand or service that we feel “knows us.” Before mapping your customer journey, take a second to reflect on the variety of journeys that you have taken when purchasing goods and services. What do those purchases say about you and how would you market to yourself? After all, it is crucial to understand what put you in your shoes before walking in someone else’s.

Read more: <http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/201761/a-bigger-megaphone-doesnt-mean-better-marketing.html#ixzz2X9ghAh2c>

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