



## **Planning Isn't Free: What Marketers Can Learn from HGTV**

By Laura Patterson

I had a cold recently and used the downtime to catch up on email, voice mail, etc. I had the luxury of watching some television. As a home and hearth person, HGTV was made for me. As I watched some of the 30 minute shows I thought, "They make it look so easy." All I need is a few days, a sledgehammer, a thousand dollars and "voila", that major home makeover I'd been planning would be complete. Then it occurred to me that many marketers approach their marketing plan in the same fashion – a few days and a few dollars and "voila" a new marketing plan!

Well the truth and myths of real time television apply to the creation of a marketing plan. Here are three lessons we can learn from HGTV.

### **Myth 1 -It's Fast.**

There's no such thing as a 30 minute makeover or a 30 minute marketing plan. Many of the HGTV shows portray a major overhaul in a matter of days. And, let's face it, who hasn't fast tracked a marketing plan? But the truth is, a lot happens behind the scenes to prepare those wonderful HGTV shows. And there better be a lot happening behind the scenes if you want your marketing plan to have "divine design." Off screen, a large team of experts have spent months developing and costing the plan, creating a project schedule, taking measurements, making selections and organizing contractors and crews. This should also be true when developing a solid marketing plan. If you want a marketing plan that has the same effect on your leadership team as those home makeovers you will need to invest the time and people to do the behind the scenes legwork first.

### **Myth 2 -It's Free.**

Although a show may say a project budget is only a thousand dollars; that usually isn't what it really cost. These shows often don't reveal the design and labor costs, which can be expensive. You can't design a marketing plan on a dime either. Planning isn't free. Not to sound too

redundant, but you will need to invest the time and people needed to conduct market and customer research, competitive analysis, establish performance targets, and plan development.

Myth 3: It's Easy.

These shows suggest that anyone with a little know how can transform a room or home from “drab” to “fab.” I’m reminded of those famous tag-lines from the large home improvement stores: “You can do it. We can help™.” Or “Let’s Build Something Together™.” All of these shows are being produced by professional home improvement experts with years of experience. These people have a stable of crews they work with. They work with these contractors to select and prepare for the project. A little know-how can go a long way with a marketing plan. But if you don’t have the market data, the expertise to make it customer-centric, the ability to make it measurable, the commitment to ensure it is properly aligned with business outcomes, and not just an extensive list of marketing activities with costs and dates, then you may end up not only with a bad plan but a finished product that negatively impacts your business credibility.

The planning season is upon us. So develop out those blue prints, collect your best tools, take good measurements, double check your alignment, consult your experts and craft a marketing plan you and your team will be proud of and will demonstrate your value to the leadership team.

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