



## A Marketing Toolkit for Every CEO

CEOs face challenges every day. If you're the CEO of a small or medium size business (SMB) your challenges not only include prioritizing the numerous demands on your time, balancing short-term opportunities with long term goals, managing cash flow and long sales cycles, solving resource shortages ranging from funds to people, but also the variety of hats you wear as the CEO. The SMB CEO is often responsible for closing key deals and serving as the company's primary marketer. Sound familiar? Then build this simple CEO marketing toolkit, designed to save you valuable time and money.

Every toolkit should have six basic items:

- A hammer, to use as a lever
- A wrench, to turn things
- A screwdriver, to attach or close things
- Pliers, to bend things or hold on to small stuff
- Screws, bolts, duct tape or super glue, to connect things
- A measuring tape, to - you guessed it! - to take measurements

Let's translate these everyday tools into marketing tools.

In the world of marketing, the hammer is your company's value proposition. What's a value proposition? Simple - it's the basic reasoning for why people should consider your product or service. Your value proposition shows you understand who the customer is, and what they want and need, and that you understand their purchasing criteria and supplier evaluation attributes. It answers the question, "Why should someone buy from you?" It addresses pain points and buying motives while serving as the basis for your positioning.

Here's an example of a weak value proposition: 'Company A is a leading provider of real-time mobile network intelligence solutions that are creating the foundation for a successful mobile data experience.'

This is a stronger value proposition: 'Company B tailors and integrates web-based solutions that automate business processes so broker-dealers can increase rep and employee loyalty.'

Which example best reflects your value proposition?

Your second important tool is your wrench. Generating more sales leads is one of the top three business goals. How do you turn on lead generation? By developing market-centric actions tied to incremental behavioral commitments - we call this the Buying Pipeline. How do you control the pipeline flow? By optimizing the marketing mix (offer, price, placement and promotion) to address your prospects needs, wants and buying process.

You need an all purpose screwdriver for closing and tightening. In the business world, the screwdriver represents your proposal and contract templates, customer references, and how accessible you can make your products and services to prospective customers. Having the opportunity to try your products or services before buying is key to accelerating the adoption process.

Use these six questions to gauge the speed of adoption of your product or service:

1. Does the target perceive that the product/service adds value?
2. Is the product compatible with current practices and processes?
3. Is the product/service easy to understand and use?
4. Can the product/service be sampled and/or trialed?
5. What is the risk factor in buying/using the product? (Tip: lower is better)
6. Is it easy to communicate the advantages of the product/service?



No toolkit is complete without a set of pliers, which allow you to hold onto small delicate objects. In the business world, these delicate objects can be your prospects. Pliers also offer flexibility - as do your product/service roadmap, product line, product configuration, purchasing and financing options.

Screws, bolts and glue allow you to connect or hold things together. To connect your business operations together, make a contact management and/or relational database system that supports sales, customer support and marketing, which should be one of your first considerations (not something you install once the task has become formidable and expensive).

Although listed last, the business equivalent of the ruler or measuring tape is one of your most important tools. Use metrics in your company's business, marketing and sales plans to clearly identify how success will be measured, and to track your business' progress towards that success. Metrics can include securing a specific set of customers, a certain number of deals each quarter, a certain amount of repeat business from existing customers etc. These business outcomes serve as the basis for your strategies and tactics.

These six simple tools will:

- help you clarify why people should buy from you
- make it easy for people to adopt your product or service
- give you and your prospects room to maneuver on product and pricing
- enable you to establish sales and marketing processes and systems
- help you establish clear metrics that indicate how well you are achieving your business objectives

With your CEO marketing toolkit in place, here are three tips on using it for maximum impact:

1. Remember to repair things that are broken quickly - the longer you wait, the worse and more expensive it can get.
2. Use the best materials you can afford.
3. Do the job right the first time.