

# METRICS MAKE YARDSMARTS SMARTER

## THE SITUATION

Briggs & Stratton Corporation (B&S) is the world's largest producer of aircooled gasoline engines for outdoor power equipment. Their engines are incorporated into products as diverse as lawnmowers, tillers, generators, pressure washers and pumps for residential use, as well as many industrial/commercial applications. The company is also the largest producer of generators and pressure washers in the United States. Briggs & Stratton products are designed, manufactured, marketed and serviced in over 100 countries on all seven continents.

The Engine Power Products Group makes engines for OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) who manufacture end products such as riding lawn mowers, walk behind mowers, pressure washers, snow blowers, portable /standby generators and chippers / shredders. These OEM products are placed with retailers who then sell to the end user, usually a homeowner or a contractor. Briggs & Stratton relies on a number of marketing efforts to execute a push/pull strategy to market and sell these products. Public relations is an integral component of this effort and the division has two main public relations initiatives. Diamonds in the Rough is a

program that helps refurbish youth baseball fields and targets children aged seven to 14 and their parents.

YardSmarts is an educational program, helping homeowners with a yard to achieve what they want to in that space. YardSmarts, a five year old program, utilizes many of the same elements each year, including releases, media tours, e-newsletters, promotions and contests all designed to reach the right demographic market – markets with lots of grass.

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Like many manufacturing companies, the marketing organization is lean and runs fast and hard, often foregoing the planning and measurement they want. Media impressions are the primary measurement used to evaluate these

two initiatives. The company recognized that this isn't an adequate metric because it doesn't provide the bigger picture nor show how the programs are affecting the brand and sales. Anita Fisher, marketing communications manager for the division, wanted to use YardSmarts as a pilot to define better metrics, assess the program's effectiveness, and develop a framework that could be used to demonstrate marketing's value.

## THE NEED

YardSmarts was used as the pilot because the initiative was very well defined. YardSmarts provided a way for the team to make the incremental step. "While we know that impressions for YardSmarts increase each year by

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as much as 30%," said Anita, "we wanted measures beyond impressions." While they wanted to define metrics in about 45 days, they also realized they needed a process and model from which to build a metrics framework that would work across PR efforts. Because the company relies on external resources to augment their team, they decided they wanted an external firm with metrics expertise to assist with the effort.

## THE DECISION

Anita decided her best way to create metrics for the program would be to leverage an existing resource familiar to the company. Prior to this project, Briggs & Stratton had held an International Marketing Summit. As part of this gathering, VisionEdge Marketing (VEM) conducted a mini-workshop on metrics. All of the company's marketers from across the world, along with the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), came together to participate in the Summit. During the metrics session, VEM provided the team with some new insights into metrics. The workshop served as a catalyst to elevate the topic of metrics and provided Anita with a way to secure support for her pilot.

## THE PROCESS

As part of their MetricsFirst™ services, VisionEdge Marketing has a public relations metrics framework based on the following categories: outputs, outcomes, and business results. The framework helps companies hone in

on measures other than impressions so that companies can more effectively measure their PR efforts. VEM met with the Briggs & Stratton team to present the framework. "VisionEdge Marketing's framework enabled us to break up the metrics into smaller, well-defined categories that allowed us to create the right metrics for our program," said Anita. "We were able to quickly see how to set up the metrics to be most effective."

Several output measures were selected to serve as the foundation for the model. These included a message delivery score, share of voice, a geographic metric around markets, a prominence metric, and a metric associated with topic, media and cost. Next, the team set out to validate the metrics and create the model. This involved reviewing all the clips and data from the previous years' results. A pro-forma was created which was used to determine if the metrics were viable and to help determine what changes might be needed. It also provided insight into how the initiative performed against the new metrics. After some modifications, the team used the model to establish performance targets.

## **THE RESULTS**

The pilot has been a success beyond its initial intent and was completed within the 45 day schedule. Not only does the company have metrics beyond impressions to measure the

impact of PR, the framework also helped refine some of the key messages for the coming year. "The model has made us more cognizant of how we communicate with the media and to better target the specific media we want. It also helped us reformulate some of the key messages. While we have metrics on a tactical level, we also have a model that provides us with strategic direction," said Anita.

In addition, the metrics and model have helped make the organization more aware of the strategic value of messages and channel. "We still have a small budget and very limited resources. That hasn't changed. Now with the framework and metrics, we can be more effective by concentrating more of our efforts through up-front planning to focus more on strategy," added Anita. "This process has allowed us to take our planning to the next level."

"The more we can demonstrate to upper management that what we're doing is valuable and is moving the needle as it relates to brand preference and sales, the more they'll be willing to provide the resources (people, budget, time) to achieve them," said Anita. "We were able to tailor the VEM model to suit our business and our PR needs in a way that wasn't painful or difficult. And, we're paving the way for the rest of the company to use metrics in their marketing efforts."

## **ABOUT VISIONEDGE MARKETING**

VisionEdge Marketing (www.visionedgemarketing.com) is a data-driven metrics-based strategic and product marketing consulting firm recognized as a trusted authority in the area of marketing performance management.

The company excels at helping companies strengthen their competitive advantage, accelerate their ability to acquire, keep, and grow profitable customers, and measure Marketing's contribution to business goals. Founded in 1999, VisionEdge Marketing is located in Austin, Texas.

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