

Marketing and sales simplified...now what?

By Bill Carlson & Beth Standlee

Welcome to 2009. Your first quarter results are now in so you know how your business is trending and you know it is not recession proof. Even if the economy doesn't get as bad as most of you fear it will, the media will constantly remind you that doomsday is right around the corner.

How do you learn to act rationally when the world around you is acting irrationally, and there is panic and chaos all around you?

By adopting the traditional "Recession Mindset," you are opening the door to poor decision making and loss of control. If you are a knee-jerk decision maker or a slash-and-burn leader, you will have your business heading directly into tough times.

To survive and flourish in this economy, you must develop the "Profit Mindset." Your business future depends on how well you are able to reach your target market and build a relationship with them in the months ahead.

Create a marketing plan

Too many operators have no marketing or sales plan; it is like trying to steer a ship with no rudder. The most powerful marketing strategy has little to do with

advertising, direct mail, web sites or referrals. Before any of those things will really have an impact on your business, you've got to uncover and communicate a way in which your business is different from your competitors'. Find a way to stand out and stake your claim on a simple idea or position in the mind of your prospective guests.

This claim must be powerful and achievable (i.e., the business promises to deliver memorable experiences for all who come). Once this is done you must create a core message that allows you to repeatedly communicate this difference.

Find something that separates you from your competition; become it and speak it to everyone you meet. The difference needs to be the way you do business, the way you package your product, the way you sell your services, how you effect people's lives - it's in the overall experience you provide.

Here is a simple four-step process to developing a powerful marketing Core Message:

- Discover, capture and commit to a unique position that is you.
- Create a Marketing Purpose Statement.
- Turn your purpose statement into a Talking Logo; it is your image and

HOT TRENDS

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brand.

- Craft a simple Core Message to use in all of your marketing.

Make sure you always include your Core Message and logo in all marketing print materials you produce. Your logo should be easily identifiable and readable no matter what size and medium the logo is displayed on or in.

Develop a sales strategy

Now that you have the tools to develop a powerful marketing plan let's turn our attention to sales. If you fail to sell your products and services, marketing won't do anything for your business, and you will never create a Profit Mindset. You will only have a job and will be working *in* your business rather than *on* it. Your future success will be determined by how well you develop the sales component of your business and how you motivate your sales team.

I sat down recently with Beth Standlee of TrainerTainment, LLC, and we discussed why businesses in this industry fail to achieve sales success. The reasons are simple: failure to prepare, failure to make contacts, failure to make sales, failure to meet quotas, failure to commit resources and failure to provide incentives for staff responsible for sales.

Beth says you sell more when you set goals. Decide how much you want and then go for it. All sales people are motivated to WIN something. Give your team something to compete for and increase your sales this year.

Set Goals

2009 can be your year to SHINE. Have you tracked your party sales? Do you know how much birthday or group business you had last year? If you have good records, then set goals based on an increase of sales from the previous year. If you haven't tracked your sales then begin to do so today.

To get started with goals it's a good idea to look at your capacity. As an example, if you have 3 party rooms and a birthday schedule that shows you can have a total of 10 parties in each room on Saturday and Sunday, then you have a base from which to start thinking about the possibilities.

Look at your party minimums (exam-

ple-10) and multiply by the number of rooms and then you have an indication of the maximum capacity. In this example you would have 300 people or 30 parties - a 50 percent potential.

Let's say your parties are \$149 for the first 10 guests; with the add-ons your party average is \$200 (depending on your market). At 100 percent capacity your birthday sales each week would be \$6000 (30 X \$200). The 50 percent capacity number is \$3000.

If you have good records you can see where you were last year and see how far off you were (if you were) from the 100 percent or 50 percent marks. Then you can determine what the increase should be. If you did not track your numbers, I recommend that you start with the 50% capacity number and go from there.

Motivate the Team

OK, now that you know how to set the goal, let's talk about what to do with it. If we use a fictitious center and imagine \$60,000 in sales during the first quarter of 2008, any company would enjoy a 10% increase in sales. This is easy to promote to your sales team when you break it down to bite size pieces. The quarter has 13 weeks and when you divide the increase of \$6,000 by the thirteen weeks, that is only an increase of \$465 per week, or two and half parties.

How are we going to motivate this team? Show them how easy it is to attain this increase. By using the base revenue from 2008 and the 10% increase, your sales projection for each week should be \$5100 or 26 parties per week. A good sales person will maintain laser focus when they have specific targets that are both monetary and event driven.

Once they are on the winning track, find a way to reward them. Base your reward cost on a predetermined increase in sales. We have seen anywhere from 5 - 25% of the increase spent on rewards for great sales. It is a great idea to ask your sales person about their preferences for reward. Cash is not always king. You may want to consider a cruise vacation, a gift card, or a time-off reward.

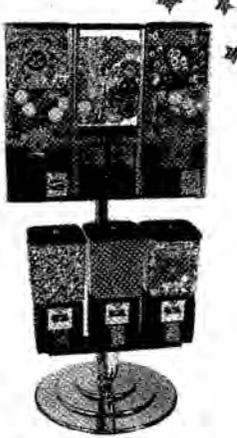
Whatever the reward, the excitement for winning will payoff for your customer, your sales team and most of all for your business.

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