

A New Way to **Get Personal** With Your Customers

BY RICHARD ROSEN

Here we are, year four of the new millennium, and I have to ask, How are the old marketing plans and tactics working for you? My guess is that changes are in order to meet the challenges of our time. We live in an age of accountability, when the CFO demands ROI on every dime we spend, and we're feeling the hit to our marketing and advertising budgets. I believe the perception of marketing and advertising as cost centers has created an enormous disconnect between brand, direct marketing, sales and finance.

So what's the solution? Throw more money at the problem? Pray that your ad agency tops all other brilliant creative to make yours stand out in the onslaught of media hype? Revise the core of your model?

I don't care whether you are from the brand side or the direct side, the old rules no longer apply. Your approach to marketing must now incorporate the customer — no matter where he or she is in the sales cycle. If you begin to incorporate the power of sales and its focus on understanding the objection set the client has, you can move beyond the stagnant pool of "nondifferentiating" features and benefits.

By getting the maximum from your spending, it's possible for you to increase productivity 200 to 300 percent for every dollar spent. You gain tremendous advantage by unifying the best of brand, direct, sales and finance in a holistic effort, rather than with the silo approach you've come to know and not love. The holistic approach allows you to use finance as a weapon, rather than as a budget from which to spend money. Instead of incurring costs that are out of proportion with short-term revenue, you can generate ROI that makes the CFO smile.

Brand-Interaction

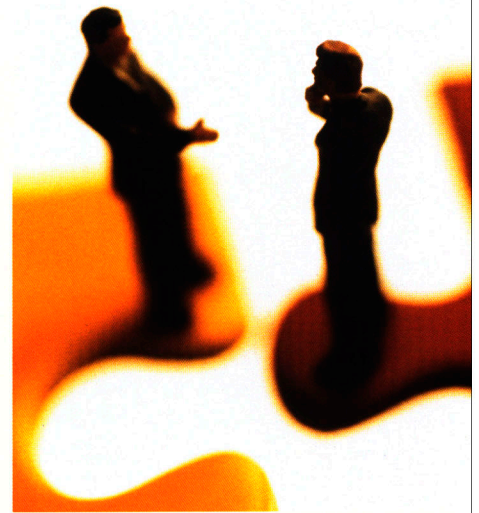
Today's marketing approach fuses business school analytics with creative advertising to achieve maximum results. Although I have been preaching this

for some time now, it cannot be overstated that you must embrace a new, very personal way of marketing. I call this innovative methodology Brand-Interaction. It generates leads and sales much earlier in the sales cycle. By integrating strategically driven creative work with business school analytics, Brand-Interaction stimulates communication, compresses the sales cycle and builds brand through demand — much faster than the conventional models used by most advertising or marketing agencies.

Building an ongoing dialogue between you and your customers is at the heart of Brand-Interaction. It's about knowing their short- and long-term expected value to your company and effectively nurturing and communicating with them so that they become your lifelong fans.

Brand-Interaction boils down to having an empathetic conversation with your customers and prospects. It can help build brand and increase demand faster, and with much less money. Many of you are already interacting with your customers through your Web sites. But having the technology at your fingertips doesn't mean you're having a conversation. By incorporating strategic creative and brilliant business solutions, Brand-Interaction gives customers options for communicating with you (in person or by phone, Internet or mail) in real time and on their terms.

Here's how you start. Develop a complementary strategy that uses the best of brand, direct and sales with-



out polarizing any of them. Target customers and prospects no matter where they are in the sales cycle, and use different messages to speak to them — where they are, not where you want them to be.

Successful Brand-Interaction leads to tremendous behavioral changes, in terms of both dialogue and results. If you want your customers and prospects to communicate with you, you must give them more incentive through offers. No tricks to pull them in. No wasting their time. No empty surveys. Just a conversation.

Take up my challenge. Businesses are desperate for a new model to lead them to financial accountability and success in the future. What's stopping you from leading the way? •



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