

mei-ster:
Suffix denoting
a professional
practitioner

ProfitMeister

MAXIMIZING YOUR MARKETING MONEY

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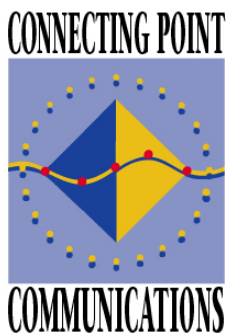
Three Power Propels Plans

Use Three Themes, Three Questions, Three Tactics

“Great simple ideas I can put into practice right away to build broader visibility for my book and my business.”

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“I want an email newsletter out every week. We never should have let it drop,” said the owner, frowning at the list of 6,000-plus names in the food club. Six months earlier an employee dropped the e-newsletter ball. Now, three of us gathered to discuss future marketing plans. As consultant, I provided the voice of reason.

“I can do weekly,” enthused the 20-something employee. “We’ll list the happenings at the restaurant, add the specials for the week, profile an employee and talk about upcoming events.”

“We need to be sure the kitchen employees understand why we’re doing this,” continued the owner. “That will take a meeting. Plus, we’ll train the front employees to invite customers to join the club.”

“Isn’t your catering going well?” I asked. The simultaneous “Yes” answer came with smiles. “The reason I brought this up is catering will only increase as you head into the Holiday season. You’re also working on your website and a marketing plan for a third store location. Are you sure a weekly is reasonable?”

After a lively discussion we settled on a bi-monthly newsletter to evolve into a weekly one after 90 days. The task of generating a template or form for the message was first priority.

What a challenge. Scheduling realistic workloads involves every aspect of your business, not just marketing. It demands a consistent focus on the desired result.

Think in threes: define goals, outline a plan, schedule time and people.

Three Power History

The subtle culture of three exists in simple nursery rhymes like “three blind mice” as well as sayings such as “third time is a charm.” From the most durable of shapes, the triangle, to the three-legged stool or the tricycle, the odd prime number three frames thinking. Education offers the three r’s (reading, riting, and rithmetic), religion the trinity, music the triad, and so on.

Remember when you connected the dots and got a pretty picture for your trouble? Easy. Rewarding Uncomplicated. Paint by Number Marketing? It’s as easy as 1-2-3.

A successful local spa planned three advertising messages for the year: free soaks, retail products and signature treatments. Every marketing effort incorporated these three elements for a selling message.

An emerging toy entrepreneur developed three themes: environment, community and products. Throughout the year, these themes were woven into every tactical campaign and leveraged for marketing ROI or return on investment. Alliance partners as well as the products themselves represent the eco-conscious aspect of the toys and a portion of every product sale goes to environmental organizations. Then, instead of a shotgun approach which assumes everyone is a prospect, the company matched community involvement with appropriate tar-

Evaluate every action against a three-prong strategy; use three themes, ask three questions, choose three tactics.



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gets like toys distributed in hospitals. Finally, specific products receive micro-targeting attention. A river otter coloring book was publicized to Amigos Bravos, a river restoration organization in New Mexico, as river otters were reintroduced.

Each of these companies evaluated actions against a three-prong strategy. Can you present a marketing plan equally simple?

Define goals

Small business owners love action, jumping into the fray immediately rather than thinking out aspects of a campaign. In our restaurant example, the employee wanted to get on it. The other reaction to planning is over-analysis.

One client, a non-profit, insisted on discussing each constituency (tenants, board of directors, volunteers, community, legislators, funders) and how they would be served. During the coming year, each month's campaign went more quickly as a result of the pre-planning.

Outline a plan

If this concentration is new to you, begin by picking three questions and addressing them: Who is my buyer or my company's target? (Describe three characteristics of this group); What three tactics will I use to reach my prospects and customers? How does this tactic serve them and prospects like them who buy other products?

Talk your idea through with an associate. This gives you the chance to flesh out the details and consider the impact of various activities. Ask for insight, challenges and a general sanity check. In the heat of enthusiasm, you may forget a key point.

Brainstorm the tasks involved in your plan. In the case of the e-newsletter, for example, the restaurant developed this list: plan a kitchen special for each of the weeks, gather upcoming events for the cal-

endar, generate a paragraph for an overview, create a target prospect for whom each newsletter would be written, make a catering offer, provide general information about the menu, etc. Once the list was generated, a team developed priorities and scheduled information meetings for all staff.

Many service providers look to build grandiose customer loyalty programs. Simple wins. A birthday program, for example, adds a personal touchpoint to a customer loyalty campaign.

Schedule time and people

Lay out the timeline for implementing your plan, setting dates as far into the future as necessary to meet the goal. Plan an entire year, for example, by month, then week, then campaign segment. For a weekly email newsletter outline a weekly calendar.

Consider effective frequency, a phenomenon that says people have to hear something at least three times in order to get it and seven times in order to act upon it. Plan those numbers into your strategy; repeat key themes. Highlight them with different words and new examples.

When you coordinate with others, schedules can quickly get complicated. A restaurant, for example, may need to schedule meetings that include different shifts or sections so they stay informed about new promotions.

Summary

The power of enthusiasm adds strength to any campaign but enthusiasm alone cannot carry a long-term program. Planning, while boring, provides a foundation for long term campaign success. Three gives you a specific number on which to concentrate. It's enough to allow for a mix but not so many as to get one mixed up. Concentrate on three and avoid overwhelm.