

## DYNAMIC THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



BY:

Douglas G. Davidoff

Founder & President

the Imagine companies

[douglas.davidoff@imaginellc.com](mailto:douglas.davidoff@imaginellc.com)

A challenge every company faces is getting potential customers or clients to understand (1) the underlying value the offering company provides, (2) what makes the offering company different from others, and (3) why someone should buy from the offering company. Overcoming this challenge is what sales and marketing is all about.

At a presentation I made recently, one of the attendees articulated the difference between sales and marketing as: “Marketing is like air cover – it enables you to ‘shape the battlefield’, it can give you a competitive advantage, and it can enable you to move your troops (salespeople) in more effectively. Sales is like ground troops – it is where land is taken.” Military imagery aside, it’s a fairly good analogy.

That said, just because a company implements a marketing initiative doesn’t mean that the marketing they do will make it easier for them to increase their sales – often it has the opposite effect.

In this issue of The INTELLIGENT GROWTH Ezine I will share with you five key rules that must be applied to make your marketing effective. I will also provide some details on the most effective marketing initiative today.

## FIVE KEY MARKETING RULES

### 1. Marketing is not the same thing as selling.

While marketing and sales have a symbiotic relationship, they are not the same thing. Marketing and sales require different skill sets, different approaches and different objectives. The purpose of marketing (admittedly this is slightly oversimplified) is to create the environment where a sale can occur. The purpose of selling is to make a sale occur.

Marketing goes awry when marketers attempt the use marketing strategies and tactics to sell, or they attempt to utilize selling strategies as marketing strategies. You are best served when you keep them separate. I warn clients that it takes 9 - 15 months of sustained marketing efforts to really reap the benefits. Trying to short-circuit the process by using sales strategies in your marketing more often than not fails.

### 2. Marketing is not just another word for advertising.

Too many people confuse marketing with advertising. Let me be clear, advertising is a tactic used in marketing. Marketing is the sum total of everything you do (and I mean everything) to create an environment that nurtures a sale with the right buyer. It includes active as well as passive activities. Advertising can make sense in a comprehensive, coordinated marketing approach – and the marketing strategy should drive your advertising tactics (if you decide to advertise) All too often companies make the mistake of thinking of advertising as either a strategy (“We have an excellent advertising strategy.”) or as the totality of their marketing program. Don’t make this mistake.

### 3. Marketing should be interesting and compelling.

Marketing needs to be interesting. Interesting, however, is not enough. It must be compelling as well. This is one of the reasons that advertising is falling so short when it comes to delivering results. It is often interesting (I truly enjoy Bud Light commercials), and rarely compelling (however funny the Bud Light commercial is, it does nothing to make me want to drink it – I’ll stick with Sam Adams). As a matter of fact, if you are stuck between the choice of interesting or compelling – choose compelling every time (Samuel Adams’ commercials are nowhere near as interesting as Bud Light’s, but they work better).

Never forget that your audience is always asking two questions:

1. So what?
2. Who cares?

If your marketing efforts don’t answer those questions for your audience without making them think about it, then the likelihood of it working effectively is greatly reduced (this is why I find the Mac commercials so appealing – they are interesting and they communicate why I should care in a compelling manner). There are, of course, always exceptions to this rule; but be careful – violate it at your own risk.

### 4. Make sure your marketing is aligned to where you are in the sales cycle.

The psychology of a buyer changes as the sales cycle progresses. I’ve written a number of articles on this subject (too many to provide all the links to, if you’d like a full list, just send me an e-mail). I, and many other thought leaders, have written about the

need to have an effective customer segmentation strategy. An effective segmentation strategy enables you to tailor your message to the issues your customers and potential customers face. Failure to segment your message can water it down and make it ineffective. The same is true for different parts of the sales cycle. As your potential buyer goes from one [phase] of the sale to another, their issues and thoughts change. To have an effective message that advances and accelerates the sales cycle you must have different messaging to support that phase. For more on this, visit [books] and order a copy of Don Peppers and Martha Rodger's One to One Marketing.

## 5. Marketing needs to create value.

I almost feel as though this statement is redundant. The fact is that everything must create value. For those of you unfamiliar with my definition of 'value,' it is 'something someone is willing to pay more for.' This means that your marketing tactics must be viewed by your potential buyer as worth paying for. I am often asked what a seller must do to get a [buyer to pay attention] to the seller. The simplest answer is to do something worth paying attention to.

The next time you get set to send your next letter, place your next ad, change your website, or anything else – ask yourself; "If I were the buyer, would I 'value' this? Is it worth it for the buyer to spend time on this?"

## CREATING DYNAMIC THOUGHT LEADERSHIP™

One of the most effective means of creating a marketing approach that meets all five of the marketing laws I've laid out here is to develop what it is often called thought leadership. Thought leadership is the process of demonstrating expertise on a subject within an industry or community in the "what and how" of achieving a set of objectives. This ezine is an example of Imagine's work in creating thought leadership on the subject of achieving fast, profitable growth.

Think about a book on a business subject that you bought at a bookstore in the past. That book, in essence, is an effective marketing tool. The book markets a service and does very little selling. Publishers won't allow authors to sell – they must allow the material must stand on its own. The book, while certainly providing a form of advertising support, is by no means an ad as we think of advertising. The book is interesting and

compelling, or at least appeared to be. It supports the early parts of the sales cycle, and, by the mere fact that you bought it, it created value. In today's world, we no longer need to rely on publishers to create thought leadership, we can create our own.

At Imagine, we recommend creating what I call Dynamic Thought Leadership. Dynamic Thought Leadership occurs when you integrate all aspects of thought leadership – website, blog, writing, newsletters, seminars, books, etc. – behind a clearly developed and articulated value proposition. Dynamic Thought Leadership puts you and your company in the role of publisher. Through Dynamic Thought Leadership you are able to introduce important vocabulary to your market. You can create customized content directed to specific customer segments that supports different phases of your sales cycle. With Dynamic Thought Leadership you are able to immunize your company from commoditization, because you live in the world of taking away your client's worries – and not in the world of peddling products and services.

Many companies hesitate to position themselves as thought leaders because of the apparent burden that creating thought leadership entails. Instead, they flail away using traditional sales and marketing techniques, only to end up being commoditized. While Dynamic Thought Leadership may take more time and other resources up-front, the payoff is a shortened, more enjoyable sales cycle. If you would like to learn more about how you may be able to take advantage of Dynamic Thought Leadership, just e-mail us for more information.