

Are You Insane?

PLAN DIFFERENTLY

story by **CHERYL STREGE**

illustration by **MATT MASTRUD**

As the Microsoft fiscal year closes and the dog days of summer approach, the timing couldn't be better for some reflection on the health of your marketing practice. After all, summer is a great time to not only set some marketing goals, but also actually EXECUTE those tactics so you're more than ready for the fall and winter selling season.

But before jumping into the next 12 months of strategies and tactics, it's good to ask yourself a few questions, such as...

- » Did I invest in enough "outbound" lead generation tactics in the past 12 months to support and feed the sales pipeline?
 - If yes, then congrats! You're in a much better position than many of your Microsoft Dynamics colleagues.
 - If no, why not? Identify the obstacles. Was it due to lack of time, lack of money, lack of direction, or just not knowing WHAT to do, so consequently, nothing was done?
- » Did I dial up my social presence (regular blog posts and social media posts) with awesome content that my audience viewed, consumed, liked, and shared?



Maybe you are
or maybe
you are.

- If yes, don't let up on the gas. It takes time, but you will see the payoff via increased traffic and visitors. And eventually, leads in the pipeline.
- If no, commit to it now with an editorial calendar so you can use the summer months to build out a great repository of blog posts and other knowledgeable social content.
- Creating the calendar is easy. It's the execution that's not as easy, but you already know that.
- » Did I invest in making my website more of a lead generation tool and less of an online brochure?
 - If yes, well done! You likely have a continuing source of fresh content to populate the site, a strategy to convert visitors to prospects, a search engine optimization (SEO) plan, and industry-specific content to optimize. This all results in using the website to generate leads!
 - If no, as in "no leads came through my website in the last year", there are likely some foundational things impeding your ability to attract and convert visitors. Get some external help and FIX this over the summer before that fall influx of qualified prospects starts searching for an ERP or CRM provider.

I could go on, but you get the idea. As Albert Einstein said, "Insanity is doing the same things over and over expecting a different result." If you didn't answer YES to all three questions above, don't continue to do the same (marketing) things over and over. Plan your marketing investment differently this year.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

If a Partner asked the question, "What can I do differently over the summer to ensure my business survives and grows in FY16?", I would answer with about 10 things (or more) based on what I've seen working in the last year. But for the sake of brevity, I'll limit my answer to the top two:

- » Website, website, website. (That's not three things, just triple emphasis on a single point.) Your website is your branding team, your marketing team, your pre-sales team, your sales team, and your "closer". There's just no excuse anymore for a design from the 1990s, outdated copy, duplicate copy (no more using those "websites-in-a-box" without personalizing the content), and a lack of offers to convert visitors to prospects.

To get started, PartnerSource is loaded with excellent ERP offers (https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/northamerica/sales-marketing/product-strategy-direction/MSDYN_ERPVolumeinSMBcampaign) to help you get your website populated with content that prospects want to view, download, share, register for, or opt-in to receive.

NOTE: Great content converts visitors to leads. For example, as much as I hate to fill out the HubSpot form each time I go to their website, I do it because they have excellent content that's relevant to something I'm researching. You can accomplish the same thing HubSpot does by creating, publishing, and distributing unique original content that draws your prospects in like ants to your picnic table.

Lastly, make it a goal in FY16 to "own" a keyword phrase. No, I'm not talking about "ERP software" or "non-profit accounting software". Those are too competitive, and you'll never outspend the players already there. But you CAN own, for example, "non-profit accounting software reseller, Kansas City" with tailored website copy, a landing page just for your non-profit prospects, unique thought leadership eBooks, a lot of blog posts and articles on the topic, and socially shared non-profit content. Believe me, it works.

- » Planned customer advocacy. The key word here is "planned" and not "uh-oh, I forgot about talking to our best customers". I realize we all think of referrals when this topic comes up. Referrals bring new revenue into the company, are easy to track, and are easy to show ROI from. But I challenge you to think beyond referrals in the year ahead and focus on a more encompassing and programmatic way to use your customer advocates:

HACKING YOUR MARKETING

Hacks are a popular topic these days, from hacking your brain to hacking your life. Take note of a few of these hacks below:

- » Download your free eBook, "Beyond the Referral: How Technology Resellers Benefit from a Customer Advocacy Program" from The Partner Marketing Group: www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/marketing-resources
- » Not sure if your website meets Google's new mobile-friendly standards? Test it here: www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly
- » What does your website look like on all sorts of mobile devices? Check it out on this cool (free) tool: www.responsinator.com
- » Want more website traffic? Want to compare your site's SEO score against your top three competitors' scores? (I do, and I did!) Go to www.quicksprout.com for a free analysis.

- **Stories:** Successful customer stories are the most effective credibility tool you have. This can be in the form of case studies and testimonials (including videos), blogs and press releases, or even simple quotes that you can post on your website and social media properties.
- **Reviews:** Possibly one of the easiest, yet very powerful, actions an advocate can take is publishing reviews about your products and services. Leading software publishers (think Microsoft Pinpoint) are making reviews a key piece of their “find a Partner” solution portals. LinkedIn, of course, has its “recommend” function.
- **Awards:** Almost all software publishers have awards for their channel and most are going to be based on customer engagement. Your customer’s role in this can be as simple as permission to apply or as resource-intensive as attending an event with you and speaking about the experience.
- **Social Media:** Everyone looks on social media to see what people are saying about you. Be connected and engaged with your customers so they can easily share your messages. Post items of value like eBooks and white papers that make your customers look good when they share them.
- **Referrals:** Of course, the bottom line (and most valuable of all the customer advocate actions) is the direct referral. We all love them but often lack the programmatic approach to identifying, asking, and thanking our customer advocates for putting themselves on the line to refer a colleague.

That said, I hope that I, or perhaps Albert Einstein, have inspired you to enact some changes to your marketing plan for the summer that will pay off in remarkable ways over the next 12 months. Now get out there and get started – summer will be over before we know it! 🚀

If you're not insane and want to change up your marketing to get a different result, download the free eBook on customer advocacy at www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/marketing-resources, then contact Cheryl Strege at Cheryl@thepartnermarketinggroup.com or 605-574-9432 to take advantage of the Beyond the Referral program. Think differently, execute differently, and grow your business in FY16.

automated report & document distribution

Liaison Messenger® EDD 3.5

automate



Utilize your existing report templates and contact lists from Dynamics AX, GP, SL and NAV to distribute forms like invoices, POs, & reports, even attachments.

print



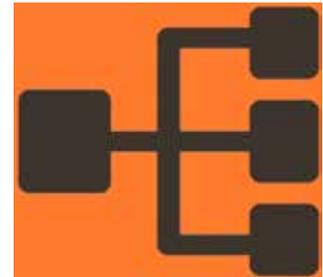
Just print the way you always have; but, select the Liaison Messenger print driver. Liaison Messenger EDD will distribute everything simultaneously.

attach



Auto-attach files like; unpaid invoices with AR statements, MSDS with shipping documents, installation specs & invoices. You create the rules!!!

distribute



Print, email, fax, ftp, archive, encrypt, assemble, sort, convert, split, batch, burst, even password protect any form or report and then send, store or print it.

"if you can print it, you can EDD it..."

www.liaisonsc.com

(800) 811-4618

Software Corporation
Liaison