

"It all goes back to the same idea. You have to work at communicating with your target audience on a consistent basis over a period of time."



Cheryl Strege

In high school, I wasn't much of an athlete. I had a single talent – I could run. I couldn't dribble and run. I couldn't hit a line drive and run. I couldn't even run and jump (long, high, or hurdles). I wasn't even particularly gifted at running, but I worked long and hard at it. With some good coaching, a mother who cared enough to make my "lucky" breakfast before each track meet, and lots of perseverance, I eventually ran my way to a state championship.

You're wondering how running has anything to do with marketing, right? As with many things in life, it all goes back to a few basic principles:

Perseverance

It translates to "nurture marketing" or "relationship marketing" or "drip marketing" – it doesn't matter what you call it. It all goes back to the same idea. You have to work at communicating with your target audience on a consistent basis over a period of time. No excuses for bad weather, hurting knees, shoes that don't fit, or not feeling like it today (whiner). In other words...

Work on it Every Day

One of the biggest mistakes I see Partners make in regard to marketing is to work on it only when they need leads. Too late. By the time you think you need leads, you're already in the "valley," and it will take you at least 90 to 120 days to get out. How long can your business survive without revenue? Like running, your training program is most effective when you train regularly. If you only run once every 90 to 120 days, you will likely fail as a runner.

The "One Hit Wonder" Rarely Works Anymore

We're all flooded by information. Our in-boxes overflow. We multi-task. (My husband marvels at my ability to brush my teeth, do the dishes, and check my E-mail at the same time.) If it's difficult to get OUR attention, imagine how your customers and prospects feel. If you execute one marketing campaign with less-than-expected results, then throw in the towel because "marketing doesn't work," you will fail. The Direct Marketing Association tells us it takes three to nine contacts with a pros-

pect to get his/her attention. A good example is the company that tells us it's "so easy a caveman can do it." They've taken a theme with a memorable image and tagline, and put it in front of us over and over again. You should be just as memorable to your target audience. Repeatedly.

One of my clients, Maximum Data Solutions, recently won a 2007 Distinction in Marketing Award from Microsoft. Key to their success was the use of a "formula" and a professor in all of their marketing materials for the last year and a half. You'll see them consistently in their print ads in this magazine, on their marketing materials, at conferences, and on their Web site. And if they were doing television ads like the "caveman" company, they would be there as well.

Note to self: We tire of our own marketing campaigns long before our prospect even recognizes what they are. It's okay to modify your efforts to account for things you've learned, but don't give up too soon. As with running, you need to compensate for the terrain, the external/internal environment, and the competition. Don't quit – instead, adapt your strategy.

If You're Not Talking to Your Customers and Prospects, Someone Else Will

Enough said.

Get a Good Coach

If you need help with marketing know-ledge, there are many very good options. I would highly recommend the online seminars at www.msreadiness.com. Microsoft provides an excellent array of sessions on lead generation techniques, branding, public relations, events, and much more.

Microsoft also provides a wealth of marketing materials on PartnerSource and on the Microsoft Partner Program (MSPP) Web site. For example, the new Microsoft Dynamics™ GP V10 marketing and sales resources are posted at <https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/sales/salestools/productfactsheets/GP-partnerresourcekit>. Microsoft Dynamics™ SL has new materials at <https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/products/solomon/newsevents/news/PreparingforLaunchSL70.htm>, and the new

Microsoft Dynamics™ AX marketing and sales materials are at <https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/products/axapta/DynamicsAX-LaunchReadiness/marketingSalesTools.htm>.

One of my favorite Microsoft sites is www.microsoftpartnerevents.com. It's a fabulous resource to help Partners execute events, from in-person events to Web casts to the Microsoft Across America truck. The site has checklists, templates, and advice from expert consultants. You can even secure a Microsoft Dynamics™ booth for your next tradeshow at https://www.microsoftpartnerevents.com/partners/TradeShow_Booth.aspx. New to the program, Microsoft has added an option that allows you to have **your own graphics panel** created for the booth!

Join the Marketing Professional Community. You'll interact with a network of peers who face the same challenges you do. Attend the monthly Community Web cast and the workshops. (The next workshop is October 1 in Fargo at The Partner Event – BBC.) Hit the Community site for templates, inspiration, and new ideas. Also, ensure you know how to qualify for Campaign Development Funds. Your management team will love you for that: <https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/communities/marketing/>.

Subscribe to the marketing newsletter at www.marketingprofs.com and/or www.marketingsherpa.com. I especially love the "Get to the Point" newsletter that MarketingProfs™ sends. It takes 60 seconds to read, which is about the right amount of time for me.

Take a book to the club or the beach. Two favorites I recommend are *Marketing Champions* and *Duct Tape Marketing*.

Maybe you have the knowledge, but you need help with planning and execution. Consultants and creative agencies can fill the gap. The biggest benefits you can get from a coach (consultant) are experience, ideas, and motivation. (Or nagging, as some of my clients call it.) Ask them for their expertise in your industry as well as for their familiarity with Microsoft programs. After all, you want to leverage existing content and resources as much as possible to extend your budget.

Mix it Up

Some people read direct mail but immediately delete E-mail. Some read E-mail, but don't pay one bit of attention to their mail. Some people learn by hearing, some by seeing, some by doing. You need a combination of E-mail, direct mail, telemarketing, and maybe even some events, to effectively get through the clutter.

And don't forget your Web site! If you

were buying a new car, you'd probably look up some of the specs and pricing online. If you want the new Harry Potter book, you can simply order it online. What do your prospects and customers think of you when they review your Web site? Is it professional? Is it easy to navigate? Do you have an offer on the home page to draw them in? Don't underestimate the impression made by your Web site – it's a critical component of your marketing strategy. It needs to be fresh – when you still have events on your site that happened six months ago, it gives the visitor the impression that you're too tired to take care of the site. And maybe too tired to take

care of them as a customer?

I know it's not easy – if it was, someone would have figured it out years ago, and we marketers would have different jobs today. We love digging into what makes our target audience tick, we love the variety, and we love the challenge. So whether you're passionate about marketing or running, be sure to remember the basics: be consistent, head toward the finish line, ask for help when you need it, and most of all, have fun. 🌟

P.S. You'll have to get your own mom to make you a lucky breakfast before you head to the daily "race"!



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