



Eyes on the Prize

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One of the characteristics of great leaders is their ability to visualize their future. Whether it's Richard Branson or James T. Kirk (one of my personal favorites), they always have their eyes on the prize.

As marketers, we often work in short spurts – quarter by quarter, sometimes month by month, on “tasks”. There’s no doubt that we have plenty to get done, it all needs to be done quickly, and all of it is important (or we wouldn’t be doing it).



WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT A YEAR FROM TODAY?

Now imagine that you're sitting at your desk. It's January of 2017. The sales pipeline is nicely full, your customer advocate program is humming along, the well-populated blog site is attracting visitors that turn into leads, and your efforts are rewarded with a nice increase in the marketing budget for the upcoming year along with a bonus for you, of course.

That means you probably spent 2016...

- » Renovating the website to ensure that it not only attracts prospects, but also CONVERTS them into opportunities.
- » Creating original content (e-books, infographics, whitepapers, blog posts, social media posts, videos, etc.) that prospects eagerly consumed and shared.



- » Launching and growing your customer advocacy program so you always have a wealth of testimonials, case studies, references, social media content, and referrals from your core advocates.
- » Planning your events (Convergence, seminars, and other conferences) down to the nth detail to ensure positive ROI.
- » Nurturing prospects and customers in the database on a consistent basis with relevant and important content that ensures their next purchase will be from you.
- » Implementing a marketing automation system that does most of the “heavy lifting”.
- » Tracking your results and regularly reporting them to the leadership team so they’re well aware that marketing is spearheading the lead generation effort (not just following the pack).

IN A PERFECT WORLD...

In a perfect world, you would have time, budget, and more people to help you accomplish the list above (which isn’t all inclusive, as you know). So which are the highest priority items, which have the highest ROI, and which drive the most revenue?

Unfortunately, the answer is all of them, although not all at the same time. For example, if you just refreshed the website, populating it with original content – industry-specific is ideal – might be the highest priority. If you last refreshed the website in 2010 (believe me, prospects can tell), then a new website should be number one on your list.

If you struggle to find enough content, which is an ongoing challenge for most of us, check out some of the resources on the opposite page. Use a combination of Microsoft-created content, curated content, and your original content to fill your content needs. And while you’re at it, prioritize the content needs. According to Gartner, the number one source for understanding the differentiation of a technology provider was peers of the same size in their industry (60 percent). That means you need content that appeals to SMBs (if you target SMBs), content that’s suited for large enterprises (if that’s your target), content for distributors, manufacturers, non-profits, professional services firms, for CEOs/CFOs/CIOs/etc., and the list could go on and on. Determine which prospects are your sweet spot and go after the content most suited to them first, then expand your content needs to the next tier of fitting prospects.

WORK BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Just as you might use a work-back schedule to plan a big event such as your Convergence presence or annual customer conference, use the same principle when determining your 2016 priorities. For example, if one of your 2017 goals is to look back at 2016 and see 12 referrals from your customer advocacy program with six closes, start designing your program NOW. (If you need guidance, download the e-book from the key resources, on opposite page.) Work back from January 2017 using a timeline to determine if your goals are reasonable.

For example, it may take you a month to design your program (give, gets), another month to obtain approval and budget, and another month to recruit advocates into the program, so you might be rolling things out in the April/May timeframe if you start now. You may start out with four or five advocates, working up to 10 to 12. If so, is the goal of 12 referrals with six closes realistic?

This could be one of the highest ROI programs you launch during the year – but only if you take the time to do it right, learn from your advocates, and closely monitor the results.

SUMMARY

Visualize the end game. What should your marketing results look like 12 months from now? What about 2021? (Yikes! That’s only five years from now.) My advice is to work back from your “2017 accolades” – what do you want to be known for a year from now? An amazing Convergence marketing campaign that generated the most leads ever? A customer advocate program that produces consistently, month after month? An industry-specific focus that makes your firm the go-to leader in that vertical?

P.S. I found a fantastic business/marketing plan outline in the Microsoft templates. If you want me to email you a copy, drop me a note at the alias below. 🌀

Cheryl Strege is not a Trekkie but is a fan of sci-fi, Richard Branson, and customer advocate programs. She can be reached at 605-574-9432 or Cheryl@thepartnermarketinggroup.com.



KEY RESOURCES

- » Download “Beyond the Referral” (www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/marketing-resources/), the free e-book on creating an effective customer advocacy program.
- » Monitor the Microsoft Smart Partner website (<http://smartpartnermarketing.microsoft.com/>) for usable content.
- » Look for “Modern Biz” on PartnerSource (https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/northamerica/sales-marketing/product-strategy-direction/MSDYN_ERPVolumeinSMBcampaign) for videos, e-books, infographics, and more.
- » Use ContentMX, formerly Butterfly Publisher, to bring curated content into your social media feed (www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/social-media/content-mx-formerly-butterfly-publisher/).

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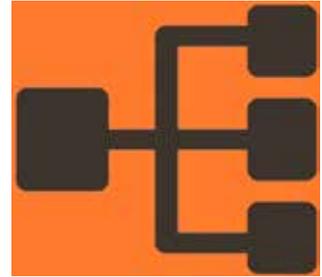


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