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Make Your Marketing Magnetic

Boosting Business and Catching Customers With Effective Marketing



We're only a few months into the new year so *Hardware Retailing* thought now would be the perfect time to review the basics of crafting a cohesive marketing campaign. By carefully coordinating your marketing efforts, your operation can boost sales, engage customers and amplify your brand by breaking through the clutter.

The clutter is thicker than ever, says Hilary Welter, marketing and research coordinator for the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA).

In her role, Welter has helped the association accomplish wide-ranging marketing campaigns to advertise events, raise awareness about association products and services and strengthen its brand. On the following pages, she offers helpful insight into the steps of a marketing campaign.

So whether you're totally new to developing a marketing campaign or have led your operation through dozens, take a few moments to review the most important components to make your marketing magnetic in 2018.



Go for the Goal

A marketing campaign is simply a plan to reach a goal. You can develop a marketing campaign for any goal your business has, from increasing foot traffic or advertising a special sale to strengthening your operation's brand recognition, Welter says.

It's important to keep your marketing goals realistic. A clearly defined goal keeps every subsequent part of a campaign in order, giving each element a purpose to help structure the overarching campaign.

"Without a specific goal, it's difficult to gauge if your marketing efforts are working," Welter says. "If you're spending time and money on marketing but aren't using it to achieve anything specific, you may be wasting your resources without realizing it."

Make sure your goals are achievable. While it would be great to get 100,000 new subscribers to your e-newsletter in a month, it's not probable. Setting lofty goals seems ambitious, but they can dilute your marketing efforts and lower morale if the goals aren't met. Start with a practical goal that your staff can work toward.



Know Your Audience

While every step of a marketing campaign is important, correctly identifying your target audience is key. Without reaching the right demographic, your marketing campaign has little chance of success, no matter how hard you and your staff work.

Let's say you and your team want to encourage customers to sign up for your e-newsletter. Directing your marketing toward customers who haven't yet subscribed is beneficial, but it's also important to think of who you'd ideally like to see sign up: new homeowners, younger customers and local builders would be good demographics to target.

Welter says that one way to think of potential marketing targets is by considering your longtime customer base and then going one step removed from them.

"You probably don't need to spend much time and energy marketing to your loyal, lifelong customers," Welter says. "But it may be worth asking yourself, 'Where are these customers' children, grandchildren and friends shopping?' How can you market to those people, too?"



Plan Your Tactics

The most effective marketing campaigns incorporate tactics that make the marketing goal clear and compelling, using vehicles that reach the target demographic directly. Planning exactly how you'll accomplish your marketing goal is the make-or-break moment.

To increase subscribers for your e-newsletter, consider directing your marketing at people who are already invested in your operation in some way but haven't subscribed. This method can help your team get its footing and work out any bugs before you expand your campaign to reach more people.

Pushing beyond your reliable clientele can work wonders for your business. Take time to write a quick summary of your e-newsletter's benefits to post on your Facebook account. Condense that message and send regular Tweets using

hashtags that incorporate your location, your store name and e-newsletter info to help amplify your reach. Post a screenshot to Instagram to help people become familiar with the e-newsletter's design. It's also possible to promote social media posts, which could be an inexpensive method that draws more eyes to your marketing efforts.

Welter recommends setting a schedule to organize your marketing tactics. By charting when you send e-blasts, social media posts and direct mailers, you can ensure you don't bombard potential attendees and sour them on your brand.

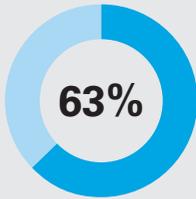
"You can brainstorm and plan all day, but if you don't have a schedule for execution and a point person to make sure all the elements of the marketing campaign are launched and seen through, it's very easy for initiatives to fall through the cracks," Welter says.

Rise Above Common Marketing Pitfalls

What are your company's top marketing challenges? HubSpot, a marketing software developer, recently surveyed business owners for its 2017 State of Inbound report.

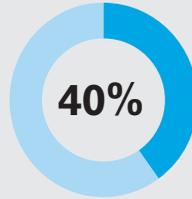
Read about the top pain points companies face and get simple solutions to overcome them to give your marketing campaign the best shot at success.

Top Pain Points by Percentage of Respondents



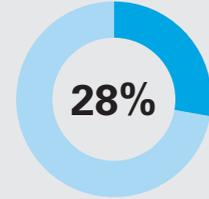
Generating traffic and leads

Be sure to ... get your message out as widely as possible, stay focused on your target demographic. From physical flyers to targeted social media posts, generating traffic and potential customers comes from many different sources.



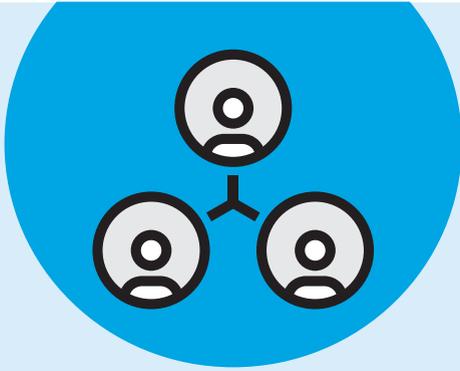
Proving the ROI of marketing initiatives

Be sure to ... measure, track and record as much marketing data as possible. Analytics give you and your team concrete data on which tactics pulled their weight and which options you should reconsider as you launch future campaigns.



Securing enough budget

Be sure to ... make the most effective use of your budget. Research possible expenditures and evaluate which is most effective to reach your audience and accomplish your goals. Social media posts are low-cost options that amplify your marketing.



Take Advantage of Team Talent

The best marketing campaigns use team members' individual strengths. Think strategically about how to best harness your team's skills and talents to achieve your marketing goals.

Does someone in your operation have a background in journalism or communications? Try encouraging that person to write some content advertising your e-newsletter and how your target demographics can benefit from subscribing. Is there someone on staff with a background in art or design? Give them time to design a graphic that can be used in your social media posts, flyers or mailing material.

By expanding your company's marketing efforts with clearly defined goals, tactics and responsibilities, you can even boost employee morale and energize your employees just as much as you're hoping to engage customers.

If you're unsure of where to start or don't have a large budget, looking to your team's talent can be a great starting point, Welter says. Team members can authentically instill your brand into all marketing.



Track Your Success

Honestly evaluating the successes and challenges you faced as you launched a campaign is a valuable portion of any initiative. Big-picture evaluations like whether you increased sales at your store or attendance at an event can be good barometers of how your marketing efforts panned out, but there are other ways to measure your success.

"Measuring ROI with your marketing campaign is important because it lets you know whether the time and money you've spent were worth it," Welter says. "If you're spending thousands of dollars in print ads and mailings, but don't know if you're making money off of those efforts, finding a way to track them can help."

For direct mail, adding a specific code to coupons and tracking how many are redeemed can give you an idea of how successful that tactic is. Digital marketing allows retailers to zero in on specific campaign metrics, and by evaluating link clicks, post impressions (how many people saw your social media posts) and email open rates, you can further refine how impactful your marketing efforts were and learn which tactics to use in the future.

Planning Your Next Marketing Push

Developing a marketing campaign that includes a direct goal, is targeted toward specific demographics and strengthens your brand can make all the difference for your business in 2018.

Whether your marketing efforts increased sales by a single penny or thousands of dollars and whether you grew in-store event attendance by a single person or by 10, take stock of what worked and what didn't in your marketing campaign. This information can make you a more nimble and

knowledgeable retailer and even help you capture your community's interest.

"Campaigns are so useful because they require you to really think strategically about how you're spending your time and money to use marketing to meet your goals," Welter says. "They may take a little time on the back end, but it's definitely worth the extra effort."

How are your operation's marketing efforts coming along? Tell us about your successes and struggles at [facebook.com/hardwareretailing](https://www.facebook.com/hardwareretailing). ➔