

(Written for my own LinkedIn account)

Are You Letting This CORE Blind Spot Waste Your Marketing Dollars?

There's a fundamental—and rarely understood—insight about how media promotion works that I almost never see mentioned by online experts.

Most likely you've read somewhere that your real prospects have to not only need your product or service but want it.

Which is true. But when it comes to using media to reach prospects and get them to act (whether it's to buy something, contact you, or sign up for a freebie), that doesn't go far enough.

Let me introduce my point with a story.

Back in the 1980s when I was starting out as a marketing writer, I decided to try offering practice development consulting to lawyers. They had just gotten permission to advertise, so I figured that, neophyte that I was, I probably still knew more than they did about promotion.

So I picked up the Boston area Yellow Pages, found attorneys, and decided to start at the end of the alphabet.

The first one I called was a tax attorney. I gave him my pitch about practice development, and he said that he was sorry but he wasn't interested.

I was about to hang up, but he seemed like a friendly guy, so on an impulse I said, "You know, you're the first attorney I've called. And I wondered if you have an idea if attorneys in any particular practice area would be more likely to be interested?"

He found the question intriguing, and we batted it around for a while. In the end, he didn't think any particular practice area stood out.

Then he surprised me by saying, "You know, maybe I could use some consulting. Why don't you come in tomorrow afternoon."

Which was great. But here's my question for you:

Do you think that this tax attorney would have responded to an ad of mine in the *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* that offered to "Grow Your Practice"?

The answer, of course, is no. He had even rejected my live pitch.

Most likely he wouldn't have given the ad a second glance. Or, if he did, say, out of curiosity, it wouldn't have worked. He simply didn't have a strong enough interest. Or maybe he didn't trust marketing types. So he wasn't ready to go in that direction.

Apparently when I talked with him more, he got a chance to know me a bit and trust me, and he ended up becoming a client.

But I would never have gotten a response from him using media.

So here's the insight:

When you're using media and looking for a response, that response will come **overwhelmingly, and in most cases exclusively**, from people who already have a strong interest in the type of offering you're making.

I would describe them as people who are ready to buy the kind of offer you're making.

Imagine the following scene: A CFO is talking to the CEO and says, "We really need a new accounting system." And the CEO says, "I totally agree, but it's just not something we can get into now with all that's on our plates."

So, they not only need a new accounting system, they want one. But they are not ready to buy one. And therefore they should not be your target when spending money on response media promotion. If you want to get a decent return on your investment, you need to target the hottest prospects, the ready-to-buy folks.

I came to this conclusion a long time ago, after noticing that the people who responded to my ads were, almost always, people who were actively looking for the kind of service I offered.

Two Experts Agree

I hardly ever see this point mentioned, much less explained, by the many excellent online marketing pros I follow.

One exception (of course others may have discussed this, and I just never saw their posts) is Ryan Levesque. He's a top online marketing pro who has made a ton of money and helped a number of businesses do the same. He wrote in an email:

"One of the reasons why I've been very successful in a variety of niches is because I follow a general rule of focusing 100 percent of my marketing efforts on the 'hyper-responsive'

prospects and customers, and individuals who are MOST likely to purchase from me.”

Another expert who agreed with me was my good friend Ted Ulle, who passed away three years ago. Ted moderated the WebmasterWorld Google forum, and his presentations at conferences were standing room only. Among his many talents was copywriting, and both he and I subscribed to this rule:

Write your copy to the hottest prospect.

Or, as I like to say: Don't write your copy to interest people. Write to the interested people.

How this impacts your promotion

Whether you call your target audience ready buyers, hot prospects, or hyper-responsive types, you should:

Never spend media space, even on your website, talking up the value of the type of product or service you're offering. That is, your message should never be, “Hey, you need better accounting software.” Instead you should focus exclusively on, “How you can benefit from OUR accounting software.”

Shape your copy entirely around what you think that hot, ready-to-buy prospect wants to hear, and don't worry about what the lukewarm or interested-but-not-quite-ready prospect wants to hear.

Why is this narrow focus so important? Because:

Even your super-hot prospects are no easy sell. The latest average figure I saw for the global shopping cart abandonment rate was 77 percent. In other words, almost 8 out of 10 shoppers who get all the way to the checkout page don't buy. This means you need everything at your disposal to get those “hot” prospects to take action—even if that action is just to give you their email to download a freebie. You need to be speaking directly to them.

If you find it hard to give up on reaching a broader audience with your response promotion, note this:

Whatever you write for your hottest prospects will almost always be appropriate for the next rung down, the ones who may want what you're selling but aren't ready to buy. Whereas the reverse is not true; that is, hot prospects will get bored if you start talking about why better accounting software is so important. They only want to hear about what your system can do for them and how it's different.

By the way, the phenomenon I'm talking about explains why the old adage "long copy sells" remains true. Your true prospects are really, really interested, and will read a lot (as long as it's good copy)—even if they are 20-year-old "visual natives" who are supposed to have little patience with the written word.

Don't be misled by surveys that show that people overwhelmingly prefer short copy over long copy. Who wouldn't? But when it comes to getting those same people to take action, experience has taught copywriters it's a different story.

-- David Almquist

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