

Essential Elements for Effective Marketing

By John Mehrmann

The purpose of marketing is to ultimately generate sales. Whether you are building a brand or coordinating a one time sale, it is important that you cover all the bases to be effective. If you are selling a product or a service, on the web or over the counter, the five essential steps for effective marketing is a check-list to make sure that you are maximizing the return on your efforts.

1. Features

Define the features of the product or services that you are promoting. Be specific, concise and accurate in your summary of the features. Imagine that you are developing your list of features like the list of ingredients for the side of a cereal box, or the list of hardware requirements for a software application. The list of features should be easy to locate and easy to understand. The list of features should not be flamboyant or contain promotional “puffery”. It should be concise and contain substantive information. Demonstrate respect for your customer’s time by being direct and easy to understand.

2. Advantage

Identify at least one, but no more than three, key advantages of the product or service that you want to promote. Unlike the list of features, statements of advantages are intended to generate excitement. The advantages are typically a subtle comparison between the ‘before and after’, or a comparison to competition. Do not disparage the competition. If you are effective in stating your advantages, the customer will make their own conclusions. Some examples of phrases used in identifying advantage are “fewer calories”, “every day low prices”, “longer lasting”, “less filling” and “fresh scent”. These advantages may or may not be the related to the primary features or functions of your product or service, but the advantages can set you apart.

3. Benefit

It is important to identify the customer value to be realized by the advantages of your product or services. The list of features details the item. The advantages identify why yours is superior. The benefits statement makes it personal. In some cases the benefits may be implied, For example, “fewer calories” implies weight loss, an obvious benefit for many customers. If the customer benefits are not inherently obvious, then it is good practice to state the benefits. This is especially true if you are selling services. For example, help the customer identify that “training and educating employees” may result in benefits like “better sales” or “increased productivity”. Keep the customer perspective, “You can buy at low prices here” is better than “I can sell to you at low prices”.

4. Image

If your marketing includes advertising or web content, it is extremely important to use appropriate images. The text of your marketing material creates an impression and an emotional response. The images or pictures used in your marketing will be remembered. To be highly effective, use images that portray your product or service with complimentary text (features, advantages and benefits). Some common mistakes are not including a picture of the product, or using cartoons in conjunction with professional services. An effective method is to use pictures that convey lifestyle associated with your product. For example, pictures of athletes for sport drinks, cityscapes convey large scope, images of people enjoying the use your product. Proper use of images can gain immediate attention and make a lasting impression.

5. Offer

Also commonly referred to as the “call to action”, make sure that your marketing material entices the customer to follow-up by asking for the sale. Effective Offers typically include a price, a place to purchase, and a compelling reason to ‘act now’. Limited time promotions, coupons, “while supplies last” and “for a limited time only” are compelling reasons to take advantage of the benefits promptly. Your marketing material may be your one opportunity to reach that customer, so use it wisely and ask for the sale.

Make a personal checklist and review your marketing material, brochures, ads and web content. Once you have reviewed your own materials, compare to your competition and commercials to see who is using the Five Essentials to Effective Marketing. Once you have successfully covered all of the bases, you will see your marketing efforts and web site transform into self-fulfilling sales.

Your Essential Marketing Checklist

FEATURES

DID YOU PROVIDE THE SPECIFIC LIST OF FEATURES FOR YOUR PRODUCT? (BE DIRECT)

ADVANTAGES

DID YOU LIST THE ADVANTAGES OF YOUR PRODUCT OR OFFER? (WHAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL)

BENEFITS

DID YOU LIST THE BENEFITS FROM THE CUSTOMER POINT OF VIEW?

IMAGE

CAN YOU INCLUDE AN IMAGE AND BRAND YOURSELF?

OFFER

DID YOU MAKE THE OFFER, ASK FOR THE SALE, AND GIVE CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PLACING THE ORDER?

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John Mehrmann is President of [Executive Blueprints Inc.](http://ExecutiveBlueprints.com), an organization devoted to improving business practices and developing human capital.

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