

The secrets to profitable marketing in a recession

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The secrets to profitable marketing in a recession

It will be the smart businesses that continue with the marketing process that will rise above the recession and succeed in the long term. Do not abandon marketing. Focus on the tips below to adapt marketing activities to maximise sales potential and minimise costs. Your competitors have not gone away! If cost cutting is inevitable, look at other areas of your business that can be streamlined and not negatively impact communications with customers.

Don't forget, marketing is a strategic management process that is designed to grow your business profitably. It is often misunderstood and narrowly defined as 'advertising' or 'PR'. These are actually just two of many potential marketing tactics that should only be used once you have done your marketing planning. Successful marketing focuses on knowing who your customers are, researching their needs and communicating how these needs are better met by the benefits of your products and services, compared to your competitors, so that they are motivated to buy from you.

By maintaining your marketing presence you will reassure customers that you are a stable and successful business to buy from, even in turbulent times. When the upturn starts it is proven that you will be striding ahead.

1. Customer and competitor research

Really get to know your customers. How are their attitudes changing with the current market? What are your competitors doing and how do they sell themselves? Plan your research and potentially use staff with spare capacity (although not for long!) to get it done

2. Strong sales messages

Strengthen your sales messages – are you giving evidence of how you help your customer's solve their problems and increase their profitability? Provide testimonials to build a customer's confidence to purchase. Can you give guarantees to reduce the buyer's sense of risk?

3. Customer and prospect data

Spend time cleaning current customer data and gathering new prospect data. Ensure that you have contact names, telephone numbers and email addresses

4. Direct response marketing

This means do something that compels a potential/existing customer to take some action *now*. Direct response marketing tactics are cost effective, targeted, personalised and measurable. Email marketing is a key tool in the marketing mix. In the 2008 Email Census, email was rated the second-best channel (after search engine optimisation) for return on investment. Ensure that your web site is well optimised and you offer something inviting that visitors will sign up for, so that you collect their details and they start building a relationship with you.

5. Regularly use a combination of measurable marketing tactics

Use a combination of cost-effective marketing tactics in a planned ongoing campaign eg email, telephone, PR, networking/speaking, website, direct sales, social media marketing (eg blogs). Try to use tactics that your competitors are not using – your customers will notice! Marketing plans should always include a cost-effective mix of tactics that can be measured. What is the most successful? What could you stop doing?

6. Exceptional service for your key customers

Do not have a downturn in customer satisfaction. Your business needs loyal customers that will repeat purchase and recommend you. Referrals cost you nothing and are the most powerful marketing message of all.

7. Product and Market Development

Can you develop and tailor your products/services to have a better fit to the needs of the market? Is there a new market that could use your products or a new product that you could supply?

8. Support sales channels

Offer distributors marketing support, good returns policies and early bird discounts, as well as longer payment terms if possible

9. Pricing strategies

If your customers are price sensitive, you do not always have to cut your list prices. You could look at reducing the criteria to qualify for bulk purchase discounts, extend credit terms and offer time limited price promotions.

10. Measure customer satisfaction regularly

A decline in sales may not be due to a fall in demand, it could be your performance. You can not afford to lose customers. Keep your customer research up to date so that you can fix problems and promote successes.

By using Pearce Marketing you can add cost-effective marketing expertise to your team and the time you need it and get results. Services range from marketing plans to an outsourced marketing manager service. For more information, contact Emma Pearce on 07887 950552, email info@pearcemarketing.co.uk or visit www.pearcemarketing.co.uk



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“Emma is very productive and fun to work with – we have achieved a lot in a short time. I would definitely recommend her. Emma is helping us with all aspects of marketing. We are benefiting from her wealth of experience and regard her as the marketing expert in our management team.”

Peter Adlington, MD, Plastipack Limited.

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