



Effective B2B Messaging: why the CPG model fails...

A Unique Selling Proposition may not be enough

Why do people buy "The ultimate driving machine" (BMW)? Because of its classy performance of course. Who do you need to convince if you want to buy a can of "The Real Thing" (Coca Cola)? No one but yourself.

When developing a marketing strategy for consumers, consumer packaged goods (CPG) firms generally concentrate on developing a unique selling proposition (USP) to convince one person, the buyer. Successful advertising and marketing messaging requires honing in on the one aspect of the product or brand that most resonates with that person.

In an organization however, multiple people may be involved in a "buy" decision; more significantly, rarely can someone buy something without explaining or justifying it to someone else, generally a superior, and that makes all the difference in the world when it comes to developing effective messaging.

An argument is not a confession

Effective selling into an organization means making the decision maker your advocate when it comes to explaining or justifying buying your product or service. And, you need to recognize that the arguments the decision maker finds compelling may not be identical to the arguments he will use to justify his choice to his superiors.

For example, consider the purchase of new servers. A manufacturer might offer a server that has many positive benefits: easier to manage, lower acquisition costs, "greener", etc. IT directors may strongly prefer to buy that brand of server, primarily because it is easier to manage, thus requiring less week-end work for their staffs. Traditionally, the ad agency would then develop messaging with a headline and copy around ease of management.

However, the ultimate authority to buy typically rests with CxOs in organizations and so when they ask why a specific brand of servers was purchased, IT directors need a reason CxOs would find compelling.

That reason is often not the same as the selling proposition that appealed to the IT director, and upon which the ad campaign might be based -- in this case, ease of management. He may argue that his brand choice is an excellent one for the organization because of lower acquisition costs, because he knows that is the more compelling argument to his superiors.

Thus, to be effective, marketing messages not only must contain the compelling selling proposition for the IT director, they must also convey arguments and details he can use to convince his upper management it is the right brand choice. Highly effective messaging means giving the IT director the arguments he can

Appeal beyond IT

Even when dealing with technology, key influencers and ultimate decision makers are not always part of the IT organization. Buying decisions may need the endorsement of people like the CFO or end-users who know little about IT. Their needs must be addressed in order to turn those companies into customers.

So does that mean twice as many focus groups?

You do not have to double the size of a project to understand both the decision maker and the people to whom he needs to justify his choice. We have developed a set of research techniques that elicit both what the immediate decision maker finds compelling about a product or service as well as the arguments needed to justify the choice to others in the organization.

use to be your advocate to others in the organization. This means that the server manufacturer must not only understand the preferences of IT directors, but also what most appeals to the people to which the IT director needs to justify his choice.

Know the purchase process and relevant audiences

Before creating a marketing strategy and its messages, work to understand your entire target audiences and the roles they play in the purchase process.

- 1 Find out which functions and levels within organizations are involved in the decision making process for your product.
- 2 Determine what unique requirements each decision maker has for your product.
- 3 Craft unique messages that will resonate with the primary decision maker and enable him to convince others that your product is the one that is needed.

Using techniques we have developed to uncover arguments and justifications for product choices, Yarnell Inc. can research your target market and help you answer these questions so that your marketing will make your products the obvious choice for everyone.

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