

It's All About Marketing!

"Don't You Forget About Me" Make marketing matter

By BJ Bounds

Everything we do as business owners is designed to keep our company at the forefront of any potential client's mind. But as we spend our time developing the perfect slogan, taking the perfect picture or designing the perfect flyer, we often forget the most important thing—the client! Remember the song titled above by Simple Minds from the 80s? That's what I'm talking about. What may be perfect to us may not resonate the same way with the clients we seek. We must always keep the client in our minds as we seek to market to them. It's not about us.

Reaching out to your audience and marketing your business is not complicated, but it starts with developing an overall look and feel for your business that will attract the clients you seek. Once you have figured out what you audience wants, the next step is to begin the marketing process. Marketing doesn't just happen. It's a process that requires a strategy—even a simple one, and it can encompass any number of methods and tools. Today, we're just going to talk about those things you can do with your main business tool, your loan origination software (LOS), coordinated with an Internet presence, to make your marketing strategy matter.

Know your audience

Marketing contacts can come to you from many different sources. A primary source of contacts will come from applicants in your LOS. Your LOS enables you to capture many more personal details in addition to the required application data. Get to know your applicants and build your database with relevant marketing information. Birthday, children's names and ages, interests, alma maters, etc. will be significant to you when you begin your marketing efforts.

Along with your applicant contacts, you can and certainly should maintain a database of vendor contacts. Your LOS is more than likely your most secure system and keeping your contacts here would ensure the integrity of your database. Keeping your vendor and referral partners in one consolidated database makes targeted marketing easier and less time-intensive.

Determining your audience's likes and dislikes, along with developing your overall marketing objectives, you can begin

marketing to your contacts. Begin by sorting your contacts by any number of fields to target your messaging. Your LOS allows you to export contact information with filters that suit the message you choose.

Tailor your messages

Your LOS is not just a loan processing system. It is so much more than that. It can serve as your database for marketing contacts and store your marketing materials for whenever you need to produce or send them. Because you can categorize your contacts in to segments that work best for your messages, your marketing materials can become the type of targeted communications that mean the most to your audience.

Now that you know who your audience is, you can more easily develop your messaging accordingly. Different from the mass marketing techniques of a large corporation, with a "one-size-fits-most" marketing campaign, your campaign should be targeted to the audience categories you have created in your database. This technique allows you determine the messages that resonate best with your contacts and are more likely to make an impact.

I mentioned before that personal information is important to capture for your database contacts. This is where sending simple birthday wishes comes into play. Use that opportunity to ask for referrals or maybe even send refinance rates if it makes sense. You could also select the realtors in your database and can create a marketing campaign just for them, whether or not you typically do business with them. It would be a great way to get referrals from new sources or solidify the relationships you have with your favorites.

Establish your online presence

Fundamental marketing techniques can establish your business as a true contender in your space. Turning your company's vision into a decided look and feel is the first step in making marketing matter for you and your clients. Once you have the overall "brand" for your company that speaks to your strengths, your commitments, and most importantly—your intended audience, you have the blueprint with which

you can begin drawing your marketing plans.

As you develop your plans to promote your brand and company offerings, keep in mind two of your strongest tools. Your Web site becomes the "face" of your company and must reflect your business' strengths and vision. You can have the most fun and use the most creativity when choosing the overall look of your site and the content you post.

Your Web content must be relevant to your audience, particularly the audience you most want to speak to. Put yourself in their shoes... what would they most like to see or what would be the most helpful to them? You want your Web site to solidify their decision to look deeper, bookmark your site to return, or even make the decision to click your "Apply Now" button. Once they apply, they join your other contacts in the database of leads you have in your LOS with a seamless integration between your site and your LOS.

Freshen up your marketing

If you want to jump on the bandwagon, there is always a tremendous amount of retail hype surrounding the holidays. Why not take advantage of that and market your services to your database contacts, past clients or even those "dead" applications that never went anywhere? Even those contacts could be viable leads. What about having a "Black Friday" event or "President's Day" extravaganza? You have plenty of options, and you can fit your holiday messaging to suit your business.

One of the benefits of using your LOS for your marketing efforts is that it gives you the ability to truly target your audience with mail-merge capabilities and one-stop storage. If you're lucky, your LOS will work easily with Microsoft Word to import and export your fresh marketing materials. Using Word to create your documents gives you hundreds of design options with the templates you can find within the software and online.

If you are creative, your designs, even modified from a template, are a great way to transport your messages in



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such a way that they evoke the response that you are looking for. That's why knowing your contacts' personal information to the extent possible is crucial. You might have to use several templates/designs to accomplish this, but it will be worth the additional effort. If you are lacking the information for your industry partners, it's time to up your networking game so that your communications to them can be just as targeted.

Make it matter to them

There is absolutely no reason why you should spend an exorbitant amount of money to design your marketing materials when there are so many templates available. Easy-to-use templates can be modified to represent your company's look and feel as well as your designated messaging per category. This applies to your Web site as well as your printed pieces. Further personalize your materials with the mail merge option in your LOS so that each piece becomes more suited to your intended audience. You'll find that even your e-mails can become a template, and yet still be customized and meaningful.

Meaningful marketing does matter in your business—particularly in a down economy—it is important to maintain a presence in the marketplace. There are clients who can qualify for mortgages and refinance loans. You just need to dig a little to find them and market to them. Use the tools and ideas that work and ones that work for you. Today it is not enough to produce mass marketing materials that try to speak to everybody but often remain silent. You must determine what truly speaks to your audience and make your marketing matter to them.

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