

## MODULE 8D Advocate Advanced Topics

### OPERATIONS

#### L5 Selling A Service to Others

In order to successfully market a business, you must first determine if it is a product or service oriented business. If the nature of a business is unclear to the owner, the result is almost always a carelessly focused marketing campaign with poor public response. You cannot formulate a workable marketing campaign unless you understand the differences between selling a product and selling a service.

#### Selling a Product

For our purposes, a product is defined as a tangible object that can be seen, heard, felt or in some- way directly measured by a customer. These tangible characteristics of a product also direct how it is sold in the marketplace. For example, you are an automobile salesman. Because an automobile is tangible and can be seen, you can sell the car by highlighting its physical attributes like beauty and design. You may mention other positive aspects of the product like speed or durability, but the central marketing focus is still the car's physical attributes.

The nature of product selling lies in the physical measurability of the product. The tangibility of an automobile allows the customer to determine the worth of the product by assessing that product's physical properties. Therefore, product selling is as much a preference for exterior design as it is for functionality. Assessing a product is much like judging a beauty contest. The outside is given much greater value than the more mysterious and or complicated inside.

The functionality of a product is placed second to exterior design because a customer usually does not understand the subtle differences in engineering or performance. The customer's lack of understanding is the main reason why the design element of a product is so important. It is nearly impossible for the untrained consumer to determine which car is actually better engineered. Therefore, the final buying decision most often rests with the customer's preference for a particular style or design.

With most products, a customer can directly compare similar competing physical characteristics. As a result of this direct measurability aspect of products, selling a product is often more difficult than selling a service. For example, your car company has just released its new line of sports utility vehicles. The product is beautifully designed and has all the latest bells and whistles. However, your competition has just released their new sports utility vehicle as well. Their vehicle has all the bells and perhaps a new whistle to boot.

Because both vehicles are more or less equal in design, the car sellers may begin to emphasize other product attributes like gas mileage or dual airbags. The advantage of these attributes is that they are superficial. These attributes do not require customer education to get the advantage message across. The sale of a new vehicle does not hinge on superior brake design or fuel injection systems because most customers don't

know enough about these technical devices to tell one from the other. Therefore, product marketing is almost always superficial. That is, a product will sell primarily by virtue of design. This is not how it works when selling a service!

## Selling a Service

If selling a product were like a beauty contest, selling a service would be analogous to a personality contest! Selling a service is fundamentally different from selling a product because a service is intangible. It does not have a physical form! It cannot be seen or directly measured by a customer. All consulting services are intangible. A customer has no way of assessing your expertise, because the customer does not have the knowledge required to do so.

If you were an accountant offering services to the marketplace, how do you differ from all other accountants in the same market? The customer knows nothing about accounting, which is why he is hiring you. How does a client distinguish your accounting service from all others in the market?

The marketing mistakes made by consultants center around how the consultant responds to the above two important questions. Most consultants take the industry approach! That is, they study the competition and the industry norms. They then do everything possible to look and feel just like everyone else in the industry. This approach will doom your consulting service to failure because it effectively makes your service invisible. You blend in with everyone else in the industry making it easy for a customer to overlook your potential strengths.

## How to Sell Services

If you keep in mind that selling a service is, for the customer, a process of judging a personality contest, it makes the selling process for services far easier. The customer is the judge and you, the business owner, are the contestant. As a contestant, what must you do to attract the attention of the judge? You must do just the opposite of what everyone else in the industry is doing. Instead of trying to mimic the competition, you should be attempting to set new standards for your industry. You will not stand out if you are simply following industry norms and practices.

## Preparing for the Contest

Now that you see yourself and your business as a contestant in a personality contest, you can now begin to prepare yourself for the event. Before going into specifics, I'd like to mention one more important point. I'd like to define the difference between marketing strategy and marketing approaches. A marketing strategy is a personal approach to presenting yourself to the market.

A marketing approach is a method of presentation such as newspaper or radio. This article is about marketing strategies, which should be specific to each individual company. Many new business owners confuse or combine these two definitions, mistakenly thinking that their marketing approach is their marketing strategy.

A marketing strategy for a service business should be created and executed based on the unique characteristics of that business and its owner. The actual presentation "language" used in a marketing approach is as a result of your personal strategy. In other words, a marketing approach is secondary to marketing strategy when it comes to creating a successful business. Allow your personal strategy to direct your marketing campaign. The marketing approach you use should be determined by its costs and its ability to reach your target market.

### Specific Tips:

To create an effective marketing strategy, you must ask yourself the hard questions first:

- 1) What am I good at? The answer to this question will help you to create an overall direction or focus for your marketing campaign. For example, if you are good with people, then your marketing approach should stress this personal characteristic. Remember, this is a personality contest! You must be personable and people oriented if you expect to win!
- 2) How do you feel about your service? When creating a marketing presentation it is easy for the customer to read between the emotional lines. If your presentation lacks passion, the customers will pick up on this immediately, reducing their passion for your service. Be passionate when describing your service and it will inspire passion in your customers!
- 3) What are you selling? You must recognize what it is that you are really selling to the public. If you think you're selling disability-consulting services, you have failed to see the point of this article. You are not selling disability consulting, you are selling a relationship, hope, support, honesty, convenience, expertise, etc. Use these selling points when creating your marketing pieces and your response will skyrocket. Keep in mind that the customer is not capable of judging how good you are at representing a disability claim. So why would you place a marketing emphasis on an issue that the customer cannot reasonably use to judge you. Make it easy for the customer by offering him judging criteria that he can understand and relate to.
- 4) What does your customer want? I can tell you this; the customer does not want to know how good you are at disability consulting. He wants to know what you can do for him! For example, the customer wants his benefits and of course it's your job to help him get it. However, if you add a relationship component to your service, the customer is also acquiring an extra something that he can relate to, a professional friendship. The relationship component should be genuine without being obvious. This is done by injecting the relationship component into every aspect of your service. Keep in mind that a relationship component added to your marketing strategy could determine which

service the customer actually chooses. The customer can only judge you by what he can understand and most customers understand and appreciate friendship.

### Things to Do

Prepare your marketing materials. Depending upon your approach, you may need to create:

- a) Flyers
- b) Business cards
- c) Brochures
- d) Info Packets
- e) Guidance Packets
- f) Phone messages
- g) Fee Contract
- h) A Website
- i) A Voice ad(s)

Make sure that your message and the operational mechanics you provide to customers is consistent in all marketing materials. Keep your message simple and concise. In all materials, list the benefits of your service to customer. It's also a good idea to place a little of your own personality into your approach. Personality is used to ease a customer's fear of entering into a relationship with a stranger. It's much easier for a customer to relate to a person or personality than to a complex service that he doesn't understand.

### Summation

Understanding the marketing distinctions between a product and a service is essential to the success of your entire marketing campaign. If you get this wrong, nothing else you do in the way of marketing will make any difference. Don't be traditional! Avoid trying to sell your service as if it were a product. Use your personal characteristics in developing your marketing strategy to set yourself apart from all others. Be personable, be professional and most of all be passionate about your service!