

The Art of Business: How's Your Marketing IQ?

You're a brilliant creative professional, but are you equally talented when it comes to marketing? Score yourself with this quick test and determine your marketing intelligence.

By Eric J. Adams, creativepro.com contributing editor, Monday, March 22, 2004

It's hard to quantify the effectiveness of a few handshakes and phone calls. As a result, marketing has always been regarded as a fuzzy art. But fuzzy as it may be, marketing is also expensive, both in terms of time and money, and the consequences of failure can be disastrous. So the more precisely you can quantify your efforts - or at least understand your marketing strengths and weaknesses - the sooner you can make sure your marketing efforts are paying off in hard dollars.

Here's a test to help you determine your marketing potency. Score 1 through 10 for each question and add up your score at the end (1 = non-existent, 10=superb!).

The Test

1. Does your marketing program have specific and quantitative (rather than fuzzy) goals and objectives? The key point here is in setting actual targets for the number of genuine sales leads, prospects, and job-producing new projects. Your goals, naturally, must be in line with the potential of your niche marketplace and your company's output potential.

Score:

2. Have you identified your unique selling proposition? The creative profession used to be exclusively local, but not anymore. With tens of thousands of competitors, in the U.S. alone, have you clearly documented what makes your services truly different, valuable, and unique?

Score:

3. Do you have "name recognition?" Are you involved with local community projects and industry associations? Are you in tune with businesses in your city, region, or selected industry marketplace?

Score:

4. Have you targeted your "best bet" marketing opportunities? Broad marketing is wasteful and ineffective. Have you identified and prioritized target industries and companies where you can demonstrate competitive advantage?

Score:

5. Have you developed a visually attractive, up-to-date and easily navigable Web site? Does it answer the pertinent questions most business prospects need to know when researching your services? Have you effectively marketed the website's location and matched your web site's look to your collateral materials and overall visual branding?

Score:

6. Have you designated spokespersons to tell your story to the people who count? Have you trained all your people to articulate your vision? Every encounter by every employee is a potential sales contact.

Score:

7. Does your marketing program utilize an effective “mix” of marketing tools (advertising, direct mail, telemarketing, referrals, editorial placement, community and industry involvement, and trade shows)?

Score:

8. Do you have an efficient follow-up and fulfillment system? Creating leads is just the start of the game. Are you following up on inquiries with phone calls? Materials? Extended conversations? Do you know what to do when someone expresses mild interest?

Score:

9. Does your marketing program extend to current and past clients, always a great source of new business?

Score:

10. Have you made a marketing commitment for the long haul (three to five years)? Experience suggests that crash programs tend to crash swiftly.

Score:

The Scorecard

Now that's you've taken the test, time to tally your score.

81 - 100 points: A little spit and polish will do the trick

61 - 80 points: Fine tune your efforts, one weakness at a time

41-60 points: Consider a serious retooling of weak areas

21-40 points: Conduct a major restructuring of all aspects

0-20 points: Get professional help now!

After scoring yourself, get working on a plan to fix what's broken and bolster what's working, because fuzzy marketing creates little bounce.

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