



GRIP REPORTS

Busy Lives

and The Battle for Attention

by: Elias Amash



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Imagine walking into a giant library with millions of books. How do you decide which book to read and what to give your attention to? There are millions of authors competing for your attention.

It's similar in everyday life. Everyone everywhere seems to have strained attention spans with advertisers constantly competing for what little is available. Most people are busy with jobs, family responsibilities and the pressures of maintaining a modern household and lifestyle. Add to that the ever-increasing demands of managing personal and business technology and keeping up with social media, and you have what's called "time poverty" or "time scarcity".

On top of this, people are bombarded with marketing messages. This includes a tsunami of TV, print and billboard advertising, as well as Google, Facebook and other digital ads on computers and mobile devices. Marketing experts estimate most Americans are exposed to thousands of ads each day. To combat this assault, consumers have developed behaviors like "banner blindness" to ignore advertising as much as they can.

In this state of affairs it's easy for retailers' messages to get drowned out and ignored. For retailers to get consumer attention that they need to survive they must excel at understanding their customers and getting the right message to them consistently and frequently.





Know Thy Customer

The first step to getting the right message out is thoroughly understanding customer wants and needs. Recognizing how important customer satisfaction is and striving to give customers exactly what they want is difficult but essential to retail success. Improvements are often ineffective if you're not listening to and engaging your customers. Real dialogue with your customer is critical.

Retailers should consistently interact with customers to stay abreast of their preferences. They should conduct market research, seek

the advice of others and read books by experts in the field. Consistent quality in customer interactions is as important as the quality of your work and the product you are selling. If customers cannot rely on consistent quality customer service, they will turn to competitors who are more reliable. Quality customer service must be one of the main focuses of any business.

You need to know how your customers feel about your business and what they would like to see in the future. The simplest way is to offer incentives to encourage them to fill out surveys and questionnaires. Consumers appreciate being asked for input and surveys are valuable tools for revealing weaknesses and soliciting suggestions for improvement. Once customer preferences have been established, retailers should develop customer personas identifying key demographic and psychographic characteristics of target consumers down to the individual level. These can be used to easily deepen a retailers' understanding of who their customers really are and how to appeal to them.

Key benefits from putting a process of this nature in place are improved customer satisfaction, improved customer retention, enhanced employee motivation and more loyal customers.

Constantly improving a business is an important aspect of long-term success. Markets will always change and customers will always want more. Continuous improvement is something that should be a part of daily operations in which every employee is engaged.

The Marketing Message – Selling the Sizzle

Once you are confident you really know your customers, the next step is decoding what they've told you and coming up with the right message to address what they really want. It is often said that consumers don't buy the what; they buy the why and the how. In other words, they are often looking for a solution to a problem or the satisfaction of a desire rather than a particular product. Another way to put it is to say consumers don't buy the steak, they buy the sizzle.

A retailer's job is to identify the sizzle in what they sell and the service they provide. For example, a small retailer might tout their friendly, knowledgeable and



accessible sales staff to consumers who are tired of walking around big box stores looking for someone who will actually help them. This would be the store's value proposition and differentiation from big box stores.

Once a value proposition that addresses consumer needs and differentiates the business from competitors has been identified the key is to boil it down to a succinct message that can become the core of a marketing campaign. With consumers feeling starved for time and overburdened with advertising, such messages should be short and sweet. Marketing graphics should be clean and simple.

Remember that marketing messages should be tied back to your consumer research and trigger an emotional response based on that solution or desire consumers are looking to satisfy. Make marketing messages memorable so that consumers will remember your business.

Another important marketing principle is that of repeating your message enough that it starts to sink in with consumers. Studies have shown that people show preferences for ideas, messages or things they are familiar with. It's called the mere-exposure effect and studies have concluded that a message should be repeated 10 to 20 times for it to take effect. But be careful, repeating messages too often can have the opposite effect, making consumers start to dislike a message they feel they have seen too often.

To get through to consumers, try to make your message relatively ubiquitous for your target market. Don't rely on just one or two advertising channels. Use different types of digital and traditional marketing based on your research of how and where to best reach your target market. Once people are in stores, stand out with great packaging and point-of-sale displays, floor stickers and coupons. Chances are, if people have already become familiar with your brand before they enter the store, these types of point-of-sale techniques will be more effective.

The Product Itself

Two other important points about the products you sell:

- 1) Ensure QUALITY products and,
- 2) Make sure your products are UNIQUE

Quality isn't ever enough alone, but it's importance cannot be overlooked. And quality doesn't always mean that the product has a high cost. Even when customers shop at dollar stores, they don't want to get home and have the item they just bought fall apart. Of course they want a good price, but they also want value. A product can be inexpensive, but it still has to have some type of value to the customer. That could be

usefulness, utility, importance, aesthetics or some type of benefit. It can even be merely enjoyable. Every consumer will have their own definition of quality and how important quality is to them. Here again, you need to communicate with your customers to find out what quality means to them, and then you will have an easier time offering it.

Further, it is surprising how many retailers still believe they can be successful by selling the same products as their competitors, as long as they offer them at a better price. Today, price doesn't provide as much competitive advantage as does uniqueness. However, uniqueness also depends to a large degree on knowing your customers, and what they consider "unique" and also, and equally as important, having a good vendor who can provide a wide variety of unusual, new and exciting items. Select and use thoroughly vetted suppliers and they will provide you with both quality and uniqueness.



In conclusion, your customers are very busy and inundated with thousands of marketing messages. Now more than ever, you have to stand out to earn the attention of prospective customers. In order to stand out, you need to make sure you are selling quality and uniqueness. You also need to have a professional marketing campaign that provides the right kind of exposure for you and your products. Companies that can best keep and hold their customers' attention will win in the long run. Try using some of the ideas shared in this report and you will increase both your store traffic and sales.

About the Author: Elias Amash, President of GRIP, is an industry veteran with more than 20 years of experience in global sourcing, manufacturing, distribution, retail merchandising, fulfillment, marketing, technology and operations. He is a trusted partner to hundreds of retailers and has "leveled up" the industry with GRIP's undying commitment to offering the highest level of service to its customers. Amash has recently published his third business book, *The Future of Retail*, which is available on Amazon. He is also the author of *Importing from China: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, and *101 Bright Ideas: Winning Tactics to Increase Retail Sales*.

