

Top 10 Marketing Musts for Telecom Sales Agents

As an independent sales agent, you take on the many aspects of running and promoting a business. It begs the question: *How do you grow your business while you're out doing what you do?*

By identifying and implementing key elements of the marketing mix, you can create a foundation of credibility from which emerges processes and practices that support sales, promote the company and build the brand. Here are my top 10 recommended areas of focus:

1. Web Site Design. I'm addressing this area first because your Web site is your most important sales and marketing tool and a key channel for building credibility.

You will realize tremendous return on investment by employing a design professional to work through the development process. And as a result, you will make critical decisions based on the end-user experience, not your own preferences. A designer brings a host of considerations to the table that may not be on your radar — flash versus quick-load, tab menus versus drop downs, search engine needs, end-user color preferences, etc. We also recommend bringing a copywriter into the mix to assist with messaging and content. The end product will justify the added cost.

2. Messaging. It's tempting to bypass the process of building, testing and approving key messages. You know your business like the back of your hand. However, forgoing message development eventually limits your ability to build and reinforce a brand; reduces the clarity with which others can promote your services; creates confusion surrounding your value proposition in the minds of prospects; diminishes the effectiveness of your Web site; reduces the impact of your marketing/advertising/public relations initiatives; and creates unnecessary communication challenges during the sales cycle.

3. Consistent Branding. Consistent branding is the continual reinforcement of the trust established within the client relationship and should be reflected through every interaction channel. Frequently

evaluate every client/prospect touch point to ensure that the messaging, logo, tag line, fonts, color schemes and content align with your company value, promise and personality. This includes assessing all aspects of the Web site, business cards, advertisements, sales collateral, e-mail signatures, on-hold messages, and more. If you're growth minded, branding is essential.

4. Public Relations. Initiatives in public relations offer tremendous value in terms of increasing your visibility and building credibility in the minds of prospects and peers. Industry and business awards, contributed articles and Q&A

for business and trade publications, case studies, press releases and speaking engagements are just a few of the activities that will pave the way for positively managing your company's image and brand.

5. Company Overview. Take the time to assemble a strong company overview document. It is an invaluable tool you'll use time and again in every aspect of your business. When creating the document, avoid "marketing fluff." It should be succinct, no more than two pages (printed front to back, so you maintain the ease of a single page) and representative of your brand and offering portfolio.

6. Customer References. Get approval from your customers to use their company names and logos on your materials. It builds tremendous credibility with relatively little output.

7. Advertising. In our content-driven world it's easy to ignore advertising — especially if you are active in other areas of the marketing mix and/or managing a tight budget. By doing so, you're eliminating an important component for success. While advertising simply reflects your own message, it also builds visibility and speaks to your good intentions within your local business community. It's an instant reinforcement of your brand and company identity. In addition to budgeting for a few standard print ads, there is value in seeking out opportunities that allow you to showcase

your expertise, such as "special sections" featuring executive Q&A. Most experts state that companies should spend an average of 5 percent to 15 percent of gross revenues on advertising.

8. Thought Leadership. There's no shortage of quality insights on the dynamic telecom market. Analyst reports, trade publications, white papers, blogs and newsletters offer a wealth of information that can be translated into tangible improvements in every area of your business. Take the time to stay on top of the news — survey what's out there, identify high-value outlets and commit to reading for a minimum period of time every day. Keep your clients, prospects and marketing/PR initiatives in mind as you review daily insights. Expert insight and knowledge are powerful tools.

9. E-mail Blasts. Communicate with your customers on a regular basis. E-mail blasts (or newsletters) should be brief, to the point and structured to add value to their world.

10. Blogging. Create a blog on your Web site or commit to weighing in on key industry blogs on a regular basis. This is a great way to reinforce the value independent agents bring to the table, while increasing your search engine rankings and notoriety as a high-quality contributor and thought leader.

Any independent agent who has tackled the marketing mix knows it is a challenging undertaking — and one that proves to be far more involved than originally anticipated. As a result, working with outside professionals can increase your results. The key ingredient lies in not losing sight of your main objective: growing your business.

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