

Honest Marketing: A New Approach to Satisfy the Most Demanding Customers

- Discover the value of making promises that you can keep.

By Alain J Roy

CUSTOMERS ARE GETTING MORE AND MORE DEMANDING, that's for certain. The reason behind this ever-increasing phenomenon may be directly linked to the success of your marketing campaign and company slogans. Or could it be attributed to the fact that marketers are not telling the truth?

If your company's theme sounds anything like: "*We Try Harder*," "*Satisfaction Guaranteed*," "*We are the Best*," "*The Customer is King*," "*Quality is Job One*," "*We Never Stop Working for You*," "*We Do It Your Way*," chances are your customers will expect it! Unfortunately, too many companies fall short on their marketing promises, and the blame for the downfall is usually directed at the front-line employees or, more often than not, at the so-called "demanding customer."

Taking a closer look at what the customer expected and what was delivered will, in most cases, reveal an incongruity. As a result, the relationship, or "trust factor," between customer and company may be forever broken. The enticing tag lines presented by marketers in an effort to attract new customers and build relationships are all too often subverting them to the waiting arms of the competitors.

Marketing executives, business managers and consultants have the same goals in mind: attracting new customers and developing meaningful relationships that will yield both the economic benefits of customer retention and the revenue-generating rewards of customer loyalty. As companies and their marketing departments develop more crafty ways to attract new customers, they often fail to understand and address their basic customer needs and expectations. In fact, many even fail to identify their key, *would-be loyal* customers in the first place. As a result, those customers may never return, leaving the company to dream up new slogans and promises. The cycle is re-created and the relationship/trust factor broken once again.

Needless to say, the economic losses from such a scenario are considerable and, to make matters even worse, they become perpetual. So, what can you do to break this cycle and achieve your customer satisfaction and customer retention goals? The following steps will give you an edge in creating a more positive employee-customer interaction.

1) Tell them the truth; then deliver what you promised.

What if a company developed a slogan that communicated a message designed to attract customers with the goal of simply offering to fulfill their basic needs and expectations? The marketing message would convey what the company can sincerely offer, and the customer, lured by a truthful message, gets what he/she expected. As a result, the customer would be likely to return for a consistent product, and the company's economic trend would begin to reverse.

2) Constantly deliver on your promises, and then give them more than they expect.

As you know, a “totally satisfied” customer is very likely to return and even pay premium prices. This particular customer may provide your company with free “word-of-mouth” promotion, which of course is an effective way to cut costs and increase customer base and revenues.

With this in mind, wouldn't it be logical to spend less in marketing and invest more in employee-customer relations? This form of “face-to-face” marketing could only have a positive impact on the customer and overall business performance—improving service delivery and customer satisfaction, and increasing your customer base.

By now, the company's economic trend reversal becomes obvious. As a portion of the marketing budget is funneled to the improvement of employee-customer relations, the company message is now delivered on the spot and in a compelling manner. The so-called “demanding” customer is now receiving much more than what he/she expected and had been promised. As a result, the now “totally satisfied” customer spends more, returns frequently, and tells friends and family.

Your company image improves and customer base grows. Operations are simplified (fewer customer complaints, improved employee performance/satisfaction, diminished turnaround, and reduced management workload). Revenues begin to increase as costs drastically decrease.

The fundamental lesson learned is that the most valuable marketing message is not the one concocted at the company's headquarters or at some remote marketing agency, but the one created, believed and delivered by the front-line employees. Whether good or bad, this is exactly what the customer will remember and convey to others. Your company image is a by-product of the customer experience and sometimes a far cry from the message delivered via a marketing campaign or company slogan.

Thus, in order to achieve the best results for your company: find out what the customer experience really is, determine customers' views and opinions of your company (see [related article](#)), and then engage in the development of a marketing campaign focusing on employee-customer relations that will become absolute evidence of such a reality.

In short, true and honest marketing (the new company image—its genuine motto) evolves at the source. It's propaganda in its purest form: together, you and your customers promote what you really are!

Mr. Alain J Roy has worked as a business and customer relations consultant for more than 30 years – helping business leaders solve customer service, personnel, and operations problems. As a leader in the customer service field, Mr. Roy has developed an effective approach which values the “intangibles” by showing the true contributing factor between specific frontline personnel investments, marketing expenditures and bottom-line results.