



Marketing Wisdom for 2004: 99 Marketers & Agencies Share Real-Life Tips

by The Readers of MarketingSherpa

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Table of Contents

Introduction: This year’s all about “in-person” marketing 6

Part I: Real-life Campaign Stories 8

Part II: Words of Wisdom on Marketing Tactics 23

Part III: Office Politics, Teamwork, & Your Career 35

Part IV: Business Building Advice for Marketing Consultants & Agencies 42

About MarketingSherpa 49

Table of Contributors by first name with quote numbers

Alex Bernstein 85	David Smyth 24
Allan Sabo 3	Debbie Weil 50
Amy Kinney 82	Dee Merica Introduction
Anonymous 46	Dmitri Buterin 97
Anonymous 48	Donna Bowling 74
Anonymous 71	Ed Gazvoda 31
Anthony Sanchez Sr. 78	Ed Kohler 40
Arlene Rosen 58	Frank Grasso 44
Barbara Burbidge 99	Gail Howard 67
Bill Muller 30	Geoff Walker 39
Bob Floyd 21	Greg Jarboe 86
Bobby Burton 45	Halley Suitt 28
Brad Forsythe 68	Harry Hoover 95
Brian Carroll 54	Howard Goldberg 51
Carl Brown 14	Ivan Vega R. 96
Carlos Ladaria 25	Jana Gauvey 60
Carol Ann Waugh 64	Jason Ciment 36
Catherine Bracken 55	Jason Summerfield 43
Chris Boothe 63	Jeff Molander 53
Chuck Lennon 37	Jessica Albon 66
Corrine Solomon 76	Jim Crocker 84
Cory Whitehead 16	Joan Huyser-Honig 57
Curt Tueffert 26	John Girard 65
Dan Regan 89	John Taylor 12
Dave Etienne 10	Josh Aston 72
David Berkowitz 38	Julie and Colin 70
David Miller 9	Karen Gordon Goldfarb 91

Katherine Smith	8	Randy Weeks	93
Katherine Smith	83	Richard A. Rogers	69
Kenth The Designer Nasstrom	15	Riggs Eckelberry	4
Kerry Colligan	32	Robert Peterson	20
Kevin W. Mahon	59	Roberta Carlton	18
Larry Brezenoff	61	Rod Balson	56
Larry Shiller	1	Ron Ragan	27
Linda C. Haneborg	80	Rose Valenti	75
Lynn Wheatcraft	19	Roy Young	81
Mario Pagnoni	13	Sally Saville Hodge	90
Mark Burris	94	Sally Stewart	22
Mark Carson	41	Scott A.	77
Mark Naples	87	Shawn Collins	52
Marlene Jensen	29	Sue Duris	2
Mary Beth Ellis	35	Susan Bratton	47
Matt Monarski	34	Susan Murad	23
Michael Beresford	6	Teri Ann Helfrich	79
Niall Booth	7	Terry White	11
Olivia Swinehart	88	Tim Smith	17
Paul Chaney	5	Tom Ranseen	62
Paul Jamieson	33	Tom Watkins	98
Peter Altschuler	92	Will Rowan	49
Philippe Borremans	73	William Siebler	42

Table of Companies with quote numbers

1-800 CONTACTS	72	Bonasource Inc.	97
AARDEX Corp.	31	Bright Side Inc.	19
Advantagecom Networks Inc.	82	BURRIS	94
AIS Market Research	24	Business Direct Marketing	27
AlmostGolf	20	Business Services	48
Alternate Response Associates	58	Champion Education Resources	26
ALTI Business Upgrade Consulting	3	Christianity Today International	16
American Family Association	5	Clickability Inc.	65
Amway Japan	11	ClubMom Inc.	52
Avatech Solutions	60	e-channel online	44
Becton Dickinson & Company	79	eBags.com	35
Biz Help Central	67	eMarketer	38

EncourageMentors	98	NetScope	6
Expertia	25	Network Online Limited	33
Express Personnel Services	80	New Horizons Computer Learning Centers.....	37
FavorWare Corporation	63	Northport Partnership Management	85
Floyd & Partners	21	NoSpin Marketing	62
Glasstree Inc.	14	Palmer Hargreaves Wallis Tomlinson	93
Global eXchange Services	7	PetFoodDirect.com	39
Halley's Comment	28	PropertyMall	9
Haystack In A Needle.....	40	Qinteraction	17
Hobart and William Smith Colleges	23	Real Branding	91
Hodge Communications Inc.	90	Resolve Marketing	42
Hoover Ink PR.....	95	Rivals.com	45
Human Service Solutions	43	ROKS Media	8
Huysen-Honig Creative Services	57	SA Stewart Communications	22
Indaba Inc.	88	SEO-PR	86
Interliance LLC.....	83	ShillerMath	1
Internet Billing Company	51	SMC Networks	2
InTouch.....	54	Soluciones Inteligentes S.A. de C.V.	96
iProspect.....	30	SparkSource Inc.	18
Jensen-Fann Publishers	29	TechTransform	4
Joe Percario Contractors Inc.	75	The Advertising Show	68
Joy of Bocce	13	The Burbidge Company.....	99
KEMP Technologies Inc.	59	The Cottage Discount Needlework	55
KN DATASERVICE	15	The Lightbulb Lab Inc.	89
KPMG LLP (US)	69	The Sales Board Inc.....	34
Lakeshost.com	12	The Write Exposure	66
Loren Casting	61	Time America Inc.	76
Magmall.com.....	36	ToyMagnets.com	41
Mailblocks Inc.	47	University Renal Research and Education Association.....	32
Making Marketing Matter	81	VocabVitamins	70
Marketing Communications	78	WIT Strategy LLC	87
Metro Transit Authority	10	WordBiz Report	50
Milwaukee Area Advertising Agency ...	46	Wordsworth & Company	92
Mindpower Inc.....	74	Xcellent Marketing	64
Molander & Associates Inc.	53		
Morning Papers.....	49		

Introduction: This year's all about "in-person" marketing

Welcome to our second annual Marketing Wisdom report — created by MarketingSherpa readers to help out fellow marketers, advertisers and PR pros.

There are two big changes this year — the first being that the name changed. Last year this report was called *Marketing Inspirations*. Our own marketer Carol Meinhart suggested this change. "Inspiration is what you need when the creative wells run dry — wisdom is what you need to get the good results continually."

The second change was based on your feedback. More than 100,000 of you downloaded last year's edition, but many felt it was just too darn long. Even if every page is useful, who has the time to read 136 pages of stories and quotes?

So when we received more than 350 submissions this year, I agonizingly cut, and cut, and then cut some more. It was painful because I believe everyone has something valuable to say, and I hate leaving contributions out of a group project. If your story or quote was one of the ones cut, please accept my apologies. I was trying to pick the stories with both the broadest appeal and the most practical use. Plus, if more than one story touched on the same point, I picked a single one to represent the idea.

One overwhelming trend definitely appeared through many, many contributions — this year it's all about personal relationships. Yes, search marketing, email, direct mail, etc. tactics all still work. Yes, metrics continue to rule. But, in the end, if you or your brand makes a personal connection, your marketing has profoundly greater impact.

I'm not talking about fancy 1-to-1 marketing with 21st century CRM systems interweaving with dynamically personalized email and/or Web pages. I'm not talking about technology at all in fact. It's about a human being meeting another human, preferably in person.

Here's a typical story, contributed by brand strategist Dee Merica:

"As marketers we spend a lot of money trying to capture that elusive 1:1 relationship with our customer. E-mails, newsletters, blogs, databases. My phone rang recently. It was a very dear friend who had taken me under his wing some twenty years ago and mentored me. He is now 76 and retired. He said, 'I was wondering if you have some time to have a bit of lunch, chat and discuss a business opportunity I've been considering.'

"It was a lovely lunch. And, I realized he continues to teach me. I learned that while technology is wonderful, and it has its place, lasting relationships come from facial expressions, the sound of the human voice, and the personal time invested to say I care about what you need."

Business-to-business marketers with limited niche audiences, and business-to-consumer marketers with heavily used customer service centers

will be able to maximize on this idea. It's a bit harder for marketers working for brands whose mass outgoing communications have few incoming channels — but not impossible.

Perhaps you should add candid photos of your management team to your site. Maybe send executives on the speaking circuit and also post streamed video clips for those who can't make it to see them. This may be the year to get execs, or brand representatives, onto radio or TV talk shows. Or at least personally tour to meet with your franchises, outside sales reps, distributors, and/or offshoot offices.

Schedule more business travel than you have in the past. Attend a few more trade shows. Have your CEO call a few partners in person to say thanks for being so great. Drop your sales pitch, and start to listen, to connect, to relax your guard.

I bet it will pay off with dividends.

My very best for your 2004 marketing campaigns, and thanks for your support,

Anne Holland, Managing Editor
MarketingSherpa

P.S. Thanks for the second year in a row to the folks at WebTrends whose support cover the production costs for this report so we can bring it to the marketing community free of charge.

Part I: Real-life Campaign Stories

1 Ruth Anne called yesterday to see if we were exhibiting at an upcoming Michigan conference; she was on a budget and wanted to save on shipping. I asked how she heard about ShillerMath and she didn't remember exactly but she did say that she's been wanting to buy for a year now. A recent ad in a homeschool magazine prompted her to call. We market to homeschoolers and it's a very seasonal business; 75% of our sales occur between March to August. It is tempting to save by cutting our advertising from September to February. But homeschoolers take their math curriculum very seriously and many, like Ruth Anne, research throughout the year. I'm really glad the marketing team decided to keep the ads going all year long. There's a lot of Ruth Annes out there!

Larry Shiller, President, ShillerMath,
www.shillermath.com/page1.php?src=sherpa

2 We recently conducted a text-based email campaign to value-added resellers who we hadn't contacted for a long time. While we had almost a 50% bounce rate (which we anticipated) and the usual 1-2% response rate for text-based emails, we learned a few things: the message really hit home with folks we hadn't contacted for a while and they became new resellers, and we found out about some customer service issues, fixed them and won the resellers back.

The point is: don't give up on the prospects who aren't your customers yet because they may convert down the road, and even though someone said no thanks to communications a year ago, don't count them out a year from now — they may now be in a position to buy from you!! Last, your communications might uncover some customer service issues. Fix them immediately and retain the customer!

Sue Duris, Channel Marketing Manager, SMC Networks, www.smc.com

3 We learned from some failures. I was retained by a client to send an e-mailing to about 2,300 names gathered from a trade show event. The campaign was a disaster. I had requested daily uploads of the prospect list (so our first email in a series of 6 emails would be waiting for people when they got back from the show). However, the client did not get me the list until a week AFTER the event. In addition, an overwhelming majority of the names had little, if any, contact with anyone at the booth. No memorable impression will not help other efforts! I scrambled to tweak the entire campaign, adding a sweepstakes for a flat panel monitor and giving away a few other cool prizes and free trials. The campaign as a whole pulled only a 1.67% click through with a peak of 3.2% on our second mailing. Oh, and total conversions... ZERO!

Allan Sabo, Marketing Strategist, ALTI Business Upgrade Consulting,
www.alticonsulting.com

4 This story dramatically underlines the value of your own product as a marketing asset. I was given the assignment this year of greatly increasing the US visibility and revenues of Panda Software, a strong European anti-virus developer. The thing about anti-virus is that it's a commodity space. Therefore, the service has some value even if unbranded. I took an internal suggestion and decided to test a controlled giveaway program. Our space was the Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) and our target was the overworked IT manager in those companies and institutions.

Called IT @ Home and positioned under the Panda Challenge umbrella, our program was simple: if you were an IT Manager, we wanted you to have a full year of our professional AV product for your use at home, at no cost or obligation.

We rolled out the program initially through *W2Knews*, a publication strongly identified with the IT network manager audience. Interestingly, we found that the offers only had legs when made editorially. We expanded through other technology newsletters like *The Anchor Desk*. The response was instant — and all told we gave away over 10,000 of these products to a very focused audience. To ensure that these were mostly IT decision-makers, we made the offers through sharply focused IT publications and research orgs (never flat Web sites), and we took down the download links within a couple of days. We did tolerate a percentage of unqualifieds.

Now, in following up on these downloads we found that the audience greatly appreciated the gift. This made it easy to talk to them. A plus was that in many cases these managers found viruses on their own home machines — machines they *thought* were fully protected! This opened up the door to quoting Panda Av on their corporate networks. It became ridiculous — everyone, including the media, was finding viruses on their home machines! This became The Panda Challenge and it did wonders during the virus storms of late August.

I'm a strong believer in the popcorn-popper, which means that there has to be a whole process of following up individually on each lead. (This does mean you have to invest in sophisticated event-driven sequential autoresponders — as offered by Campaign from Arial Software, or by GetResponse.) So we devised a whole series of follow-up offers that followed the internal motto: Serving the Underserved.

The dirty secret in B2B software is that the big enterprises get all the benefits while the SMEs get underserved. So we made a specialty of identifying programs that our competition only pulled out for the biggest accounts, and made them available to virtually every business: Competitive Renewals, Employee Free Seats, Free Network Detox, Free Phone Support, etc. These were highly effective poppers.

Our campaign to leverage the resources we had actually delivered an effective positioning of the company as the SME IT Manager's friend. How effective was it? Well, after a couple agonizing months, the sales and

revenues took off, starting in the bottom of the summer, and eventually doubled in range. You can see the graph at www.techtransform.com/id344.htm. The ultimate test? After I wrapped up, Panda continued to use IT @ Home and has made this program and its positioning as its centerpiece for 2004. Which means that Symantec, McAfee, and Trend Micro had better watch their rears!

Riggs Eckelberry, Principal, TechTransform, www.techtransform.com

5 We are a nonprofit, pro-family advocacy organization. I've learned that using online polls and petitions dealing with relevant hot button issues can be a great way to build a mailing list. I've also learned that being the first one to hit the issue pays big dividends in terms of the number of responses you accrue.

Paul Chaney, Email List Administrator, American Family Association, www.afa.net

6 Our lesson learned was how to improve email marketing. Our challenge wasn't so much the opt-in database, but getting the folks in that base to read (open/click on) the newsletter and the stories in it. Our first move was to create a sense of involvement or empowerment for the recipients. We provided them an opportunity (raffle for five) for a discount on a significant service, which many of them already utilized, for those who responded with suggestions/requests for topics about which they'd like to read. We offered the respondents the chance to be credited with the topic suggestion, which would give their business promotion to our audience.

This improved our click through rates on the newsletters by more than 25% (a rate maintained after the second issue with these changes implemented). It improved our click through rates into the stories (usually two stories per issue) by more than 30%.

Our second move was to switch the TO line to be from the company, not an individual. This, implemented two issues after the above change, had an immediate impact with open rates improving another 15%.

Our third change was to the subject line, changing it to highlight the main story in the following format: NEWSLETTER TITLE: You asked for: TOPIC. From this, we saw another 8% increase.

Our fourth change was to follow up more thoroughly with those who clicked through and opened the newsletters and the stories. We were establishing patterns from the recipients that suggested additional services in which they'd be interested. We found that specific and personal emails to these people by email and phone resulted in improved customer service at a minimum. Some of the recipients did not necessarily jump at new offerings, but many had questions/concerns about existing services or even services they were getting from other vendors. Now they're more engaged and more satisfied/impressed.

Michael Beresford, President, NetScope, www.net-scope.com

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