

Death of the Salesman

Call it heresy, but we think the marketing world is suffering from, well, too much marketing. Today's salesmen (and saleswomen) are chasing customers so aggressively they've ended up alienating them.

Of course, it wasn't always this way. In fact, it used to be marketing was pretty simple. Marketers spoke. And customers listened.

Recently, they've stopped. But we determinedly continued selling. We sold some products by extolling their features. We sold other products by claiming the emotional end benefit. To improve our sales ability, we even introduced new techniques.

A SALES PITCH IS A SALES PITCH IS A SALES PITCH

Take direct marketing, for instance. Here's a vehicle where you know what works and what doesn't. It's been the darling of the marketing world for the past 10 years. So beloved that the medium has been grossly overused. So overused that a 1% response rate is starting to look good.

Think about your own life. Isn't your mailbox overflowing with catalogs, credit card applications and home equity offers? How much of this do you throw away unopened? And you're hoping that the rest of the world is waiting by the mailbox for your self-mailer to arrive? Who has the time to read all those cute little folded pieces? All the segmentation studies in the world can't overcome the simple fact that it's become junk mail.

Of course, no one set out to create junk mail. It was customers who decided it was junk.

Not to be deterred, we invented guerilla tactics. We now interrupt customers on the streets and try to sell them when they least expect it. Unfortunately, all we've taught our customers is how to take a different route home.

Promotions? In this day and age, who's really motivated by sweepstakes or contests? How many of these things have we seen, ad nauseam, on everything from the back of peach cans to in-flight magazines?

Technology hasn't helped marketers, either. The most interesting technology to come along in the past 10 years is TiVo. A clever device that gives customers the control to watch what they want, when they want it—minus our ads.

The Internet was to be marketing's savior. Instead, it has made customers smarter, savvier buyers. And, ultimately, more independent.

E-mail? E-mail blasts were seen as an inexpensive way to deliver a targeted message. Consumers call it "spam."

AFFIXING THE BLAME

The bottom line is today's customers are too knowledgeable and too cynical to be sold. So it's no wonder that ad recall scores are off, direct response rates are declining and web banner click-through rates are dropping like stones.

The problem, however, isn't with the media themselves. It's with us. We have forgotten that we're trying to attract someone to us. Instead, we chase, harangue and interrupt.

We've become a lot like that overweight, obnoxious salesman who sits next to you on the long flight to Los Angeles. Something to be avoided, not engaged.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PHEROMONE

Every product, every issue and every service has an embedded truth that is appealing to a significant number of precisely defined perfect customers.

You don't have to chase, harangue or interrupt perfect customers because they're naturally interested in you. They have a need for what your product has to offer. Or they're dissatisfied with their current options and sense there should be something better. Or, just maybe, they're the kind of person who's willing to try something new.

You don't have to be the industry leader to attract these customers, either. There are many successful companies that are number 2, 3, 4 or 5 in their category. And there's something inherently beautiful about all of them.

Even better, there are a significant number of perfect customers who also think so. That's why we call them perfect. You're a perfect match. Your inherent magnetism, or pheromone, attracts a group of people who will rave about you and stay loyal to you. These people are your heaviest users and, not surprisingly, the foundation for your business.

At The Gate, we think the era of the salesman is dead. We see a future where companies learn that success comes not from selling to customers, but by attracting them based on their unique pheromone. It is our mission to understand what makes customers buy products and develop communication programs that attract them.

If you find this idea attractive, give us a call and we'd be happy to discuss it further. Who knows? We just might be the perfect match for you.



WRITTEN BY
Beau Fraser, Managing Director
The Gate Worldwide
11 East 26th Street 14th Floor
New York, NY 10010
212 508 3450 DIRECT DIAL
212 508 3402 FAX
beau.fraser@thegateworldwide.com
www.thegateworldwide.com