



# It's in *the mix*

Successful marketing involves a careful combination of factors, but as **Jim Stewart** explains, even successful marketers can get the mix wrong sometimes

**N**ot happy with your marketing plans? Spending a lot and getting little back in return?

You are not alone - many company owners express frustration with marketing. They feel it's a waste of money - echoing the famous quote: 'I know that 50 per cent of the money I spend on marketing is wasted - and if I knew which 50 per cent, I'd cut it out.'

The four key marketing tools are product, price, promotion and distribution, and getting the balance of these right is crucial to business success. But even experienced marketers sometimes struggle to get the combinations right and find that their marketing plans have fallen short of targets.

Here are four things you can do to cut the waste and get better results.

### **Don't confuse marketing and selling**

Selling is only a method of promoting your products and services. Sales people have to be told which products to sell, how the products will benefit their prospects and customers and how much to sell the products for.

Marketing is deciding which products your customers will want, how much they will pay for them and then launching your products on time. Sales people have to be given 'qualified leads' - they're too costly to use for generating and qualifying their own leads - so it's more cost effective to use the promotional techniques to do that. Marketing is figuring out which combination of the promotional techniques is needed to produce enough leads for the company to achieve its sales targets.

### **Don't confuse marketing with promotion**

Use some or all of the following advertising pathways to promote

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your business: print, radio, television, billboards, public relations, direct mail, web sites, email, or telemarketing. But remember that promotion is only one of four marketing tools.

Here are a couple of 'don'ts' regarding promotion.

- Don't expect an advertisement to bring you results the first (or even the second or third) time you use it. Consistency of use is one of the key requirements for advertising to work.
- Don't be surprised if the response to your direct mail (or email) campaigns is 'low'. A two or three per cent response rate may be all that you should be expecting.
- Don't look for a flood of visitors to come to your web site and buy your products - unless you spend time and money 'optimising' your site for search engines.
- Don't forget that you'll get better results by using several of the promotional techniques in an integrated campaign, for example follow up a direct mail or email piece with telemarketing.

### **Remember that you have four marketing tools at your disposal**

We've talked about three of them already - product, price and promotion. The fourth is your distribution channels - how you get your products to the end user. A couple of points to remember:

- Products - these have a 'life'. Some will remain in demand longer than others, but none go on forever (notice how hybrid engines are beginning to appear in cars and trucks, slowly replacing the petrol or diesel engine which has been around 'forever'). Develop and launch new products before your competitors do.
- Price - follow either a high quality/high price or low quality/low price strategy. Don't get trapped in the middle.
- Promotion - budget to spend a percentage of your sales on promotion at the beginning of each year. Keep your promotional programme going all year - don't wait until your sales people get short of leads or sales fall off.
- Place/distribution channels - should be changed either at different points in a product's life or in the face of new technology.

The four marketing tools are like the promotional techniques in one way - you get the best results if you figure out the combination of all four that gets the best reaction from your market. **bex**

#### **JIM STEWART**

For the past 13 years Jim has worked with entrepreneurs and business owners. A number of the companies with whom he has worked have received business achievement awards.

Prior to that Jim was chief executive officer of the Canadian subsidiary of a multi-national corporation. During a 25-year career he held positions as a marketing and sales executive with major companies in Canada and internationally, and spent much of his time starting and growing new businesses.

