

Marketing Is A Lot Like Fishing By Ellie Winslow

Suppose on a bright Spring morning you decided to go fishing. Suppose, also, for the sake of this discussion, that one of your all-time favorite foods is bananas. As you prepare to go fishing, however, you'd never for a moment consider baiting your hook with bananas. No, it's very clear, the fish like worms, or mayflies or caddis flies, not bananas. So you proceed to find the right bait for the fish you wish to catch.

The process of catching customers is very like the process of catching fish. If you are going "fishing" for customers, doesn't it make sense to apply the same kind of logic to the process? What is it that appeals to potential customers? It turns out that what you like, what appeals to you and what you find interesting, are almost never the same things that appeal to your customer.

Let me put it another way. The most interesting thing to you in the whole world, is you! The most interesting thing in the whole world to your potential customer, is himself! This is just human nature. Given that good marketing requires you to go a bit against your own human nature, it will involve your attention, thought and practice because it doesn't come naturally.

So, if you want to be more successful at marketing (catching customers) you're going to have to get out of your own head, walk in the customers' shoes, and give him what's interesting to him.

Let me tell you a few things that it isn't.

It isn't your history "We started raising alpacas (goats, emus, rabbits....")

It isn't what you need "I need to sell these animals (products....")

It isn't facts about your animals or products ("Here's a group of bred females..." or "We're offering this(cute, quality, finest, organic, colorful) product...")

Your potential customers are bombarded with about 3000 marketing messages every day. To most of those, potential customers are subconsciously saying, "So what!" "Who cares?!" And "What's in it for me?" The "What's in it for me" is where you have the opportunity to put that worm on the hook instead of the banana.

In the examples I used above, I've described features. They are the facts about you and your products. They're what you find most interesting because they're about you and your 'stuff.' They're what most people talk about. The successfully baited hook will talk about benefits to your customer.

Benefits tell why the facts matter to the customer!

Why does it matter to a potential customer that you've been raising these animals for ten years? Why does he care if you need to sell these animals? Why do bred females matter to him? Or, why is a cute, quality or colorful product what she wants?

How could the above examples be turned into statements about benefits?

"You get comprehensive mentoring and healthy animals because we've been raising these animals for..."

"Exceptional startup value as we downsize our herd."

"Free offspring in your first year with these bred females."

"Increased family enjoyments with these cute...."

"Better health for your family with organic..."

"Your own business gets off to a better start with these quality..."

"No dyeing needed with this fiber in beautiful, natural colors."

One of the ways you can do a quick check of the effectiveness of your marketing, is to be sure you take out all the "I" and "We" statements. Put your customers' needs in your marketing. You and your "I" statements may show up there, but always start with the customer and what he wants, as in the examples above. *You* come at the end. He comes first! And remember, benefits are almost always non-tangibles. They are about how your animal or your product make the customer feel better, make his life better, solve his problems and frustrations or make life easier for him.

When you sit down to prepare a sales presentation, write an ad, prepare a brochure, flyer or catalog, go ahead and start with your list of things you usually say about your products. Then ask yourself, "Who is this about?" If it's about you and your 'stuff' (facts) you need to do a translating job to make sure it appeals to the self interest of that potential customer first (benefits.) Translate from your own ego into the ego of that customer you're fishing for. Then he'll pay attention. Then he'll hear you or read your material because you made it interesting for him to hear or read. You baited your hook with what he likes. You'll catch more customers!

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