

It's never been more challenging to market your business and the professional services your organization provides. Potential clients and customers are bombarded by literally thousands of marketing and sales messages, and those charged with business development have virtually an infinite number of ways to go about the marketing of those services – just rarely an infinite budget or infinite amounts of time. It's hard to even grab the attention of those you know you can assist.

For some, the strategy is throw as much at it as you can and see what sticks. Some are stuck in "that's the way we've always done it." For others, the budget of time and money is so small as to make little impact. Some do nothing at all. And for most, there's just so many marketing options, who has the time or the knowledge to cut through it all and make a sensible plan – after all, you're busy, right? And, if the business is particularly the small, the "marketing executive" may also be the business development person, owner or, in some cases the admin with virtually no experience, training or expertise.

Make no mistake, the ongoing, purposeful, consistent and strategic marketing of your business is literally the difference between staying in business and going under, or treading water vs. being very successful. With customer and client attrition, and the unusually high turnover rate of internal marketing personnel, business owners, particularly those that are an outsourced business model themselves, need to take a serious and strategic look at their marketing efforts.

For many, they unfortunately skip the strategic and dive head first into the tactical. We need to advertise. We need to do Facebook Live (or insert new whiz bang thing you read about recently). We need to put out a press release. We need to cold call more. The answer is quite simple: No, you don't. You need to stop, take a big step back and take a look at some critical areas of your business. I would strongly suggest you need to bring in outside counsel to review at least once a year and offer objective suggestions and assist in cutting through the endless clutter of tactical "things" you "could" do – an annual communications audit. Having that expertise and counsel allows companies to focus on their organization rather than "testing" the infinite number of latest and greatest marketing tools – as experts have likely experienced, vetted and understand which tactical things will work best for a given type of business. Again, having an expert counselor is far different than talking with that sales rep who has a quota. Your accountant isn't there to sell you something, they're there to look at your business and offer expert advice. Same with

your marketing counselor. The local ad rep is there to sell you ads.

So, let's start with strategy.

Do you have one? Ask yourself to, in one sentence, state your marketing strategy. Go around the business and ask your sales or business development team, what is your marketing strategy. Ask the internal marketing team. Did you get the same, consistent answer? Did you get a blank stare? If you actually did receive a clear, consistent response, that's a very good thing. If you didn't, there's a problem that needs to be addressed, after all, as they saying goes, if you don't know where you're headed, any direction will get you there. Develop your marketing strategy, and again, if this isn't something you do or believe you can have objectivity with, bring in a firm. It's what they do, and be sure to hire one that understands your industry – if you are a manufacturing business, don't hire a firm that provides consumer goods expertise. Laundry detergent and banking don't translate.

Once you have your marketing strategy outlined, look at all of the potential audiences you can provide those services to and gather as much information and data on those audiences as you can. Trade groups, trade magazines, first person interview and even surveys can be very effective. You want to be as specific as you can about the target publics because without that knowledge, it's virtually impossible to relate to the publics and public relations is at the center of marketing for any professional services organization. Name your targets, identify them and come up with a unique value proposition and brand narrative for each, that align with your marketing strategy.

And before you're being the "smart ass" kid in the classroom and say your marketing strategy is to "sell more," no, that's your sales objective without any specifics and no benchmark or direction. Don't be that boss – it's bad leadership. Not a marketing strategy, which involves specifically how you are going to communicate the specific advantages to your varied



publics in order to create a positive sales environment. My advice is to lay out a matrix, with your marketing strategy at the top, followed by the target publics with whom you wish to relate followed by your specific value proposition for each – after all, you don't sell to your mom the same way you sell to your kids, right?

Benchmark each and lay out exactly where you are currently based on sales numbers, engagement, presentations or really any area that you want to see growth – web hits to that specific page, and so on. Then, based on the value proposition, develop your strategy for communicating with each – for example, in our value proposition we want to show how our software makes a business more productive for this specific business type or title. So, we showcase a specific challenge that individual faces, and how our solution addresses it efficiently. We need a creative and a copy strategy that will grab the attention and clearly showcase what we are saying, while creating a CTA (Call to Action). Now, you develop your marketing pieces.

This is where you begin being tactical, in the creation of your print ads, marketing materials, social posts, direct response and the like – all versioned for your specific publics. Again, you don't market, sell or relate to your various publics the same across the board so you must be smarter and market to each, not to all. Fortunately, versioning the relatively simple provided you're following the steps above. Then, you execute. Be creative (and if you're not creative or don't know how to do this, don't.) One of the worst mistakes we see is such poor tactical execution that even if a group DID see your stuff, they don't understand it or it fails to make any impact (or worse yet, has the opposite impact).

Get your "stuff" out to your publics. Media relations, social, paid, sponsorships – again, the options are endless so depending on your marketing strategy, there should be some combination of an "all of the above" strategy – this is called your marketing mix. Start at 100 percent and carve out your time and budget on your 100 pie chart and create your mix. As you watch performance, this mix can and will need to be updated and possibly altered.

Sound complicated?

Well, it is. And that's the problem with most organizations that attempt to do this themselves without professional, experienced outside counsel. I mean, you wouldn't (or shouldn't) just dump a ton of money in the stock market and see what happens, right? Unfortunately, this is as close to the marketing strategy of thousands of businesses across the country that may be struggling. Particularly if you are yourself a BPO, why on earth are you tactically and strategically trying to take on all of the marketing efforts internally? That's risky and in most cases, more expensive. After all, you'd say the same thing. Consistent, ongoing and professional marketing that says the right thing in the right places at the right time to right people is a science and an art. And the health of your business (and your sanity) is no place for guesswork. Guessing is expensive and can actually undermine your business and your goals entirely. As you look toward planning for next year, this is an area where most can improve and look at doing something "differently" next year – be bold. Be brave.

About The Eisen Agency

We have been one of the most successful strategic partners for professional services businesses who understand that they don't need to know everything – they just need to know where to turn. We take visions and goals and turn them into reality through our award winning marketing and branded communications strategic planning services. With that strategy, our hard working, talented and tenacious team tactically effectively and efficiently executes as an extension of your team – delivering superior marketing communications expertise and execution, and giving you perhaps what you value most. Time.

Lower overhead through outsourcing to a professional marketing agency, objectively and intrinsically tied to delivering success. Get more done. Gain market share. Market smarter. Spend less time and money doing it. The agency offers strategic counsel, marketing planning and tactical execution all in one amazing firm.

