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Smart Move!

by John Catalano

Have you seen [this](#) great DirectTV commercial? A marketing executive from a cable TV company says, "We change the customer. Because the people we got right now - they're terrible! They call in; they're angry all the time!" Although wonderfully funny, that guy is right. Get different customers.

Faith, trust and respect are characteristics I see lacking in too many businesses. All businesses begin based on those principles, but most lose sight of them as they grow. Businesses who bring these concepts back into focus usually are quite successful. I call this application "Freedom Management."

But where does the restoration begin, with your employees, or with the customer? The following article blends a market positioning idea with the need for a demonstration of faith.

This is a "new" marketing approach that recently came to mind. I passed this on to an associate in the truck/auto business. This pitch is written to position themselves in our very crowded yet very profitable market. Simply change the "names" to build the concept into your business.

Warning:

Since I am not directly in the auto business, I have to figure this has been done many times over and I just haven't see it locally. I am pretty sure this is not any local car dealer's current positioning. If it is in place, they should talk to me, because I can't find them.

Background:

It is the fashion nowadays to be considered all things "Smart."

Well more ingrained than Smart homes or Smart cars, in many parts of the country (the coasts especially) people elevate their self worth by telling themselves they are associating with Smart people: co-workers, friends, neighborhoods, subdivisions, etc., even restaurants and social activities.

The Position:

"XXX Automotive Group - Home of the Smart Car Buyer"

(Get it? - You can read it as a Smart Car as well a Smart Buyer.)

The Pitch:

People like to know think they belong to the Smart club, even though they may not regard themselves as wholly worthwhile members. This "I am Smart" concept is endemic in many locales and is exceedingly prevalent in corporate America. I am sure you have seen it in your neighborhood as well as in your customers. I propose that you capitalize on this trend by incorporating a version of the above slogan into your market positioning.

Carry this "Smart" theme into all marketing (print, radio, business cards, internet, tv, service desk, nametags, signage, promotion, all internal and external printed materials, etc.), and in time you will get customers in who think they are really Smart and want to associate with people (other customers) who they perceive as really Smart. And "everybody" knows that Smart people buy higher quality products, for which they spend more. (Hint: advertise in Park City.)

This is called positioning, or placing, your business in a certain manner. Market positioning is usually one aspect of a market plan or campaign. There would be several steps involved with the process, but even that is only half the story.

The other half is making use of your internal human relations. It actually must begin from within.

In the case of a car dealer, get "You're Smart" drilled into the sales and service staff. See here for one way to start that process internally. Maybe a special "Smart Buyer!" logo printed everywhere listed above as well as on the nearly-identical polo and dress shirts you give each employee to wear.

When dealing with customers, teach your employees to do things that let customers know that you know and appreciate that s/he is really Smart. Things like printing the KBB True Price or other internet sources and going over it with the customer. This validates the customer's work since we know they have already done it anyway. Things like citing the internet references to reviews, shortcomings, etc. of the cars the customer is looking at. The idea is let the customer know you value (respect) their hard research work. You largely must train your employees to everything (related to your product line) that is on the internet.

Conclusion:

I began this blog talking about faith, trust and respect as the cornerstones of a work environment. What this pitch boils down to is demonstrating respect for the customer, which will be a truly novel feeling for 90% of car buyers. But it has to start by demonstrating respect for the internal staff along the same lines. Much more could be done from there, but I am sure you understand how you fit into the equation.

You want to get to the point where your marketing execs are saying "And the customers! We need to keep these great customers. I mean, every time they call come in, they're always so Smart!"

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