

Susan Mucha

The EMS Marketing Balancing Act

Optimizing expenditures means building awareness through the right vehicles.

The two biggest myths in EMS marketing are contradictory. Myth One is that you have to spend a lot of money to get your name known. Myth Two is that formal marketing doesn't work and all you really need is a sales team with good relationships.

The truth lies in the middle. Many EMS companies overspend on marketing. Some overspend on poorly directed activities that use ineffective channels. Other times it is overspending in terms of number of activities or the budget for a specific activity. Failure to do any marketing carries a cost as well, since Sales' time is an expensive resource. Wasted sales calls can cost as much as \$1500. Calculate the fixed cost of a salesperson who spends 50% of their time in accounts not ready to buy and the "cost" of no marketing becomes very obvious. At the same time, marketing without sales won't work, either. The EMS sale is too complex to sell with marketing messages alone.

Developing a good marketing process is not too different than running an assembly line. When the process is in control, good product is produced. When elements of the process exceed control limits, money gets wasted. Process control is achieved by developing a strong strategy and then measuring results against goals set for the process. The basic planning process is transferable between companies; however, the message needs to be unique.

Typically a good EMS marketing process will be determined by the goals for lead generation. Thus, promotion is aimed at achieving the right mix of "reach" and "frequency." Reach is the term used to describe the penetration of the message to the right qualified prospects. Frequency is the number of times the target audience sees that message.

People rarely remember a message they have just seen once. Often, a message must be seen or heard three to seven times before a person even becomes

aware of it. This is the reason that consumer advertisers run commercials over and over again. While you may remember (and be irritated), others in the target audience are just starting to tune in. In the EMS industry, companies rarely have a budget ample enough to irritate their market through frequent promotion. The primary focus should be on ensuring that messages are run with enough frequency to build awareness in the target market.

Frequency requirements are the reason it is a bad idea to run only one ad, send a single direct mail piece or go to a trade show with no pre-show promotion. Even at a discount, a single ad strategy may be a waste of money because the bulk of the audience will never remember seeing it. Trying to promote a company by simply placing a booth at a trade show can have equally poor results, because most serious buyers often visit only companies they have heard about through other channels.

Reach requirements are the reason for focusing efforts on a narrow target audience. Generally, if a publication reaches millions, advertisers are

paying for the total measured audience, not simply the small part of the audience interested in their services. Focusing on channels with narrow target audiences helps ensure that marketing dollars are not wasted buying access to viewers who have no interest in EMS.

Reach issues also make pay-per-click advertising strategies via the Web questionable because many of those clicks may come from people unfamiliar with

EMS. Web ads placed in focused venues visited by likely buyers of EMS-related services are the best Web-based marketing option.

Paying per click via the Web is a questionable strategy.

Qualified Means Quality

The goal of EMS marketing efforts should be twofold. First, they should be focused on identifying ready-to-buy accounts. A stream of qualified prospects translates to less wasted sales time. Second, they should

Susan Mucha is president of Powell-Mucha Consulting Inc. (powell-muchaconsulting.com), an EMS consulting firm focused on training, branding and strategic planning; smucha@powell-muchaconsulting.com.



be coordinated to tightly focus the more costly efforts on the best-qualified target audiences and balance high-cost promotion activities such as advertising and trade shows with lower-cost activities such as public relations, seminars and conference participation.

A good integrated marketing plan accomplishes these objectives by laying out a strategy that sequences activities throughout the year. Advance planning can drive frequency discounts, ensure adequate time and resources are available during plan implementation and help drive a consistent flow of qualified leads.

A good plan also helps maximize frequency and reach by developing a visually consistent message. Look through a trade magazine. Do you recognize some advertisers even before you see their names, simply because of the layout or colors of an ad? Consumer or corporate image commercials achieve this by using the same theme song, images and graphics. In EMS, visual message consistency can be achieved through graphics, internally-trademarked process names or very focused value propositions. Message exposure frequency can be maximized by creating databases of leads and re-marketing periodically using lower cost internally-generated mailing or emailing efforts.

Many mediums can carry the message. For instance, a quickturn prototype house or regional provider that delivers to a small area may opt for a slogan or dynamic message on the side of its delivery trucks. Every time a prospect sees that truck they are reminded of that value proposition. At the height of the last business boom in San Francisco, exhibitors rented billboards mounted on trucks that circled exhibition halls to reach attendees. Others prominently position large copies of ads in their booths. A slogan (tagline) can be used—on stationary, brochures, quotes, ads—to reinforce a message. In some cases, this may actually be a part of a logo. Another tactic: include reprints of ads in direct mail pieces or with literature fulfillment pieces. Finally, use visually similar composition on the Website and other promotional material.

Promotion opportunities are endless. A good integrated marketing plan helps tie together a sequence of promotion activities that reinforce each other cost effectively.

Most important, it helps ensure that activities are implemented throughout the year because the biggest challenge most EMS marketers face is finding the time to strategize and implement activities when marketing is not a formal process. The benefit of one-to-two weeks of planning time per year is a healthy pool of prospects and less time spent implementing marketing activities during the year. ■