

MARKETING OBVIOUSLY: THE WOW FACTOR

by David & Lorrie Goldsmith



Marketing obviously. What's there to say if it's obvious, right? Well, doing anything obvious is often not so obvious until it's pointed out. So, here's pointing.

Say your goal is to increase sales. The obvious part is that there are three ways of increasing sales: 1) get your current customers to buy more from you, 2) steal customers away from competitors, and 3) come up with a new product/service that makes people buy. The not-so-obvious part is that you can do all three of the above by being the first to use a marketing tactic that works in other industries but has yet to be used in your own.

For example, we couldn't help but say WOW when a flyer from the grocery chain, P&C, recently arrived by mail. The grocer's mailer employed the dollar-store sales tactic—good stuff for only \$1. The flyer was entitled “Dollar Deals” (with the S actually being a \$). Unless you've been living under a rock for the past decade, you're already aware of the booming popularity of dollar stores. They've cropped up on street corners all over America, offering reasonable products for a dollar or less—Dollar General, Everything For a Dollar, Family Dollar, etc. P&C's mailer exhibited the cheesy, yet flamboyant dollar-store flair, from the bright yellow colors to the bold typeface that screamed, “Buy me, buy now.” They were luring customers by appealing to them in a way that wasn't typical of grocery-store marketing.

Sure the two purchasing systems are different. Grocery stores must have a mix of name brand and the lesser-known or even private labels on the shelves. Dollar stores are often looking for closeouts, misprints, rejects, out-of-business

remnants, and inventory overages. The marketing tactics of the latter, do, however, work for the former in some ways. Similar to the adding of a restaurant or a video store to a grocery store, this dollar idea could become an add-on where the product markup might be greater than the two, three, or four percent that is customary for grocery retailers. (When does grocery store change to superstore?)

A local dollar store carries socks for a buck, and quite a selection that is often being replenished, meaning there are manufacturers that are not in the distress sale business but in the business of quick and easy packaging, low-cost, no-name products. The grocer can make this transition easily and without being seen as a "discounted." During tough economic times, the transition is a big plus with customers. Buying cheap and in bulk a la Sam's Clubs and BJ's is already a buying pattern, too.

The question is, are you wowing your customer? Have you taken the time to say, "Are we missing the obvious?" Home Depot now promotes the tool rental business competing against the Taylor Rentals and Rent USA. Smart move. Now, when a customer decides he can't afford the \$499 DeWalt Compound Mitre Saw, he can rent it from the same store without having to make alternative arrangements. Could Home Depot be losing business? Most likely not. If you're a true handyman, once you have the tool, someone has to send in the Special Forces to get it back.

Fast food restaurants jumped on the bandwagon a while ago. Think dollar value items or 99-cent menu.

Here are a few pointers on creating the wow:

1. Take a look at what your competition is doing? Yes, you've heard this before, and yes, you might say you've done it, but did you research it as far as you needed to go? This means talking to customers, watching the competition, reading about others just on the cutting edge.

2. Make it a point to offer one product or service that can add real bottom-line dollars to your business. Searcy Uniform out of Arkansas added deodorizers to their already-full trucks, realizing that the deodorizers were an extension that took up very little room and had huge profits. Other uniform businesses have followed suit with profitable results.
3. Throw away pre-conceived ideas such as "customers don't want it that way." How do you know? Did you ask the customers you currently have or did you ask those who don't purchase from you?
4. Group some of the products you offer by solution, not by type or vice versa. Catalogs like Victoria's Secret often will run the same product in several places. This is meant to increase the odds of purchasing, since the viewer now is in another state of mind. In addition, they might not see the item when it's on Claudia Schiffer, but notice it on another model in another color.

5. Look across industry lines to see what has brought success to others. Schwan's food company sells high-quality groceries, not vacuums or encyclopedias, door to door. Again, implementing a tactic that you wouldn't normally see in your industry can yield surprisingly good results.

Marketing obviously is all about doing something that makes others smack their foreheads and say, "Why didn't I think of that?!" It's about taking something ordinary in one place and trying it out in a new place or in a new way. Sometimes, when you move an old piece of furniture into a different room, you give new life to the piece of furniture. When you implement existing marketing tactics in unexpected areas, you offer a new perspective of your products that could potentially pay off. Marketing obviously is a new twist that could have your customers saying WOW long after you've cashed their checks.

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