

4 SIMPLE TOOLS TO IMPROVE YOUR MARKETING

By Carla Gail Tibbo

The simple rule of the industry – get the right product to the right customer, at the right time, for the right price, and in the right place – too often gets translated into “sell, sell, sell,” or “run an ad campaign,” or the dreaded “do what you have to do to get an order.”

Why is this so? Lack of focus? Lack of savvy marketing? Lack of understanding and assessing the real market for your product? Companies (and their products) need to be relevant to their target consumers. They need to understand who those consumers are.

It’s a customer-centric world out there, where customers have been trained to expect products

and services tailored to their specific needs and wants. The better you understand and focus your attention on those customers, the more successful you’ll be!

Focus requires discipline. And it requires serious assessment of your market. **You cannot be everything to everyone.** But you can pinpoint who you can serve best with your key product/service offerings, and make that your focus.

There are four main pinpointing tools you can use to focus your marketing efforts: segmentation, targeting, niche marketing, and positioning. All four work together, so let’s explore how you can use them:

1 SEGMENTING

Only the most untrained and starry-eyed marketers would suggest that everyone is their market. If the goal is to reach a mass – or a very broad – market, different segments within that mass market will require different marketing approaches. One overall plan will be too generic to “speak” to everyone effectively, and in the end, won’t speak to anyone effectively.

To segment well, take your overall market and divide it into groups with some key element of homogeneity. To do this, ask yourself first: is this a business to consumer market (a restaurant is traditionally a business to consumer market (B2C). Is this a business to business market (an engineering firm selling design services to municipalities is a B2B situation)?

After you’ve determined if you’re a B2C or a B2B marketer (and you could be both!), consider the different ways you can segment your market – using geographics, demographics, socio-economics, usage of your type of product/service, benefits sought from your kind of offering, and psychographics. Ideally you will use a combination of these. Look at each segment and determine whether or not you can market to it **effectively and profitably.** **Create a mini marketing plan for each segment.**

Key point - link segments to consumer and business behaviour, and think about the alignment of your products and services with the things that really drive decisions in the segments you are looking at.

2 TARGETING

First, determine how many segments you can reasonably handle.

Ensure that each segment you choose is comprised of people or organizations with common needs and similar types of response to communications messages.

These become your target markets, and **each market requires a separate marketing strategy!**

3 NICHE MARKETING

The ultimate target market is a target of one, but this is an uneconomic approach – and a risky one! While businesses segment their markets as insightfully as they can, the process is not perfect, and segments will not be perfectly homogenous. The larger the segment, the less homogenous it will be.

This is where the niche comes in. Within a market segment, there are sub-segments with very specific needs and characteristics – these are your niche markets. Consider them the most attractive parts of your market, and those you feel you have the most affinity with. Think of it as micro-segmentation!

4 POSITIONING

You want to get into your customers' minds – to occupy a space, to be regarded as superior, relative to competitors. What are you best at? What makes you special?

Positioning includes all of your efforts you make to establish your product and company in customers' minds. And, once you are there, you have to continually work to defend and maintain your position. Competitors are always on the lookout for ways to edge in! Study and understand the position of your competitors to better understand your own market position and how to best communicate it.



So why use these pinpointing tools?

Customers are diverse – and so are their needs and wants. Every customer is special and unique in some way. These tools cause you to recognize the diversity and requirements of your customers and allow you to “speak” almost individually to each one.

Markets are full of small pockets of potential, and in some cases, major competitors ignore these markets, to their detriment. Shrewd marketers can benefit by focusing on these niche markets!

Most businesses work on the 80/20 Rule – 80% of your revenues (and more likely 80% of your profits) come from 20% of your customers. **Those who fit into this lucrative 20% deserve most of your attention.** Imagine how much effort is expended marketing to the 80% of customers who generate only 20% of profits! This fact alone makes a solid case for niche markets.

How will you start using these tools in your business? I'll delve into some specifics for each of these tools in other blogs. How do these tools work in your business?