

Listening to the Marketing Voices of 2010

by Dan Logan

Recently we asked a mix of our clients, prospects and business partners, “What are the three or four major marketing topics or initiatives you think have grown most in importance, and need more of your attention in 2010?” The majority of people we work with are in the business-to-business space with a high concentration in the broad financial, insurance and healthcare industries, as well as professional services and technology. While there was considerable and notable consistency in their responses, the ranked order of their concerns differed. The following is a summary of their top priorities and concerns, in no particular order.

Bringing clarity and consistency of messaging to and across the organization and delivering powerful messaging to clients, prospects and partners

Whether we talked to people working in Fortune 500 companies, fast-growing small businesses or mid-sized businesses who struggled in 2009, it is clear that many are trying to reposition themselves in light of the seismic changes of the last few years. The need for consistency and clarity of messaging delivered from the organization to the outside world was mentioned by almost everyone.

The root causes behind these findings ranged from:

- Organizational restructuring or merger
- The natural internal tension among corporate branding, various business units, and sales and distribution
- The ever-increasing number of communication channels available to a business via technology, the web/internet and social media
- Messaging issues brought on by new products, markets and strategies

And very importantly, the person expected to bring order to this complex issue is the CMO.



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Identifying the proper role of social media within the overall marketing effort

We believe it is fair to say that no media innovation in history—such as the phone, radio or television—has been adopted so quickly and on a global level as social media. Whether one wants to reference the C.I.A., numerous politicians, Tiger Woods or various components of the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, we now live in a business world that is increasingly transparent. A simple email, photograph, or video can mean the difference between success and failure. So while everyone talked about social media in 2009, 2010 will be the year that marketing people will be asked to work hard at separating the facts from the buzz and start to get specific about the best role of social media in their business.

Several people we talked to expressed concern over the ROI of social media, and the difficulty of quantifying the true human costs of all the resources within a company required for managing it. Other people cited significant usage and acceptance differences within both industry and consumer markets versus the business-to-business market they operate in. What works in the entertainment, healthcare or technology world might not work in the world of private banking or commercial insurance. Unlike the use of a computer, which started in the office and migrated to the consumer, the acceptance of social media as a marketing tool for a business happened in reverse. That being said, the need for a social media policy and plan within a business setting is both more apparent to, and more complex for, a business than an individual. Again, the person expected to take the lead role in 2010 is the CMO.

Effectively dealing with the internal demand for more email target marketing and lead generation efforts

Most everyone we talked to felt they received more email in their business setting in 2009 than ever before. What is ironic about this is that collectively it is the marketing, business development and sales people of the world that are causing this. What is surprising is that many people say the email they receive today is often more relevant than in previous years but they simply do not have the time to deal with it all. At the same time, virtually everyone seems intent on using more and hopefully better email marketing campaigns in 2010 than they did in 2009. This is particularly true of small and mid-sized businesses.

The reason for increased use is simple. Well-designed email campaigns are cost efficient, measurable and they generate quality leads. That combination of benefits is unbeatable. Lead generation is also on the mind of almost every marketing person in 2010 because top line revenue growth and ROI is the financial theme of the year for most B2B businesses. Factor in the historical tension between marketing and sales people and the pressure is on the CMO to help deliver leads and thus sales in 2010.

Answering the question, "Where will future growth come from?"

Aside from mergers and acquisitions, a company's growth comes from identifying new market segments, new products, new positioning or new channels through which to sell. In today's environment, it can also come from partnerships, a global as opposed to a local orientation, bundling and cross-selling products and services, private labeling and the list goes on. Most marketing people we talked to think organic growth is one of their primary responsibilities but they are so squeezed for time that they cannot sufficiently focus on it. Nevertheless, in 2010 growth, as opposed to cost cutting, is a major theme and marketing people are under pressure to make recommendations about how to acquire more clients, customers and high quality prospects.

In summary, as we listen to the marketing voices around us in 2010, Trinity Marketing sees our efforts with our clients and business partners focused on a mix of growth strategies, clear, consistent and creative messaging strategies and campaigns, more effective email/lead generation programs, and finding the right place for social media in the marketing equation. The good news is that marketing people are at their best when the challenges they deal with are focused on stimulating demand, finding new customers and increasing the satisfaction of current clients and customers.

We wish you much success in 2010, a year that represents great challenges but also great opportunity.