



Stop Talking About Marketing

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People are complex creatures, and figuring out how to reach them can be a beast – especially on a budget. From understanding Millennials and their pets to simple day-to-day experiences, sometimes forgetting about “marketing” is the best thing you can do!

People are changing how they make decisions. Peer-to-peer feedback and other “offline” channels are equally important to more traditional or online marketing channels.

- “In 2010, shoppers needed 5.3 sources of information before making a purchase decision. In 2011, just one year later, shoppers needed 10.4 sources...” (Baer)
- “Slightly over half of consumers believe reading online reviews of products to be Extremely or Very important before purchasing a product (58%) or selecting a new service provider (59%)” (Vantiv)
- “About 70% of Millennials and nearly two-thirds of GenXers consider online reviews as Extremely or Very Important before making a purchase decision” (Vantiv)
- “The most common reasons why a mobile device is used to supplement an in-store experience are to retrieve coupons/deals (36%), check prices (33%), review loyalty points (18%), and make purchases (18%)” (Vantiv)

Pet ownership is on the rise, and how people think about their pets is changing.

- “Dogs ranked among the top three motivators for first-time home purchasers and were cited by more millennials than marriage/upcoming marriage, 25 percent, or the birth/expected birth of a child, 19 percent.” (SunTrust)
- “The way pet owners view their pets and the criteria they use when deciding which pet products to buy are closely tied to whether they live in urban areas, suburban or outer suburban locales, or rural parts of the country.” (Research and Markets)
- “To many adults ages 20-36, these furry creatures are much more than cute companions—they’re starter children.” (Main)

“Millennial” isn’t a dirty word and they should not be ignored—they’re likely already a large part of your audience. However, Millennials are not the only drivers of our changing shopping and decision-making behaviors.

- Millennials are people who are 20 to 36 years old right now. Their world has always incorporated technology; social networking is a natural part of their communication.
- “Generation X consumers in fact made 20 percent more purchases [online] last year than their younger counterparts.” (Vantiv)

Deciding how to spend your budget (if you have one) and how to allocate your team’s time and skills can make “marketing” intimidating. Positive adjustments to your clients’ experience with your services and your communication can influence on your customer’s behavior.

- **Make them feel welcome.**
 - Consider ways to use their name (and their pet’s name) during their visit and customize communications.
- **Expedite your processes.**
 - Look for ways to streamline the check-in and check-out process using mobile payments, credit cards on file, and home delivery.
- **Create opportunities for clients to share their experience.**
 - Get rid of “no phones” rules and incentivize sharing across channels.
- **Make it easy to find you.**
 - Mobile websites are no longer optional.
- **Say you’re sorry.**
 - Don’t hide from negative reviews—respond to them from a place of acknowledgement. Your potential customers read reviews and responses.
- **Find loud partners.**
 - Partner with a community business or individual who can reach more people than you can.
- **Do a few things well.**
 - Draft thesis statement for each channel so you are clear on why you’re using them.

There’s no silver bullet, and you don’t have to spend a lot of money. Focus on what you can control, do a few things well, and meet your customer’s expectations.

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