



Ad Agencies Can Open The Door By Addressing The Prospect's Problem

There is only one thing a marketing executive wants to hear about and that is solving a current marketing problem. Period. End of story. If you do not hit your prospect right between the eyes with a message that promises to solve a current marketing challenge you are wasting your time.

The Capability Pitch Will Not Open the Door.

Prospects do not care about your capabilities. How do I know this? I know because I was a prospect for over ten years. I can't begin to tell how many ad agencies contacted me in one form or another and communicated a generic list of capabilities. It does not matter how creative your capabilities pitch is delivered. At the end of the day capability pitches are all the same. Here's a news flash: Marketing executives know what ad agencies do. We already have an ad agency and whether or not we are happy with the agency we do understand their capabilities.

What Will Open the Door?

Demonstrating you understand the prospect's business and their challenges gets attention. Uncover your prospect's current problem prior to making contact. Then communicate the specific experience or ideas you have in this area. And if you communicate using their jargon you dramatically improve your chances of gaining the prospects undivided attention.

You can learn about the prospect's problems and learn the vocabulary they use through a systematic research process. Here's an example: A full service agency sought after a premium spirits marketer. (The agency had very good resume in this category.) A direct quote from the VP of Marketing obtained during the research process was, "I'd like to learn more about mobile event marketing. I'm not sure it can reach our target in enough volume to make a difference. And we strive to *surprise* people in all of our marketing activities. Surprise is a mantra around here." Rhetorically he asked, "How would we do that with mobile event marketing?"

Given this quote how would you communicate to the target to get his attention? A simple email with the headline, "*Surprise* Your Customer with Mobile Event Marketing" followed up with an example and your qualifications in this specific area may do the trick to gain an immediate response and begin a meaningful conversation. Now you are communicating about an issue on the prospect's mind using their language, not a meaningless laundry list of generic capabilities.

How To Do It

A simple research process can uncover current, relevant information you can use to gain attention.

The process includes two steps. Step one is a **database search** performed on the Internet. It is more involved than entering the prospect name into a search engine.



You should subscribe to a database service and find someone in your firm with the expertise and time to perform the search. Depending on the prospect this step can take as little as two hours or up to eight hours. The objective is to find relevant articles and information published about the prospect's marketing activities. Many times the information you need is only available through paid research databases. Old, out-of-date information should be eliminated. Consider only the most current and pertinent data. This step, most importantly, will uncover key contacts to be interviewed in phase two.

The second step is making direct contact with marketing executives via phone interviews to learn about their marketing plans and challenges. It is recommended this phase be conducted anonymously and by an outside research firm. Your goal is to find out what is keeping them up at night. Where is the pain? Depending on the prospect's business you can also interview salespeople, dealers, distributors, franchisees, and customers to learn how they view the company's marketing programs.

Armed with this information you will know exactly what is important to your prospect. You will be able to craft your communications (whether on the phone, through the mail, via email, or social marketing techniques) to get in the door.

About the Author Steve Aronson and his firm Marketing To Marketers – Steve Aronson a marketing veteran with over 30 years experience on both the client and agency sides of the business has founded Marketing To Marketers. This company performs low cost, custom research activities for marketing service firms designed to provide actionable information about their specific prospects. To learn more please visit www.marketingtomarketers.com.