

The Role of Technology in Marketing

Technology has brought with it many things, some good some bad. In the middle there is a huge grey area. A province occupied by many hawkers and e-vangelists. It is the area of 'e-marketing'. So, is this the answer to all of our prayers or is it all, as the industry itself has defined it – SPAM?

In business, communication is the single most important tool we all have. The advent of the telephone revolutionised the way we kept in touch with suppliers and customers alike. It became and, to a large extent, remains our primary means of registering our existence. Latterly, call centres and remote silent dialling have put even this old stalwart under the scrutiny of officialdom.

So, what of technology in marketing? Like the telephone, the internet and e-mail have revolutionised the way we interact within our work and home environments. We are, in many ways, even more open to communication with 'always on' broadband connections in the office as well as the home. In light of this it is sensible to assume that e-marketing is taking the lions share of marketing bucks now leaving traditional means of message transmission; advertising, direct-mail etc. slowly sinking in their wake.

To a point this is true but, such has been the exponential growth in this area that hard drives are being clogged; bandwidth is being strangled and enormous amounts of time being wasted on irrelevant e-mail content. This is what is known as Spam, unwanted and unsolicited mail. The back lash to this has been the creation of legislation to govern its use.

Under the Data Protection Act one must have the consent of recipients in order to broadcast to them via e-mail. You must also have an 'opt-out' option on every communication you make by this means. This legislation has largely been brought about by the shortening of people's fuses as a result of the tidal waves of unwanted data they have been receiving.

Recently we have seen a move away from the effectiveness of such tools in marketing as the perception is that e-shots are a cheap means of getting to a broad market quickly – mainly because they are all of the above. The downside is that this perception also denudes such communications of any personality or care. The recipient is just another faceless number or e-mail address on a list. The very essence of sales is that you strike up a relationship with your customer, you make them feel special. E-shots take away all vestiges of this caring aspect of sales and, as a consequence, more and more people are responding more favourably to traditional methods.



The traditional route displays an element of investment and focus. It also has a permanency and physical presence that engages the viewer at a more fundamental, human level.

There are clever devices out there that combine the best of both, webinater for example. This is a piece of direct mail that drives traffic to a web based response mechanism. A simple piece of card carrying a tease message goes out to customers, upon receipt it reveals nothing; the user then has to follow the instructions to reveal the resolution to the tease. This is by way of a landing zone that dynamically sells for you and then puts the call to action right where you want it – in front of your customer.

The thing that makes webinater work is curiosity. Unlike standard direct mail that can receive results in the order of .5 – 1.5%, webinater has never dipped below 21%, such is the power of intrigue.

So, is technology the Holy Grail or do traditional methods still win the day? I guess the answer is that you need to be relevant and careful how much you send by e-means and if you can find a method of combining traditional with technological, you're on a winner; like for example Social Media Marketing!
(Discussed under separate cover)

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