

Use Edu-Marketing to Maximize Response

BY SHANNON WALKER-LEMBKE

Educating prospects has been taking place in marketing for years. Sometimes companies approach new markets by showing the prospect they need the product by educating them about a problem—think Listerine and halitosis. Other times, the education is focused on the solution. This is particularly true when the solution involves innovative technology.

Education occurs right in the marketing piece itself or in a separate piece of collateral. Depending on the market you operate in, this separate piece may be a white paper, special report, or some other form of information. Also, depending on your market and product, you might be giving information away at different points in the sales process. In business-to-business markets where the product or service is a high cost item and the sales cycle is long, white papers are often offered early in the buying process. In consumer direct marketing, there may be a special report – or collection of special reports – you receive with a purchase or trial offer.

As marketers, one of the biggest benefits to offering information early in a buying process or offering it without a commitment as a bait piece is building your house list. This benefit is huge if you are entering a new market and starting by renting lists for direct mail. After all, once the prospect is on your house list, you can mail to them whenever you want.

Business-to-business marketers—particularly in the areas of IT—frequently use white papers as part of their marketing efforts. Check out the thousands of papers on www.bitpipe.com or www.knowledgestorm.com to get a feeling for the extent of white paper use. Business-to-business white papers cover topics ranging from accounting software to email security and e-marketing guides to enterprise business intelligence platforms.

Any marketing effort where the solution is complex, expensive, or innovative is an opportunity for using a white paper. White papers can focus on business benefits, technical benefits, or can be a business-technical hybrid providing both types of benefits. As with all marketing creative, the right focus comes out of assessing the audience. You may end up deciding that two papers are required – one for a technical audience and one for management. You then market each paper separately to reach the ideal reader for that paper.

To make edu-marketing work if an offer of a white paper is no longer working or it seems that your market is overwhelmed with white papers, a little creative packaging can refresh your offer and re-new response. Options include offering a podcast with interviews from experts, developing an e-course delivered as multiple e-mails or streamed over the Internet, or holding a webinar. If you already have a white paper, use the content as the core for one of these other options and offer them as a package. The possibilities are almost limitless.


Business-to-consumer markets also present an opportunity for edu-marketing but likely not under the umbrella of white papers. Obvious consumer markets for edu-marketing include health, real estate, and finance. Other consumer markets that lend themselves well to an information bait piece include:

- Hobbies - gardening, woodworking, knitting
- Home improvement products - flooring, appliances, windows, decking, wall finishes
- Electronics
- Self-help
- Any do-it-yourself product

The form your edu-marketing takes for consumer markets also needs to reflect your prospects preferences and fit the market. Podcasts or CD recordings fit the self-help market since many products in that area are recordings. And while video streamed over the Internet might seem great for the hobby market since many products in that area are visual, if your demographic is women over 55 they may not feel comfortable with the format and not respond. In this case, other video offerings such as DVDs may be a better option.

Here are other ways to package and deliver free information offers for either business-to-business or business-to-consumer products:

- Tips and tip sheets
- Booklets and pamphlets
- Resource guides
- Newsletters
- Software
- Seminars
- Articles
- Books

Giving your prospects information about problems, solutions (both in general and yours in particular) and useful ideas that make their lives better establishes you as an expert, builds trust, and makes you buzz-worthy. Make an information offer as part of your next direct marketing campaign and generate response. 

“ Giving your prospects valuable information establishes you as an expert. ”



Shannon Walker-Lembke is a freelance commercial writer specializing in B2B marketing copy and corporate communications for use in print and online. Her engineering background has brought her clients from the engineering, environmental, construction, and telecom fields. Her business experience has resulted in working with a number of businesses in a variety of industries including nutritional supplements, food and beverage, government, and legal. Shannon can be reached at 720-810-2487 or shannon@writeforadvantage.com.

for the March 7th Luncheon!