

Marketing Your Product as Everything, Often Does Nothing

By Matthew Yubas

A common marketing mistake I see over and over is trying to sell a product as a multi-purpose solution. A product that can do many different tasks usually doesn't do any one task better than the competition. Herein lies part of the problem. As consumers we typically experience one problem at a time and then shop for a single solution.

Ask yourself as a buyer, do you specifically look for multi-purpose products or do you look for a specific solution? Your good steak knives can be used to prune a tree, open letters, and to cut fishing bait. But don't you usually buy a separate pruner, letter opener, and fishing bait knife?

Exceptions to the Rule

There are a few exceptions to this rule. There is the clock radio, boom box, Swiss Army Knife, and all-in-one printer, scanner, copier, and fax machine. If products are typically physically placed next to each other, there is the possibility of combining them.

For example, a clock and radio often sits next to each other on the nightstand. By combining them together, it saves space, shares certain components to save costs, and adds the extra feature of waking up to the radio.

Where Does it Fit?

In most cases, your customer wants the best solution among the alternatives. Tailor your product to solve a specific problem or satisfy a particular need or want. Imagine shopping for a coffee maker. You might be looking for the top-of-the-line model, least expensive, or one considered the best value.

Or, suppose there was a multi-purpose coffee maker, popcorn popper, and waffle iron? But you're looking for just a coffee maker. You look at the multi-purpose machine but it's more expensive and doesn't have all the specific coffee maker features you want. And using the

multi-purpose machine might prove difficult if at the same time one person wanted coffee and another wanted to make waffles.

The other big problem is for the retailer. Retailers and distributors prefer a product that fits into one category. Where do they place the multi-purpose machine? Does it go in the coffee maker section? Next to popcorn poppers? Or, the waffle iron section?

When marketing a multi-purpose product, there's the issue of not focusing on a target market. If a multi-purpose product caters to many different people, the cost of marketing simultaneously to each segment raises significantly. With a fixed budget, instead of making a big noise in one market, you end up making a small noise in many markets.

Conclusion

For success, create a product that solves a problem or satisfies a need or want better than anyone else at a reasonable price. During early development, talk to potential customers and ask what features are important and what features are not important.

Eliminate all the features that do not make your product sellable. Then make the important features more attractive than the competition. Then you'll be on your way to product success.

Matthew Yubas

matthewyubas@gmail.com