



Establish 360-Degree Communication With Customers

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These days, there is a buzz around the use of digital media which offers cost-effective brand/product promotion opportunities over the Internet. Charisse Tabak, a well-known marketing professional, recently said, "Rather than seeing digital marketing as an *add on*, marketers need to view it as a discipline that complements the communication mix and it should be used to generate leads, get registrations or drive sales, rather than simply generating awareness." To understand the key elements of an effective digital marketing-strategy, Vandana Sharma of Benefit Bureau caught up with Jagdish Mitra, CEO, CanvasM. Here's his advice to businesses on making the most of online marketing.

Tuesday, August 18, 2009: **How relevant is it for businesses to opt to market via the digital media? What elements or tools does this include?** To acquire, retain and sustain the consumer relationship, the most important elements are to identify consumers; to know how to communicate with them; and to effectively deliver what they want and when they want it.

At a time when the consumer has become a lot more experimental with the basket of available brands in different product lines, digital marketing helps businesses to spread their promotional message at the right time, in the right place, and to the right audiences, to achieve the best results. So, it is certainly an effective medium to explore.

Digital marketing includes tools like short message services (SMS), blogs (which users can create online with services like WordPress.com, Bloggers.com, etc, to share views related to their brand or any subject that they think could generate the interest of their customers), micro blogs (like Twitter), online chat services (through services like Google, Yahoo! or MSN), social networking websites (like Facebook and Orkut), online photo/video sharing sites, and many others.

How effective is it as a medium of brand promotion?

Digital marketing, generically, has components similar to any marketing-mix where you have a product/service to promote, a medium and a target audience -- the effectiveness of digital marketing lies in its ability to personalise the advertising/promotional campaign and make it interactive. Digital marketing is aimed at establishing a connection between brand attributes and consumer perceptions. These days, the tools of digital communication are being used by marketers to build innovative communication strategies with the ambient media (non-traditional or alternative media). With this, they are aiming to create and deliver superior customer value to a chosen target market. So, it is proving to be an effective tool to convert societal needs into profitable business opportunities.

The unique benefit of the medium is that not only does it offer cost-effective marketing solutions, but also a great opportunity to reach out to the global audience. Web tools can also be used to launch brand loyalty programmes, and a lot more!

How could a company make the most of Web tools for marketing?

Changing consumer dynamics has thrown up the challenge of sustaining the relationship with consumers and building the 'connect'. Businesses need to focus on establishing 360-degree communication with their customers through all of their media campaigns. So, the best way is to design a campaign where consumer-centric communication is oriented towards converting products into brands. This invariably works as a successful mantra for any or every industrial sector across the globe.

It is important to understand that all digital marketing tools deliver a value -- while some are pull-based, the others are push-based. This means that some tools can allow marketers to plan a promotional strategy that makes a customer demand or pull more information about the promotional scheme, which is a pull-based marketing strategy. While there are tools that push promotional content to the intended target audience with an aim to generate awareness, brand recall, or communicate some discount scheme. Businesses need to analyse and identify -- depending upon the target audience's taste, behaviour, the time of running the campaign and many other dynamics -- what kind of digital marketing strategies and tools would work for them.

What should be the goal of an online marketing strategy?

Digital marketing should inform, educate and create striking communication with consumers. Marketers should ensure that the promotional strategy is engaging and aimed at understanding the audience. It should provide an opportunity to create an open dialogue between users and the business. There should be a provision to allow an immediate response to customer queries,

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feedback, complaints, etc. The tools adopted should be such that they provide easy access to consumer behaviour, based on which structured planning to draw active consumer participation could be initiated.

What are the essentials of an ideal digital marketing mix?

A digital marketing mix is an umbrella term that integrates technology, social interaction and an effective channel of communication that creates a dialogue with the customer through words, pictures, videos and audio. To stand out from the clutter of the brandscape, it is important to arrive in an arena with the perfect mix of digital marketing assets. This includes creating marketing strategies that are highly engaging and interactive, apart from being entertaining and interesting. It is also essential to ensure that the approach is innovative.