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Branding / Corporate Design

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## The Silver Bullet

Back in the 1800s when a tall man on a white horse gave you his “silver bullet” as his calling card, there was no mistake he was the Lone Ranger. When there was trouble you knew whom to call. That tradition of the “calling card” was established!

Fast forward to today, there are so many calling cards by so many people you can be lost in a maze of who is the right person to call! In my 30 plus years of marketing, I have assisted many private and Fortune 500 Corporations to brand their identity and assist them in a strategy of how to position themselves to generate revenue and reduce unnecessary spending. In every instance, there were many managers who could not discern the difference between marketing and sales. I always like to teach that Marketing is to “tee it up” for the sales staff to “hit” the ball. It will always require hard work to bring in the business.

Still, quite a few CEOs think Marketing is logo pens, pencils, shirts and tradeshows. This is a blind bull in the china shop method. However, a great CEO recognizes that good Marketing is Strategy.

One of the first drills I suggest to my clients is to go through a Discovery phase. It is like the “plans” to build a house. You would not start building a house without a blueprint. So many companies just want to display at the same tradeshow or run an ad in the same magazine just because they have always done it like that. It is like trying to drive a car without a steering wheel. It may work for a little while but you will eventually need to make an adjustment to follow the road. The same goes with your Marketing Strategy.

First you must “listen” to your customers. A company that has mastered the art of Marketing understands the needs of their customers. Believing in this process yields a competitive advantage. The “voice” of your customers will yield profitability and drive decisions related to your pricing, packaging, promotions, trade shows, events and, most importantly, positioning. We spend the time with our clients customers to learn, not to be responsive to a customer’s preference, but define what they need and then develop their criteria of a strategic direction. Meaning simply, define what the clients need.

**Once you figure this out, you have one silver bullet.** But how do you apply it?

I recently put together an extensive sales program for a company. These strategic sales initiatives included a lunch and learn seminar, three direct mail pieces (in 3D) and four email blasts to invite the prospects to the seminar. The sales staff did not think they should follow up with a phone call to any of the prospects. That is just wrong! The marketing campaign only is a tool to assist the sales staff, not to do their work for them. If that were the case, the company would not need the sales team at all. They think that the campaign in itself is the silver bullet. But there is no one silver bullet that brings in all the customers. It takes many different kinds of strategies, marketing and sales techniques to accomplish this goal.

Now let’s educate the internal management. It is necessary to bring together all the top management to educate them and develop a new marketing strategy. Yes, and make sure the CEO, Controller, EVP and VPs are on board and included in this phase. Otherwise, they will be left in the dark and especially the CEO who may have his or her own ideas. This works best when all participate. **This is the second silver bullet!**

Nothing pays off more than hard work! In sales and marketing, it is always a work in progress. It is also a lifestyle! Good sales people eat, sleep and drink it all the time. A great sales person’s network is always growing. For the most part, they do not shut it off on the weekends. They are entertaining prospects and clients with lunches, dinners, sport games and other events to promote the business. This seems like a chore but it is how to become successful. So many companies are continuing to invest heavily in product and acquiring new companies without the knowledge and benefit of a successful marketing strategy plan.

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**In the Discovery phase, we discuss with our clients what needs to be accomplished. This is a six-step process as follows:**

- Discovery – Who we are now.
- Future Identity & Positioning: What do we want to be?
- Brand Portfolio – What statement does each brand make?
- Brand Platform – How is the brand verbally and visually expressed?
- Branding Guidelines – Operating rules.
- Brand Evaluation – How is the Brand performing?

**Next, we discuss the “play and win” strategy. We cover the following steps:**

- The Experience.
- The Organization.
- The Track Record and Resources.
- Develop the Approach, Offerings, Reputation and Do/Say Ratio.
- Build the core values, fair to all, trusting the team, building the future and doing the right thing.
- Create a shared need to develop a mobilized commitment.
- Set the goals and strategy of The Plan.
- Discuss the deployment of the Launch.

This is a proven Six Sigma systematic approach. Toyota, Hewlett Packard, Ford Motor Corporation, Samsung, Xerox, 3M, Bechtel, Motorola and GE are a few companies that apply this successful system.

Finally, we develop an Internal and External rollout plan. It is extremely important to educate your internal people before any new marketing strategy hits the street. Once this is executed with success, it is time to rollout the new plan to your clients and prospects. **The third silver bullet!**

You are now ready to develop a budget for the New Year. The Discovery phase will determine what deliverables will be necessary to accomplish the company's goals. Maybe it is a new brochure specific to your clients' current needs, a new website with chosen meta tags to draw in specific clients, a tradeshow or shows and events to educate your prospects. But whatever you decide, it will take some additional planning and cooperation from your company managers moving in the “same direction” with enthusiasm to pull it off successfully. Remember, to win customers' attention and trust, marketers must think less about what advertising says to its targets and more about what it does for them! **The fourth silver bullet!**

So the next time someone leaves a silver bullet in your hand, just remember all the hard work that went into it. You may just want to partner with that person before he rides off in the distance to meet with your competition!

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