

When the Marketing Gets Tough

I know many professional marketers will agree with me: some products and services take every ounce of creativity within you to market effectively. Some industries are particularly tough to market because of the negative culture that surrounds them. Some are so ho-hum they are simply obscured in the crowd. Regardless, there's a strategy to overcome any obstacle.. Here is a random sampling of potential tactics and strategies built around some marketing challenges that may seem particularly difficult.

Using Research & Repositioning

Cemeteries – Most of us will need one eventually, even if we choose cremation (rising rapidly as the interment of choice). So how do you drum up “business” for a cemetery when many think about cemeteries only when a burial plot is needed? In this case, the answer lies with research, and here's an example:

Research will confirm that cemeteries were once viewed as public areas where people could pay their respects on a pleasant Sunday afternoon, take a leisurely stroll with their family members and just enjoy the serene, well-tended surroundings. These were positive connotations, so turning the public back to that more enjoyable idea of cemeteries will logically create interest in them. People will come. Vandalism will decrease. People will be more likely to purchase a final resting place there, even before their time is up. Every “body” wins.

Using Brand Extension

Food products --How do you market an already-popular food item that's been around forever, say, corn flakes? One way is to roll out an “exciting, new” recipe using the product as a main ingredient. Another is to introduce to the marketplace an extension of the existing brand. You only need a trip down the supermarket cereal aisle to see how this works. For example, both Quaker's Life Cereal and Kellogg's Special K now offer versions featuring chocolate bits, exploiting the public's eagerness to introduce healthier, flavonoid-rich foods into their diets without sacrificing flavor. The word is not yet out on the “heart healthy” part, and don't expect the milk in your cereal bowl to turn chocolatey. For that satisfying effect, you must dive heartily into those ole standbys, Post's Cocoa Pebbles or Kellogg's Cocoa Krispies, whose latest brand extension is ChocoNilla, a cross between America's two favorite flavors.

Using Repackaging & Pricing

Household items – Is there anything more boring than a mop, a bottle of dishwashing liquid or a brush whose only function is to eliminate the dust from your ceiling fan? One

way to market a boring product may be to make it more irresistible than other brooms, sponges, etc. Do this by packaging it beautifully and pricing it higher. Changing the public's perception of the *value* of a product works like magic every time. And even seasoned marketers and discerning shoppers are suckers for great packaging. Would I pay more for a bar of French-milled soap if the packaging is aesthetically pleasing? You bet! And if it costs more, it must be worth more, right?

A couple of years back, Q-tips cotton swabs, a product originally created for baby care, introduced a packaged beauty "kit" called the Q-Tips Vanity Pack. By teaching women how best to use Q-tips for applying make-up, etc., Lever Brothers created a new market for Q-tips, even though they were the same cotton swabs as before.

Using a Bit of Everything

Ice to Eskimos – A product that nobody really needs creates a most difficult marketing dilemma, but keep in mind that the key is differentiating your product. How would you get Eskimos excited about buying ice?

- Conduct a focus group to find out exactly how most Eskimos use commercially-packaged ice (other than for home construction). (*research*)
- Introduce the idea of enjoying ice that is "fresh" and "pure." (Show them images that depict this fresh idea.) (*repositioning*)
- Repackage the ice using graphics that depict purity and freshness (*packaging*)
- Add a flavor like cherry to the ice and provide recipes for using this new "flavored" ice in, say, mixed drinks at parties. (*brand extension*)
- Increase (or decrease) the price of the new packaged ice as compared to its packaged ice competitors (*adjust pricing*)
- Target your marketing message only to Eskimos who actually use commercially-packaged ice