

## Strategic vs. Tactical Marketing

Which would you rather be: **Efficient** or **Effective**? If you're like most people, your gut-level response is "Both!" But have you ever stopped to think about which one needs to come first?

Steven Covey, in his highly-acclaimed book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* said: "It's incredibly easy to get caught up in an activity trap, in the busy-ness of life, to work harder and harder at **efficiently** climbing the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall. It is possible to be busy – very busy – without being very **effective**."

This premise is especially true when it comes to marketing. Businesses often make the mistake of "doing something, even if it's wrong", mistaking activity for effectiveness. It's easy to do in the real-time instant-gratification world we live in. They get busy placing ads, buying lead lists, building a web presence, sending out mailers, attending trade shows, creating brochures, and so forth. In other words, they get busy DOING something.

## Strategic Marketing

It's important to realize that the strategic side of the coin – what you say, how you say it, and who you say it to – is always more important than the marketing medium of where you say it. This is the basic difference between strategic and tactical marketing.

Strategic marketing embraces the thought process that occurs before your message is broadcast to the masses. Seth Godin, business author and blogger once said, "Marketing is not an emergency. It's a planned, thoughtful exercise that started a long time ago and doesn't end until you're done."

Strategic marketing starts with understanding who your customers are and what is important to them. You have to understand why they buy what they buy – you have to see the world through their eyes! By understanding what's important to your target market, you can then put together a strategy that gets more qualified prospects to call, reduces your sales cycle, and increases your conversion ratios. Strategically, marketing programs and advertising should get the attention of target market prospects and facilitate their decision-making. This lowers their risk for taking the next step in the buying process.

Examples of Strategic Marketing (what you say, how you say it, who you say it to):

- Market Research you did to determine a need for what you offer
- Competitive Intelligence
- Customer/prospect feedback
- How you determine what your customer needs to hear
- How you determine where your customer goes for information
- How you determine what types of evidence will give him the information he needs to make the best decision possible
- How you decide which speaking engagement or networking event to attend

## Tactical Marketing

**Tactical** marketing is the execution of your marketing plan, such as generating leads, placing media, creating marketing tools, and implementing a follow-up system. In other words, it's the medium in which your message is delivered. To be **effective**, the strategy has to be in place first! Just putting a marketing message in an appropriate medium for your customers to hear or read is not good enough. The strategy must derive from an understanding of what's important to them. Otherwise, this tactical part of the marketing process will be much less effective, resulting in marketing programs that under-perform.

Sounds logical, but you'd be surprised at how many companies try to figure out how to sell more before they find out how to provide a solution to their customer's needs. They get in a hurry to "do something" and end up viewing their customers as a blurry "they".

Examples of Tactical Marketing (*where* you say it):

- Lead Generators (to get the market's attention in the first place) such as:
  - Emails (text/html/audio/video)
  - Direct Mail Pieces
    - Postcards, letters, flyers
  - Speaking engagements
  - Networking Events
- Marketing Tools (to keep the market's attention once you've gotten it) such as:
  - Website
  - Evidence (hard copy, DVD, CD/Video, web-enabled)
    - Testimonials
    - Reports
  - Brochures

## Where Are You Spending Your Time?

Organizations that take the time to develop a sound marketing strategy that speaks to their customers' needs are the ones that get the business – every time. The procedure for accomplishing this is exactly the same every single time, for every kind of business.

Take a second look at the examples of Strategic and Tactical Marketing and – be honest – evaluate where you've been spending your time.

Remember: You can be **tactically efficient** but you need a **sound strategy** to be **effective**.