

MARKETING

2007 – Year of the Pig

Marketing gurus and voodoos around the world are making forecasts to mark the start of a new year. While many of them might take on a traditional route, Drew Neisser, CEO of Renegade Marketing, outlines the following trends, which could perhaps provide ideas for the Hong Kong marketers:

Being Transparent

'Honesty at all costs' is the motto to adopt. As consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their legal rights, marketers need to 'be frank' with them – the days of *Caveat Emptor* are gone. Directness and honesty will not only help to win respect but also recover from some bad shots.

Transparency is important to building up confidence of consumers. A few months ago, a supermarket giant was accused of selling expired products, the marketing team of the group turned around the scene by inviting their customers to inspect the shelves – rewards for any substantiated report on products having passed their sell-by-dates. Taking initiatives, the campaign certainly won back customers and their hearts.

Blogs

Internet 'Forums' have grown to Blogs where corporations or individuals make public comments about an organisation, products or services on the web. Marketers can set up Blogs as non-traditional promotional platforms and for a networking hangout for like-minded individuals.

Blog monitoring is important too.

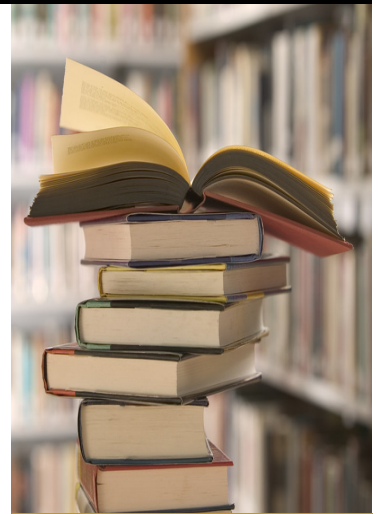
Tracking what Bloggers are saying on other people's Blogs is an important part of marketing so appropriate and timely action can be taken to handle complaints, seize opportunities or defend against threats.

User-Generated Contents (UGC)

Opportunities can be seized from other Internet platforms



too. A video on Youtube.com showed a kid dropping Mentos



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into a 1-Litre Diet Coke bottle to create big splashes all over the place. Mentos rode on the UGC waves and increased sales 17%. Coke could have done the same too. Finding promotional opportunities and getting customers involved will be the marketers' challenge in 2007.

Eco Everything

Green is the colour for the next decade. Anything green sells. Pressure for environmental goodness starts with the consumers and through marketers, ends with manufacturers. According to Drew Neisser, all giant brands including P&G, J&J, Black and Decker, will be forced to examine the 'greenness' of their manufacturing and distribution process. In Hong Kong, the Business Environment Council for example, organises annual Eco-Product awards to honour the best environment-friendly products on the market. Eco-friendly products will not only help to rejuvenate Planet Earth, but also win the hearts of eco-conscious customers.

Your Next Step

Now review your present strategies and see if you need to make a change:

◆ *Customer Satisfaction* – Is your telephone answering system asking callers to hear long instructions and press dozens of buttons to access what they want (or don't want)?

◆ *New Promoter Scores (NPS)* – Do you measure how customers would work for you? NPS is a measure of the multiplier effect created by customers – how many (nett) people did each customer recommend to use a product or service that he/she had used. Melbourne Business School found HSBC Australia ranked second in the banking category by relying on recommendations of foreign customers to their Australian friends.

◆ *Innovating Triumph* – Can you improve business by making small changes to your products? Companies selling the same products year in year out get stale quickly. Innovation is the key to keep customers coming back for more. Apple Computer, lost its limelight for some years until the creation of iPod, which is no more than a glorified version of an MP3 player, but its stylish designs have won customers and gave them back some lost shares in the market.

◆ *No more lines* – 'Above or Below the Line', 'On-line or Off-line'? Is there really one fine line to divide how advertising is done? Drew Neisser hopes that marketers can 'forget the lines' and look for any opportunity for continuous customer dialogue.

So examine your present practices and look for opportunities to improve.

(Jaki Yeung
Consort Management Consultants Ltd.)

MANAGEMENT

Life Quality

Change has been the byword of the first part of this millennium, with its attendant job insecurities, long-hours culture, corporate culture clashes and significantly different styles of leadership. These are all the ingredients of workplace stress: an ever-increasing workload with a decreasing workforce, a climate of rapid change and constant organizational re-structuring, and a feeling of having less control over one's job.

Although top managers frequently proclaim that 'the most valuable resource we have is our human resource', this may be more rhetoric than action, particularly in trying to create a healthy work environment.

In a recent Quality of Working Life survey by the **Chartered Management Institute**



of over 1,500 managers at different levels, it was found that two out of three said that working long hours ‘damaged’ their social life. Nearly 60% said it affected their relationship with their spouse, 56% their health and 54% their relationship with their children. Most interesting of all, 46% said these hours undermined their productivity. Another recent survey of over 600 working parents by Working Families also found that people whose employers allow more flexible working arrangements are more productive, have greater job satisfaction and fewer sickness absence days.



Employee Wellness

Why are we creating work environments that are psychologically and physically unhealthy when there is increasing evidence to support a good business case for workplace well-being? Do managers really believe that working long hours is productive, or that micro-managing people is motivating; that managing people by fault-finding and ‘keeping them on their toes’ is effective, and ‘change for change’s

sake’ is necessary in a globalised and highly competitive world.

Increasingly, the issue of workplace health and well-being is being recognised as a bottom-line issue. The *Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development* in 2004 found that stress was the leading source of long-term sickness absence. Lack of well-being at work is now estimated to cost, in all its forms, about 5% to 10% of GNP per annum.

If we really believe that our most valuable resource is our people, what can we do to make the workplace more liveable, healthy and vibrant? First, in our technological age, let’s get rid of long-hours culture in central-office environments and introduce more truly flexible working technology to enable people to carve out the flexible arrangements that suit both their lifestyle and their business demands.

Second, much of the stress and ill-health experienced by many at work is a consequence of how they are managed. People like to feel valued and that they are making some contribution to the organisation, so let’s be more praised and reward-orientated, so let’s be more praise and reward-oriented, as opposed to fault-finding and negative in our treatment of people from day to day. Third, poor management of change is responsible for a good proportion of ill health, so it is important to manage change better. We need to be more open and honest in our communications with subordinates, understand people’s natural fears and encourage greater ownership in the change by real consultation and the mutual development of change strategies.

In a civilised society, it is important for all of us to realise that any feel-good factor at work should include quality-of-life issues, as well as bottom-line ones – including working hours, family time, manageable workloads, control over one’s job and some sense of job security.

(Adapted from an article by Cary L Cooper CBE in Management Today, March 2006 journal of the Chartered Management Institute)

ENGLISH

Words Worth

WRONG	RIGHT
<p>× The engineering course takes four years time.</p> <p>▪ <i>When talking about how long something takes or lasts, do not use time with a time phrase. E.g. Each letter took one hour to write. The battery will last 7 days. However, for phrases beginning with ‘in’, the word time may be included. E.g. I’ll have to finish my course in 4 years’ time. Bill is due to arrive in 3 weeks’ time.</i></p>	<p>✓ The course in engineering takes four years.</p>
<p>× They walked along the beach for long time.</p> <p>▪ <i>‘a long time’ is a phrase.</i></p>	<p>✓ The walked along the beach for a long time.</p>
<p>× I’m sorry I’ve not had a time to write to you until now.</p> <p>▪ <i>Unlike ‘a long time’ as a phrase, when you talk about ‘time’, which is not countable, ‘a’ should not be there.</i></p>	<p>✓ I’m sorry I’ve not had time to write to you until now.</p>
<p>× It didn’t take a long time before we were back home again.</p> <p>▪ <i>The sentence would be simpler if we just say ‘long’. ‘A ... time’ is incorrect.</i></p>	<p>✓ It didn’t take long before we were back home again.</p>
<p>× On the last time, I went shopping I bought a toy.</p> <p>▪ <i>‘On’ should not be used with ‘the last/next time’ etc.</i></p>	<p>✓ The last time I went shopping I bought a toy.</p>

<p>× Parents should spend more time to look after their children.</p>	<p>✓ Parents should spend more time looking after their children.</p>
<p>▪ <i>When talking about spending time, you should add ‘-ing’ to the verb, so in this example, ‘looking’ becomes a verbal participle.</i></p>	
<p>× The firemen arrived on time.</p>	<p>✓ The firemen arrived in time.</p>
<p>▪ <i>‘on time’ = punctually, ‘in time’ = before too late, early enough.</i></p>	

Other common Hong Kong errors about ‘time’.

<p>× I’m not enough time to do my assignments.</p>	<p>✓ I have not enough time to do my assignments.</p>
<p>× I will meet you next Monday in office hours.</p>	<p>✓ I will meet you next Monday during office hours.</p>

MOTIVATION

Money is Everything?

According to Business Psychologist, Prof Adrian Furnham, there are at least 4 reasons why money is more likely to be a cause of dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

1. Pay and performance are not linked. The effects of a pay rise wear off as people adapt to their new conditions. Any improvements are therefore likely to be temporary. Money can be a motivator, but a great deal of it is needed to stop the adaptation.
2. Comparative pay rather than absolute pay leads to satisfaction. No matter what people are paid, if they think they are not fairly paid, they become demotivated. That’s why many institutions keep salaries secret.
3. Many people would be happy with more time off, or more job security, than more money. People are prepared to make trade-offs for money, especially if they have enough of it.
4. All very well to increase pay, but if the after tax gains are not much, why would they work for the government?

(Adapted from an article by Adrian Furnham in Manager, June/July 2006 journal of the Institute of Administrative Management)