



# Traditional Versus Modern Marketing

Modern marketing requires taking an innovative approach to your messaging.



By Stan Pohmer

“**B**ecause the purpose of business is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two and only two basic functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing and innovation produce results; all the rest are costs. Marketing is the distinguishing, unique function of the business.” — Peter Drucker, influential 20th century thinker and writer on the subjects of management theory and practice.

This is a pretty profound statement and one that some of us may find challengeable. After all, we spend much of our time managing costs, from negotiating prices, controlling payroll, and keeping track of non-negotiable costs such as

rent and utilities, to finding ways to lower costs and increase efficiency by investing in technology and labor-saving equipment. And these activities are all critically important to your bottom line and the ability to exist as a company. But at the end of the day, do any of these activities truly add value to your customer?

## Marketing 101

You can have the most efficient garden center in your marketplace, with the best and highest quality assortments and services, but if you don't let the customers in your market know about who you are, what you offer and what your competitive advantages are, you'll never tap into your potential.

Marketing is what grows your customer base and market share. Marketing's results — sales — are measured on your top line, but its ultimate value goes right to your bottom

line. We need to remember that all your fixed and variable costs and expenses are measured as a percentage of your sales; increase sales and you reduce the percentages of all of your costs, generating a far better bottom line than just managing a single cost element.

Traditional marketing, as many of us were taught, is a structured pyramidal process, with one step in the process building upon the other; it's a process that takes time to show results — and in a seasonal industry like ours, time does not work in our favor.

The pyramid of traditional marketing looks something like this:

**Step 1:** Raise awareness (get them to know you exist)

**Step 2:** Change attitudes (convince them to give you a chance)

**Step 3:** Modify behavior (they buy from you)

There's a marketing principle called The Rule of 7, which means that the average consumer needs to hear the same message seven times before they act on what they see or hear for several reasons. First, the consumer is bombarded with marketing messages; some media gurus say that the consumer is exposed to tens of thousands of advertising or marketing messages each day! Your message becomes just part of the noise they see and hear.

Next, they don't know they need you ... yet. If the consumer only hears your message once or twice, it's unlikely they'll remember you when they are in the market to buy. And, sorry to say, but most consumers in your

marketplace have no idea you even exist, don't like you, and don't trust you. But if they hear your message frequently and consistently, you can break through the noise and they might give you a chance.

And if they do, you've achieved part of the Holy Grail: a new sale (the other part is to generate repeat purchases!). Convincing someone to buy from you requires time; there are very few instant success stories in retail. And there are no silver bullets; the Rule of 7 applies to whatever media you select to communicate with the consumer... flyers, newspapers, radio or TV, etc.

### Modern Marketing

While the traditional marketing process is still important to reach a segment of consumers, there's a world out there with some consumers who don't read newspapers, listen to traditional (non-streaming) radio and TV that we still want to reach and convert into customers. Communicating with this tech-savvy consumer requires a different approach because they operate in a time-compressed world.

You don't get a second chance if you get "it" wrong, where people (peers) compare notes, share reviews, experiences and recommendations in conversations with each other. And because these conversations are generally online, they are almost instantaneous. We don't have nearly the same control over the marketing message or how it's communicated; the consumer has a voice and we're not even aware of what's being said about us in these consumer conversations.

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## Marketing is the lifeblood of your business, driving both your top line and bottom line.

Operating in this new world (and, yes, you'll have to operate in the "traditional" and "modern" worlds simultaneously to reach the complete spectrum of consumers!) requires that you think differently. Because modern marketing is much more social than traditional marketing, it's essential that you ensure that you do whatever you can to control the message before it goes viral, building as strong a foundation for it as possible.

Here are the steps in the modern marketing process:

1. Intention: Who is your intended audience and what are you trying to accomplish? What are the needs of your customer and what are the benefits you can deliver to them? With this information, it's time to craft your story (younger consumers can relate to stories if those stories are authentic and correlate with satisfying their needs).
2. Retention: Marketing is a continuum; there is no end to it. Once you gain a new customer, you need to retain

that person, so you need to think about approaching both the new and old simultaneously. Getting someone to buy one time is a lot easier than keeping them coming back (think lifetime value). Casting a wide net to gain new customers requires a different approach than target marketing to your existing customers.

3. Remarkability: If you've laid the right foundation, customers will initiate conversations based on their positive experiences because you've developed trust with them (especially compared to your competition). The network effect is the most powerful force for growth, but people won't talk about your work unless they believe it will help them reach their goals.
4. Once you've got these basics nailed down, you're ready to plan out your social media campaign.

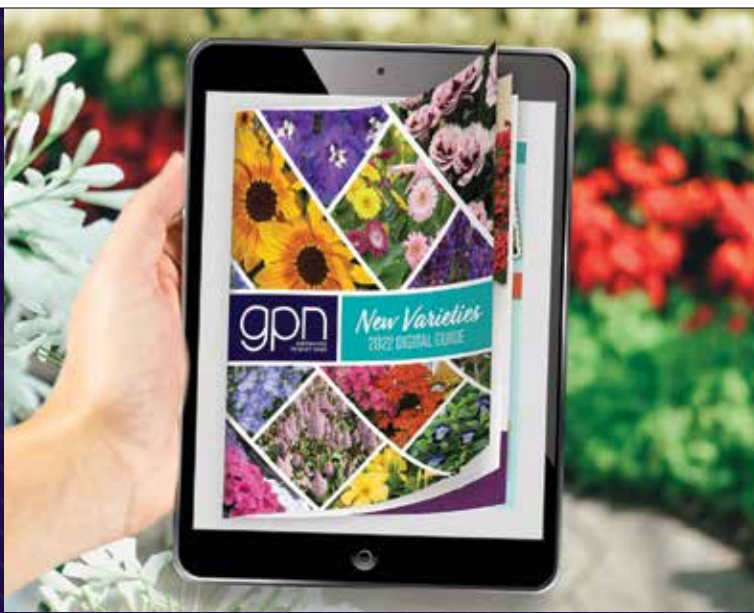
Your traditional and modern marketing initiatives can run parallel to one another, using the same messages, but crafting them differently for different audiences, approaches, and delivery methods.

Marketing is the lifeblood of your business, driving both your top line and bottom line. And just like your business and your customers, things change, requiring innovative approaches. 🌸

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