

Integration of Traditional Marketing and “e”

by Pamela Fay

Marketing has migrated from the tactical execution of programs into the strategic realm. It leaves no operational function of the business untouched and is no longer confined to a single department. However, this does not mean that traditional marketing activities go away. There are still, and will continue to be, direct mail marketing initiatives, in-branch campaigns and conventional marketing communications.

Since traditional marketing activities continue, its activities must coordinate with e-marketing so that consistent messages are distributed. Eventually, the “e” *does* go away. For now, however, it is how we differentiate the incremental activities that define e-business marketing. As “e” becomes an integral part of how companies do business, the designation will lose its meaning outside of the context of business-as-usual.

The need to present one face, i.e., a common look and feel, is critical to the success of e-business. Marketing initiatives must coordinate between traditional and e-marketing and across divisions enterprise-wide. Here are some guidelines to follow as a company plans to integrate its traditional and e-business marketing initiatives:

- Strong off-line brands should be maintained through traditional marketing activities enhanced through the intelligent use of data.
- Recognize that there are both synergies and tensions between traditional and “e.” Identify and work through the obstacles head-on; do not allow roadblocks to become an excuse for slow (or no) progress.
- Deploy the 80/20 rule. Plans do not have to be fully flushed out; move ahead and make corrections as you go.
- Balance the autonomy of individual e-business projects with the integration of the enterprise-wide e-business program.
- Ensure adequate resources. Spreading resources too thin across multiple initiatives means that the organization has failed to commit to e-business transformation.
- Hire for the skills required to perform e-marketing activities. These may differ from those of traditional marketing, requiring greater emphasis on analysis, statistics and technology. Keep this in mind for hiring and staffing decisions.
- Equally as important as deciding what to do, the organization must decide what it will *not* do. Strategy is the ability to make trade-offs.
- Resist the temptation to simply duplicate traditional offline business assumptions on-line. The channel is fundamentally different.¹

A conventional company that successfully extends its organization as a true e-business will be strongly positioned to compete in a changing environment. Recognize, however, that marketing is no longer something that is done *to* customers; rather it is done *with* customers; it happens at every point of interaction whether face-to-face, through the Internet, by phone, or some other channel. Today, power is in the hands of the customer. However, this does not mean that

¹ A good example of this is Barnes & Noble. They actively encourage leisurely visits to their brick-and-mortar stores with comfortable chairs, coffee shops, author appearances, readings and discussion groups. When they tried to duplicate this experience online, they quickly discovered that the model did not translate well. The company spent much money before they figured out that their customers did not want to hang out

marketers no longer have control. Marketing innovation still relies on companies that can be market-*driving*, not market-*driven*.