

Ad executives share holiday wish lists

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Special to the Sun-Sentinel

January 2, 2006



If marketing communications executives had their wish, nagging, unrealistic and stingy clients would be replaced with those who are empathetic and understanding, who know how planned marketing can be powerful and how a well-executed campaign can build a brand and cause the register to ring.

Read on for their holiday wish list.

Know the difference.

What's the difference between marketing and advertising, an expense and an investment? Know that, and Manny Salomon will have an ideal client.

Marketing is systematically and thoughtfully creating a communications program that uses efforts like advertising, graphic and product design, direct mail, PR and the Internet to get the word out. An expense is the rent or utility bill. Marketing should be an investment in the company's future.

"When you understand it's what you do to sell your product, you'll change your questions from, 'How many promotions can we buy?' to 'How many more sales can we get?'" said Salomon, principal with Salomon Snow Advertising in Hollywood.

Make time to plan.

Knocking out a marketing campaign on a tight schedule and with little thought to the calendar can deliver certain failure. Yet all too often, that's what clients do, said Jonathan Gouthier, principal with Gouthier Design, a Fort Lauderdale marketing firm.

Instead, look at important events for the coming year that can serve as "hooks" for campaigns and plan the year's marketing efforts with the intent of boosting return on investment.

"The year's end is a great time to set realistic target dates to accomplish effective visual and verbal communication that will not only impress, but will produce the sought out response," he said. "Increased ROI? Now that is some gift."

What's "newsworthy"?

Clients that hire a public relations firm often expect miracles, such as all press releases being deemed "newsworthy" and getting picked up by the media.

In reality, where clients believe their news is critically important, sometimes that's just not the case, said Tom Cutler, CEO of TR Cutler Inc., a Fort Lauderdale marketing firm serving the manufacturing sector.

"The word 'gotta' says it all," Cutler said. "What is important internally to a company is not necessarily something an editor or reader has 'gotta' know about."

Know your product.

Yannick Tessier wants a strong, marketable product and clients that know they have one. He also likes for clients hoping to launch an interactive campaign to have a tech-savvy staffer who can help implement programs, or just explain the mechanics to marketing execs who need some education, he said.

"Strong products mean aggressive marketing," said Tessier, CEO of Global Resource Systems, a Plantation interactive marketing firm. "It all helps: being open to creative new ideas; understanding how ROI works on sales, leads and branding; and having realistic expectations."

Work with us.

Clients hire agencies to create marketing programs. But agencies rely on them as partners in the process, said Michael Goldberg, chief marketing officer at Zimmerman, the Fort Lauderdale agency that specializes in retail advertising.

For retailers, working with the hired marketing team means making sure the promise made in the advertising is followed up with a strong in-store experience, he said. The result, optimally, would be notable sales increases, Goldberg said.

"While we can help drive traffic for our clients, the last 15 feet of the purchase process demands their critical involvement and control," he said. "Our wish is that our clients continue to partner with us on every single foot to make their sales successful."

Know my needs.

You're not hiring a vendor, marketers often tell their clients. You're hiring a teammate. So treat them as such, said Marian Morgan, a business coach and consultant who works with PR firms.

The most common wish would be for clients to return calls from the firm or journalists promptly; happily agree to work with the account executives assigned to the client, not just a firm's principals; keep up on the news to know what events can be capitalized on for media coverage; and ultimately, trust the PR firm to know what it's doing and thank them for their successes.

And a little more understanding on the issue of fees and timely compensation would be nice, too, Morgan said.

"Please don't ask me to discount my services," she said. "I wish we could do this for love. But since I have to pay my employees, my rent and my credit cards, please pay us on time."

Micromanage your own business.

Less.

In a word, publicist and marketing instructor Linda Hamburger wants "less" from her clients. As in less unrealistic expectations, time spent in meetings and micromanagement, she said.

Clients getting too personally involved in the marketing "can lead to decisions based on emotions and opinions, rather than well-developed campaigns that project a consistent and effective message," she said. That's not to say leave the marketing firm alone. "Of course, client feedback is essential."

Trust me sooner, than later.

Brian Lazar's requests are simple.

Seek marketing assistance sooner, before sales show signs of slipping, rather than after damage has been done. Trust the hired hand to get the job done. And offer insights, but let the professionals do their jobs.

"All I want is a client who knows enough to go to a doctor when he's sick," said Lazar, principal of Lazar Design Inc. in North Miami, "and then not tell him how to treat the problem."

Don't blast us.

New Jersey's acting governor recently and very publicly blasted a \$260,000 effort to create a new slogan for the state. The move made Lisa Treister shudder.

"I can't imagine anything worse," said Treister, partner in The Treister Murry Agency, a South Beach marketing firm. "It's bad enough when a client disses what you thought was a brilliant idea, but to have it done in such a public manner is embarrassing. The best gift a client can give is respect for an individual's talent and the opportunity to let it go to work to get the job done."

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