

Educating Manufacturers About PUSH Marketing in the COVID Era

by T.R. CUTLER



The wrong questions are being asked by manufacturers who are scrambling to figure out a new marketing paradigm due to COVID.

Too often the wrong questions include:
What's the circulation of a publication?
What's the conversion-to-inquiry from a published feature article?

What's the conversation-to-sale from a published feature article?

These questions are being asked to cost-justify the cost or expense of getting an article published. Conflating sales functions with marketing is a fundamental error.

The reality is that in all industrial decision-making processes there are many key influencers. If the solution is based in technology, automation, lean manufacturing, or best-practice processes, published content which speaks to all involved can become the factor of whether a sale happens.

Too many have watched Constant Contact commercials on television and assume that vast amounts of eager customers (or prospects) will immediately engage and

purchase. It is false. Even page 1 of the Wall Street Journal does not guarantee a single new customer or purchase order.

Until COVID, many manufactures attended national conference and tradeshow to generate the bulk of leads. That will not happen any time soon. Trade shows are being cancelled in favor of remote events which have poor traction unless particularly specific in application.

The next default for naïve manufacturing marketing is to buy print advertising. When calculating the cost and return-on-investment, it rarely generates sufficient inquires and sales to cost-justify the expense. Super specific print advertising to a targeted audience, such as software for moldmakers, can be effective, but it still requires multiple placements over time. There are no quick lead generation programs.

The right questions

The most important questions for manufacturers in the COVID era, begins by clearly knowing the target customer. This must be answered prior to creating messaging. What are the prospects pain points? How does a solution provider best offer a unique value proposition?

What is the competition doing to be seen by the same customer prospect universe? Sadly, too often manufacturers get sucked in Google Adwords or even use the competitions name to divert interested customers. There is not a constant evaluation and declaration of why a solution bests the competition.

A feature article campaign

The cumulative short-term impact of a consistent weekly drip campaign to prospects, sorted by industry sector, job function, and from credibly respected publications, transform manufacturers' marketing outcomes. One article cannot create velocity of customer awareness. One article in one publication will not convince the myriad of decision-makers described earlier. A bucket of published feature articles from which to advance a sale is the only solution.

If a salesperson is speaking to a lean manufacturing team, utilizing published articles with a variety of published content assuages the concerns of each person. An operations manager is going to be differently influenced and persuaded that a C-Suite executive. A QA/QC professional wants to hear diametrically different information than an industrial engineer.

Most PR firms fail when marketing for the manufacturing sector

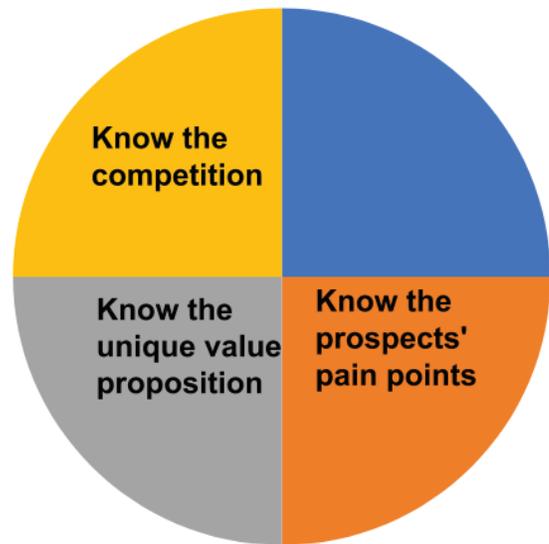
Most PR firms pitch a story. They have no relationships with the industrial sector and email hundreds (even thousands) of editors who summarily delete the email pitch. There is zero nuance about the way most PR work with manufacturers. They are pitching a new plant-based burger the same way they are pitching robotics and automation. They may get an article, even several published. Without a consistent stream of newly published fresh content, the marketing messaging campaign fizzles. The manufacturers are disillusioned because the conversion-to-sale was non-existent.

Instead there must be a guarantee to get no fewer than nine feature articles published each quarter. Thirty-six feature articles a year, fed into a power email drip campaign and supporting sales teams, is instrumental in shortening the sales cycle (often 90 – 180 days less) and building a brand, reputation, thought-leadership, and yes, customers.

Typically, the second year of this type of marketing outreach campaign consists more about customer case studies and profiles.

When bolstered by aggressive press releases cross-promoting published article, it is like putting content on steroids. It works.

In 1999, TR Cutler, Inc. founded the Manufacturing Media Consortium. It now has 8,000 members worldwide. These are the editors, freelancers, staff writers and reporters,



the economists and thought leaders who are the microphones to the latest and greatest information about the industrial, distribution, and manufacturing sectors.

The state of manufacturing feature articles: short, informative, and consistent

Twenty years ago, it could not have been imagined that most content would be read on a phone 67% of the time. Nor could one foresee the death of an extensive whitepaper or exhaustive client case study.

Now (like the article being read) the manufacturing feature article is typically 700 – 1000 words, with a pie chart. This modality defines the scope of these feature articles. It is not bad, simply different. The attention span of manufacturing decision-makers requires being in front of them with concise information, interesting perspectives, variety of nuanced speaking in the vernacular and issues of each decision-maker, and most of all consistency.

Author Profile:



Thomas R. Cutler is the President and CEO of Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based, TR Cutler, Inc., celebrating its 21st year. Cutler is the founder of the Manufacturing Media

Consortium including more than 8000 journalists, editors, and economists writing about trends in manufacturing, industry, material handling, and process improvement. Cutler authors more than 1000 feature articles annually regarding the manufacturing sector. More than 4600 industry leaders follow Cutler on Twitter daily at @ThomasRCutler. Contact Cutler at trcutler@trcutlerinc.com.