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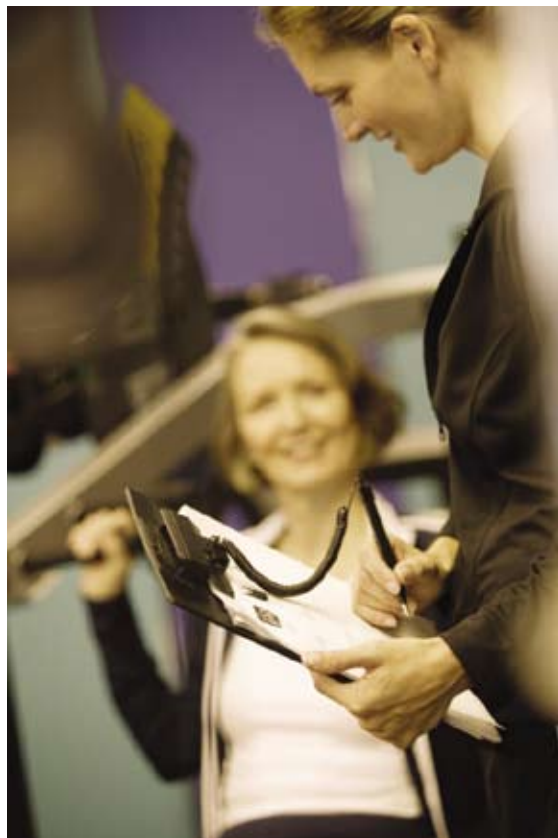
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Marketing to women, for the common man



The prospect of marketing to women has become rather a daunting prospect for many men in business. By helping you rewind and revisit your talented marketing brains, I hope to help change that.

The women that you would like to reach are your wives, daughters, mothers and friends. When you view your brand through a woman's eyes and make changes to serve them better, you will be more likely to create a great experience for all of your members and clients. Women are also more likely to share their experiences with others via word of mouth or word of mouse so, assuming their experience with you is positive, focusing on them can build a collateral buzz among their neighbours and friends too.

Don't think pink

Done well, marketing approaches geared towards the way a woman makes purchasing decisions will not be 'pink' or obvious in a way that leaves men squirming. Rather, many male consumers will find themselves attracted to a brand that tends toward a woman's – often higher – buying standards, perhaps without being able to pinpoint why. A few examples of non-pink buying rules of thumb are:

- Describe features and benefits to apply to lifestyle relevance, as well as the usual 'memory, speed and power'. Car companies and computer brands are doing this more now.
- Leave more 'white space' on websites and in retail stores. Go ahead and supply every product, model, colour choice and type of background information known to man, but give people space to think, pick and choose what they need to see, when they need to see it.
- Train sales staff to allow for longer purchasing processes and to happily supply additional information. The 'hard sell' approach has long since lost its effect, for both men and women. People know that they absolutely do not have to make an immediate decision – they can easily compare prices and features elsewhere on the internet if they can't get all of the information from you easily.

Revisit marketing 101

The reality is that marketing to women is simply good marketing – not anything

earth-shatteringly new. Plus, let me remind you, doing it well will not alienate men. Revisit marketing basics, such as:

Update your consumer research

You've got to stay on top of the developments in your marketplace, preferably with a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. If that sounds overwhelming, at least make a concerted effort to talk to the women in your market in some small way (for example: e-mail database or in-house) to mine some interesting insights for further consideration. A good example of a trend that will impact your market is single women – who are poised to become one of the most influential economic forces of this century. This trend also means that 'family' has been redefined to be less the traditional nuclear unit and more a gathering of friends and even online communities.

Build regular customer interaction

Consumers and the things that influence their buying behaviours are ever changing. Ask your female customers for their input and inspire them to stay in touch by letting them know you actually use the feedback.

Stay true to the brand

Staying true to your guiding mission and principles and keeping the brand honest reflects well in a woman's eyes (and doesn't look bad to a man, either). Incorporate checks and balances so you can't go off on tangents and jump on the latest marketing gimmicks but continue to stick to your original story. Authenticity in action, not just word, is duly rewarded by the entire marketplace, men and women alike.

Revisiting these and other Marketing 101 basics should help any brand return to relevance with customers.

Women's market translation

Think of the benefits of your product as 'lifestyle connectors' and not just bullet points. Translating the great attributes of a product or service to better reach women means turning gigabytes and Hemi engines into more multiple user-familiar terms. Men, with their more linear brains (see Helen Fisher in her book *The First Sex*), do respond to 'bigger, faster, better'; women are more likely to shrug their shoulders to all that specification and competitive lingo, and seek out terms or language with which they can identify.

Helen Fisher describes men in this way: 'They more regularly sacrifice health, safety and precious time with family and friends to win status, money and prestige.' Fisher writes that women and men do not differ with regard to 'internal competitiveness', a psychological term for the desire to meet personal goals and display excellence. But, she continues: 'Men score much higher in 'external competitiveness,' the willingness to elbow others aside to get ahead.'

Geek talk

Geek talk is exemplified by the way a laptop is described with numbers in a sort of better/stronger/faster approach: Intel® Pentium® M Processor 740 (1.73 GHz/2MB Cache/533MHz FSB)

Just stop a minute and read the above line again. What does that mean to you at first glance? Now, compare it to copy that hits the key lifestyle connectors for a new laptop: 'If you check your email a few times a day, occasionally type up documents, do your bookkeeping online and surf the internet a few times a week, this is the perfect laptop for you.' Lifestyle details serve as filters for women, who will then look into the technical specifics. Men, on the other hand, may filter on the technical specifications, but find it helpful to consider the lifestyle aspects as well.

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Marketing to women, for the common man

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Another example is the digital camera industry. The box for my fairly new model says this: 5.0 Megapixels. 3x optical zoom. Extra large 2.7" LCD. Fine. My comment is: 'Wow. That screen is big! Will the photo files be too large to email?'. I speak in one language, but the camera features are presented in another. Only industry-insiders (or otherwise industry savvy people) call the screen 'LCD' or the little box a 'viewfinder'. Only those same people would know that 5.0 megapixels means that you end up with a big enough photograph file to create high quality enlargements.

Sex talk

If a product or service can in any way be tied to sex or seduction, it is likely to be done by companies that don't really understand their customers. In the case of marketing to women, I call it the 'Male Fantasy of What Is Important To Women', aka, Sex Talk. When you are focused on serving women but still want to be relevant to male customers – this can be a real trap.

The female consumer is your wife, sister, mother or friend

To quote the infamous ad-man David Ogilvy, 'Bear in mind that the consumer is not a moron. She is your wife. Don't insult her intelligence.' You could easily replace 'she is your wife' with 'he is your husband.' In either case, don't make your consumer market a place of overwhelming mystery; think of it as a group of people about whom you already know and care. Why not keep the women you know in your head as you proceed in developing your marketing efforts to better serve women everywhere? If you don't have the resources to conduct research or the time to use your database for surveying – the women in your life could act as a sounding board to provide a layer of insight you wouldn't otherwise have.

Common man guidelines to women's market relevance

- Get to know them! Update your consumer research frequently.
- Stay in touch! Encourage and use customer feedback.
- Don't stray from the path! Embrace and maintain brand authenticity.
- Avoid 'talk'. Keep car talk, sex talk and geek talk in check. ♦

Andrea Learned

Andrea is the co-author of Don't Think Pink: What Really Makes Women Buy – And How To Increase Your Share Of This Crucial Market. She is a women's market speaker, writer, consultant and blogger at www.learnedonwomen.com

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