



## SMART MARKETING MIX FOR 2003

**Are you running with the same program as last year? Why?**

A smart marketing plan requires us to step back and reexamine our target customers and assumptions each year. It's time to review trends in buying behavior and their relevance to our business.

**New target customers?**

It is better to choose fewer targets and communicate with them effectively, than to recycle non-customized campaigns aimed at a growing, unsegmented pool. Are there new, big opportunities you've overlooked? Examine who is buying and using your product or service and how they experience it to learn if a new target has surfaced.

**Do you have a branding strategy in place to build your company reputation?**

Unless your industry is dominated by relationship marketing to acquire and retain customers, it is most likely that you will need public relations and targeted marketing, like advertising promotions or direct mail, to keep top of mind and be viewed as the brand of choice.

**Haven't had the money to invest in a complete Internet marketing program?**

We know a lot more about the Internet today and can be more selective without insane fees. This is a good time to research Internet strategies that are most compatible with your company.

**Remember your employees.**

Your most loyal customers – your employees – need to be exposed to your brand and its messages. You wouldn't want to miss out on the best word of mouth possible.

**It's not all about money.**

While a smart marketing mix benefits from a healthy budget, your marketing dollars will go further with

- Your ingenuity
- Understanding of your customer
- Understanding your marketing program's effectiveness
- Willingness to test new approaches and really differentiate from competition

These non-financial contributions will greatly multiply the impact of your resources.

## DEFINE & ASSESS TARGET CUSTOMERS

Pinpointing receptive target audiences is a critical first step in successful marketing; primary and secondary research play important roles in this process.

**Secondary research** – a thorough exploration of all market data and competitive promotional materials – provides clues about the demographics and psychographics of potential target segments and uncovers opportunities in the category.

**Primary research** – both qualitative and quantitative – helps to narrow the target audience and explores the psyche of potential customers. Qualitative research – individual in-depth or focus group interviews – provides insight into motivations for interest in the category and specific products; images of currently available alternatives; and, areas of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with current brands. Analyses of these data provide the basis for selecting the specific target audience(s) that represent the greatest opportunity for the product; for development of strategies that might be effective against the target(s); and, for development of specific positioning alternatives.

A second phase of qualitative research is used to test the strategy and positioning concepts prior to specific message or promotional materials development.

And, finally, all communication materials are subjected to qualitative and, ideally, quantitative testing prior to implementation.

To keep abreast of the evolving marketplace, evaluating and refining the target audience definition must be an ongoing process.

**Marketing Coach** is a publication of IVY COHEN CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS. ICCC provides corporate communications — marketing and public relations — to help companies build their reputations and differentiate in a competitive market. For information about ICCC services or **Marketing Coach** contact [ivy@ivycohen.com](mailto:ivy@ivycohen.com) or call (212)-399 0026.

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## "Budget is Building Brands"

The average company in U.S. spends 4% of its gross revenue on marketing. The 500 fastest growing brands in their categories spend 11%.

*Those that are market leaders with the number one or two brands in their category outspend their competition 3 to 1.\**

\*Michael Levine, PR

## ASSESSING MARKETING STRATEGY

**How do you measure** the success of your marketing efforts? The answer seems simple and obvious: monitor sales. But, it is impossible to link the specific reasons for a brand's performance because all of the factors that affect sales cannot be controlled. The most effective advertising campaign or promotions can be undermined by, for example, a simple price cut by the competition. On the surface, the short-term effects of that price cut can make it appear that your own marketing strategies are not working when, in fact, they are contributing heartily to a positive predisposition towards the brand.

Marketing research plays an important role in helping to assess the effectiveness of marketing efforts on an intermediate or long-term basis. Both qualitative and quantitative research can act as barometers of the marketplace: tracking awareness levels; monitoring brand images and attitudes; keeping tabs on changing consumer needs and values that impact interest in the category and specific brands; exploring customer satisfaction; measuring intent to purchase; forecasting and following usage trends and brand switching patterns; etc.

It is important to set specific goals for your marketing efforts, e.g., specific brand awareness levels, brand perceptions/images; and, attitudes towards the brand versus competitive brands and to use marketing research to assess the degree to which those goals are being met. Repetitive research efforts over time (tracking studies) can provide important insights into the effects of marketplace factors (including your marketing efforts) on the brand's strength.