

Marketing 101—Selling the Splash, Not the Fish

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Abstract: Marketing yesterday involved delivering products to customers. Today the world is changing rapidly and the way we market to consumers has changed dramatically as well. Now, we sell fun. Zebco and Quantum have begun marketing fishing as fun in order to compete with the many choices available for spending leisure time and money. Market survey information suggest the Baby Boomers are prime candidates for marketing fishing. We can be successful, not in selling the fish, but in selling the splash—fun of fishing.

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Marketing, in its simplest definition, is finding out what the customer wants, and then delivering that product. We all know who our customers are, and we all know what products they want. All we have to do to be successful, is deliver.

Joe Angler wins the biggest bass tournament of all time by slow-rolling a big, heavy spinnerbait. All the newspaper articles, all the magazine articles, and all the fishing shows for the next several months have to do with slow-rolling a spinnerbait.

Then, surprise. Quantum introduces a brand new baitcast reel that is smoother and prettier than any before it. Its low profile makes it more comfortable to hold and it comes in left or right hand retrieve versions. But wait, it gets even better. It also has a brand new gear ratio, the perfect one for slow-rolling a spinnerbait. It's at a price that everyone can afford, comes with a full one-year warranty, and is easy to find in just about any fishing tackle department. Simply look for those stores that have the picture of Joe Angler holding this shiny new reel in one hand and that great big bass in the other.

Mr. Consumer sees all this hype and thinks about how that technique might work well in his area lake, buys the reel, buys the license, and goes fishing.

That is marketing. Yesterday.

For those of you that heard my boss, Jim Dawson, speak this morning, you heard about the changing America, the changing workplace, the changing lifestyle and the changing customer. That also means a changing product.

Today's consumers are no longer content with a product whose only attributes are quality, value, and service. Instead, they want a product that is an emotional experience,

an adventure, . . . just plain old fun. For all of us in the fishing business, whether tackle manufacturers or fisheries biologists, we are now in the business of selling this new product called fun. Lucky us!

That's why I've entitled my segment as "Selling the Splash, Not the Fish."

How do we sell fun? Marketing. We are still marketing a product to consumers. While you must not look at marketing as a 4-letter word, it is indeed a new term to a lot of companies. Public service companies, state game and fish departments and others now have marketing programs. As we are successful in selling fun, we will also succeed in selling rods, reels, fishing licenses, user permits and the other things that we must sell.

And there are several good examples of companies that are successful in selling the steak because they first sell the sizzle. Look at Disney World. They don't ever talk about spending a hefty entry fee into a theme park to have your family's picture taken with some giant rodent. Instead they are selling those "magical moments," or fun. And there is Southwest Airlines, whose own CEO, Herb Kelleher, says, "We've defined a personality as a marketing niche. We seek to amuse, surprise, and entertain." Those of you that frequent Southwest flights will know exactly what he is talking about as flight attendants tell jokes, sing, and otherwise bring a smile to passengers. Almost makes you forget that you had just been herded down an aisle like a bunch of sheep, and that your fare probably really was not the very best deal, doesn't it? I said almost.

Or look at Harley Davidson. You do not see them marketing big, noisy 2-wheel vehicles. They sell Harleyism's. They sell the experience associated with owning a Harley. They are even trying to trademark the "Vrrrooom."

You want the customer to say "WOW" when their experience is over.

Zebco began using this approach about 2 years ago with its "The Fun is Catching" campaign. A campaign that sells fishing as a fun, emotional lifestyle that the entire family can enjoy. Perhaps you have seen our television spot where the mom of the family of four catches the fish and hoots and hollers. Or, perhaps you have seen some of the print ads, like the ones that features 4 women having a blast on a fishing outing. That's right, women. Others feature kids as the primary focus.

The theme of the new Quantum campaign is "Fishing is a contact sport." It, too, focuses on appealing to emotions, establishing an attitude.

Are these campaigns designed to sell fishing, or rods and reels? The answer is yes.

Today's consumers have tons of choices to pick from. It has not always been that way. Remember the often stated quote that Henry Ford once made, "We'll give them any color of automobile they want, as long as that color is black." Along comes a new company called General Motors that offered autos in lots of different colors. We all know what happened then.

Or consider a trip into the local supermarket. I have heard that a 30-minute visit to a supermarket exposes us to some 30,000 products, each one vying for our attention. Think about what catches your eye and what doesn't. It is because of marketing. Marketing today really is nothing more than the pursuit of the customer from every possible angle. And when you think about the product we have to sell, fishing, every single person out there is a niche market. That's the beauty of our product, the fun of

fishing. It has few, if any, boundaries that it cannot cross. Our target market does not have to rely on a specific age, gender, race, income. Doesn't really matter. Sure, there are lots of obstacles to cross, but really no boundaries.

And although competition is fierce out there for our customers' time and money, we are really sitting in a pretty enviable driver's seat. You see, we have a product that, by merely participating in the activity, reeks of fun. It is not like having to sell why it is fun to brush your teeth, or apply deodorant. Fishing is fun.

And really, timing is good for us. Consider 2 target markets that are just looking for something to do and for a way to spend their money. Kids and baby boomers.

Kids first. Today, there are over 36 million children in the U.S. between the ages of 8 and 17. A youth marketing study in *Marketing Today* reports that they have a mean annual income of over \$1,200. Combine that with the money that adults give them for specific purchases, and we're talking a spending control here of over \$100 billion a year. Meaning, they have lots of bucks to spend on the things they want to do. And we all know kids, they do the things they want to do.

And then there are the "Baby Boomers," the 80 million people that were born between 1946 and 1964. That's one-third of our population. Here's a group that is slated to become the wealthiest generation in history over the next 10 years, and is one that has never been afraid to spend money and has always savored its recreation time and likes to have fun. There's that fun word again.

In fact, 3 broad characteristics have been identified to define the Boomers as a market in a recent study.

- 1) They spend money on themselves.
- 2) They enjoy retrospectives of their own past and childhoods.
- 3) They are lured by the promise of innocent adventure.

This same study reveals the 10 commandments of marketing to the Boomers, and 8 of them have fishing virtually written all over them:

- Give them their past; they love nostalgia.
- Don't ignore their families.
- Use clever marketing to line concepts like adventure and responsibility.
- Stress individualism and escape.
- Make it easy for them; they're busy.
- Don't overlook financially independent Boomer women.
- Emphasize lifestyle.
- Give them opportunities to be young.

Sounds like fishing to me.

So whose job is it to do this stuff called marketing? Almost all marketing strategies now say marketing has to be in everybody's job description. It has been said that "marketing is everyone's job, why marketing is everything and everything is marketing." Building that special customer relationship that today's consumer not only wants, but expects, is an absolute must, even from those who never even see the customer during their daily routine. The building of marketing relationships is

everybody's job. Think how important that is in your role as a member of our country's fish and wildlife agencies. Like it or not, marketing has to be in your job description, whether you are in law enforcement, fisheries management, research, personnel or whatever. Today's customers don't care about job titles. They are interested in the product you are selling.

Be creative. Be imaginative. Put yourself in your customers' shoes. Don't do something just because that's the way it's always been done.

And, perhaps most importantly, don't think that you have to sell our customers the fish. Instead, sell them the splash. The fish will come along with the splash. And the anglers will come back, again and again, with their fishing licenses, with their special stamps and permits, and with their new rods and reels.