



The Marketing Hourglass

Creating the Ideal Customer Experience

Many marketers have been taught the concept of the marketing funnel. The idea being that you bring leads into the top of the large opening in a funnel and push the ones that become customers through the small end. The problem with this approach is it turns all the focus on the chase. We happen to think that real payoff in marketing comes from expanding and focusing your thinking on how to turn a lead into an advocate for your business.

Long ago we developed the concept of The Marketing Hourglass™. The top half indeed resembles the funnel concept, but the expanding bottom half, to our way of thinking, adds the necessary focus on the total customer experience that ultimately leads to referrals and marketing momentum.

When you overlay our definition of marketing – “getting someone who has a need to know, like, and trust you” with the intentional act of turning know, like and trust into try, buy, repeat, and refer you get the entire logical path for moving someone from initial awareness to advocate.

The key is to systematically develop touch points, processes and product/service offerings for each of the 7 phases of the hourglass.

1. **Know** – Your ads, article, and referred leads
2. **Like** – Your web site, reception, and email newsletter
3. **Trust** – Your marketing kit, white papers, and sales presentations
4. **Try** – Webinars, evaluations, and nurturing activities
5. **Buy** - Fulfillment, new customer kit, delivery, and financial arrangements
6. **Repeat** – Post customer survey, cross sell presentations, and quarterly events
7. **Refer** – Results reviews, partner introductions, peer 2 peer webinars, and community building

Far too many businesses attempt to go from “Know” to “Buy” and wonder why it’s so hard. By creating ways to gently move someone to trust, and perhaps even creating low-cost offerings as trials, the ultimate conversion to buy gets so much easier.

Know

This is the initial introduction to your company, and while it is commonly conveyed through your advertising messages, it is also the point at which a referred lead discovers you. The cliché “you only get one chance to make a good impression” applies here. The best way to start the relationship is to communicate a clear brand or point of differentiation that is designed to attract your ideal customer and your ideal referral sources.

Like

Once a lead is aware of your company, they can and should be led to dig a little deeper to see what’s behind the ads. This is often the point where your Web presence or physical presence (store, offices, marketing materials, etc.) set the tone for a deeper connection. Without a defined process for getting to know more about your company, without any commitment, without the opportunity to lurk and learn a little before pulling out a credit card, prospects tend to hold back from becoming customers.

Trust

When a prospect is ready to learn more, this may be by agreeing to a face to face meeting or signing up to receive your bi-weekly newsletter, you are approaching the trust hurdle. This is, for some, the trickiest spot. When a lead is referred to your business, you borrow some trust from the referral source, but you can easily lose that trust if your initial attempts to engage the prospect don’t connect. You can’t simply assume that because Uncle Bob referred a friend, that friend was ready to buy from you.

Everyone in the company that comes into contact with a customer or a prospect is performing a trust building or eroding practice. Can everyone on the organization deliver your core message in a confident and consistent manner? Repetition builds trust and trust builds the brand.

Try

Far too often companies think of their offerings exclusively in terms of the core product or service—we are a law firm, so people retain us when they need a lawyer. This approach limits

your exposure to vast pockets of prospects and usually leads to customers who are less than ideal.

One of the best ways to ensure that every customer relationship evolves into a referral relationship is to create a way for your customers to sample your business and, in turn, give your business the opportunity to sample the customer.

Creating lower priced products and services to support and supplement your core service is a great way to reach markets that may not be ready for your core offerings or simply don't have enough experience with your company to determine if they should go with you.

Buy

Finally, we get to sell the primary products and services. Yes, it's essential that you have a product or service that people like, delivers as promised, and gets people talking. But from a repeat and referral standpoint, it's the process of becoming a customer that often needs the work.

How you orient your customer once they say yes is a key hourglass touch point. How you fulfill the order, how you deliver the order, how you communicate throughout the process, how you communicate after the project, and how you ask to be paid for the work are all elements that determine whether you are referral-worthy or not in the eyes of your customer.

Repeat

If you do a good job with the previous stage, you are halfway towards tapping the repeat phase for all the power it's worth. The key factor in creating repeat sales, expanded product sales, and long-term loyalty is to make certain that your customers are getting the most possible value from your products and services.

Far too often we sell a product or service and just assume our customers are getting the results they desired or were promised. By creating a systematic "how to" set of materials, we can help them be more successful, use more of the features, and ultimately experience greater value.

Refer

The last stage of the Marketing Hourglass™ is that your customers become such total advocates for your business that they operate as a form of uncompensated sales staff. You know you have built a complete Marketing Hourglass when this type of action becomes common within your customer base.

Even if referrals are flowing freely into your lead system now, there are ways to stimulate and facilitate even greater amounts of referrals. In this stage you should focus on making it very easy for your advocates to participate in your business, come together as community, and tap your entire network.

Next Steps

In order to start thinking about the hourglass concept and gaps you may have, ponder these questions:

- What is your free or trial offering?
- What is your starter offering?
- What is your “make it easy to switch” offering?
- What is your core offering?
- What are your add-ons to increase value?
- What is your “members only” offering?
- What are your strategic partner pairings?

Learn More

The content in this whitepaper is an excerpt from the eBook *How to Create a Remarkable Business by Focusing on the Total Customer Experience* which you can download here - <http://bit.ly/RemarkableBiz>

About Bill Brelsford

Bill Brelsford is the owner of Rebar Business Builders and a Certified Duct Tape Marketing Consultant. As one of the original members of the Duct Tape Marketing Consultant Network, Bill has been helping small business owners and professional service providers install the Duct Tape Marketing System since 2004.

If you have any questions or need help implementing any of the strategies in this eBook, contact Bill at (913) 962-9261 or via email at bill@rebarbusinessbuilders.com.

To learn more about how Duct Tape Marketing can help you grow your business, complete our free Signature Brand Audit (a \$250 value) at www.rebarbusinessbuilders.com/signature-brand-audit/



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