

Align Marketing Messages to Improve Conversion

Let Customer Language be Your Guide to Building a Successful Marketing Strategy

It is critically important that companies align their marketing messages, sales tools, and the spoken words they use with customers and prospects. We all recognize that a company's web site is an important tool used to communicate with the target market. But how do you create a web site that aligns with what your target buyers need? How will you make prospects see your site as high-value to them? How do you make them see your company as understanding of their needs and competent to help them solve their problems? How do you differentiate yourself from all the other choices they have in the market? When they land on your site, how do you begin to establish a dialog of trust and begin an online relationship that will soon convert to an offline relationship?

Often, when looking at creating web content, the first place web developers/copy-writers look is to the people who commission their work, the marketing team, especially product marketing. They interview marketing people, take samples of brochures, press releases, etc. for examples of content to populate the web site.

In many companies, product marketing is the product champion, totally intent on branding their products and gaining mind share and market share. They are the ones who often tell you: "When I put my product, XYZ Gadget, into Google, I want it to show up in the number one position." No kidding! Certainly they should see that. But what really matters is showing up in the number one spot for the keyword indicating the problem expressed or the perceived solution for the problem by the buyer.

Prospects with a problem are many steps away from entering a product brand name as part of their search criterion. When people enter a keyword phrase, they are not interested in product -- yet. They first want to know if you understand the problem, before prescribing a solution. They make a quick judgment based on the language you use and how well it matches the language they use.

The only way to really learn the language your target market uses is by talking to customers and prospects and verifying that their language and preferred buying process matches the content and structure from marketing. Talking to them means asking questions and listening. It also means talking to the people in the company who talk to prospects and customers every day, the sales reps, telesales, and customer support people, to understand how customers express their problems and describe the desired solutions. It also means learning from your web traffic reporting tools.

What keywords bring high-value prospects to the web site? Which keywords bring the most direct action? Is there a trend you can identify for a particular keyword or phrase?

Once you understand the buyer's language and your current web traffic results, the next step is to inventory your response to those keywords and phrases. Are those keywords reflected in web content throughout your site? Do they find their way into email subject lines to customers and

prospects? Are they prominent in your sales collateral? Do Customer Support and Telesales reps include them in scripts? Are those keywords taught in sales training classes? Do the PR people include those keywords in press releases, speeches, presentations, etc? They should be! If not, you are missing a huge opportunity to establish credibility and rapport with your target buyers.

Alignment of language is also invaluable to segmenting your market. In B2B sales campaigns, there are often many types of buyer involved: technical, financial, beneficiary, implementer, user, etc. Keywords and keyword phrases are often specific to the perspective of a particular buyer-role in the sales process.

If a buyer reaches your web site with a keyword phrase that includes a financial indicator (e.g. ROI, cost of, etc.) you don't want to serve up technical content in response. Your content and web draw offer for conversion would be business/financial in nature.

On the other hand, if the keyword phrase includes a technical indicator (e.g. download, specs, API, etc.) you don't want to serve up business content in response. For each buying participant there is a commensurate matching set of keyword phrases, web content, web-draw offers, and fulfillment – all reflected in the online dialog established with that particular buyer-role you are targeting.

A good place to start is by taking an inventory of all the types of target buyers by function, title, company size, and high-probability business issue and target solution. This will give some direction to your research, but also is a good starting point for planning the hand-off from online to offline sales. This should reflect the qualification criteria for establishing thresholds for lead qualification for fulfillment by sales. This step is the key to assuring alignment of the marketing and sales process with the buying process of your target market.

Here are a few key points to remember:

- Make sure all customers/prospects hear consistent language from your company.
- Use buyer language as your guide for content.
- Visitors become prospects when they see your language and process in alignment with theirs.
- Good targeting and aligned content will result in qualified leads and increased sales.

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