

## MARKETING

# Marketing Missionaries – Answer the Call

Here's the scenario. Two missionaries appear at your door in a poorly lit neighborhood at 8 p.m. – with the express interest of converting the members of the household to their faith. Bold, crazy or naïve?

The next day, you contact a group of executives that you do not personally know and ask them for a half hour of their time to help a client determine how to position its products and services going forward.

Sound familiar?

By definition, a "missionary" is a member of a religion who works to convert those who do not share the missionary's faith; someone who proselytizes. The word "mission" is derived from the Latin *missionem* (nom. *missio*), meaning "act of sending" or *mitto*, *mittere*, literally meaning "to send" or "to dispatch," the equivalent of the Greek-derived word *apostle* from *apostolos*, meaning "messenger."

The type of conviction, patience and persistence shared by missionaries is necessary to be a good marketing executive. From the outside, marketing takes the form of clever ad campaigns and new product launches, but much goes on behind the scenes long before the outside world ever sees the results.

Marketing work is missionary work. New products, markets, business ideas, ad campaigns and innovative approaches only happen after many roadblocks have been removed.

Step by step, here are some specific lessons learned that may help marketing professionals be more effective in making their case.

**Find Your Apostles.** The first step in getting your marketing programs underway and building your case is to enlist your marketing apostles. In every organi-



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zation there are two types of people – those who hold the job description for an assigned task and those who actually know how to get the job done.

The first job of the marketing missionary is to find the people who can get the work done, regardless of their title. If you are lucky, it will be the same person – but this is not always the situation.

**Be Prepared to Evangelize Your Convictions.** As a marketing missionary, you have to be "on" all the time. Do your homework and know your materials because you never know when your convictions or business case are being tested. Be ready for challenges at every turn and carry your faith everywhere. The confidence you exude could win you an ally along the way.

**Make Your Outpost a Sanctuary.** New ideas and new ventures often are incubated in isolation. Whether a far away foreign outpost or the far corner of the building, you may not have regular,

face-to-face contact with your colleagues. When you do have the opportunity to connect, make it a welcoming and positive experience, and if you are way out there, be sure to befriend the locals – they too can be strong supporters of your success.

**New Ideas Inspire.** Many new product and business concepts have to be initiated in a cross-functional team environment, typically because in the early stages, there are no direct resources assigned to the project.

If the cross-functional team is managed correctly, it has the opportunity to be the essence of the start-up team for the new venture.

The incentive for team is often the opportunity to do something outside the normal day-to-day responsibilities that they have to deal with every day. A solid cross-functional team member will work after hours and on their own time to make the new venture happen.

**Do Yeomen's Work.** Good staff work is the key to success in any business environment. A marketing missionary has to keep this principle up front at all times. Good research, writing and presentation of an idea will go a long way toward convincing the hold-outs that the idea or program has merit.

**Sacrifice for the Greater Good – as Necessary.** Now you've made your case, recruited supporters and convinced the powers that be that your idea has merit, the idea still has to work in the current context of what the company is doing and must fit into the greater strategic framework.

Remember, life still goes on outside the marketing department. The idea cannot assume a life of its own such that these things are ignored. It's easy to get lost on

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a zealous missionary path. In the end, a good marketing person must reconcile all the work done with the reality of what is best for the business.

**With the Spoils, Exercise Humility.** There's nothing more rewarding than watching a good idea come to fruition. But as a marketing missionary, your job is to put it in the hands of the operational team, thank everyone who made it happen and move on to the next project.

You may be asked to stay involved and

if so, you have to continue your enthusiasm in a humble way that allows others to build upon in the success. This takes some "marketing maturity" but letting go allows your idea to propagate through others and ultimately ensure its survival in the end.

The challenges of missionary work are apparent both inside and outside a business. As an outside advisor, it's important to recognize that your clients, often the VPs of marketing and their teams, are the

missionaries and it's important to be connecting with their peers to help spread the word in a consistent and supportive way.

If you do your job right, you help make your clients successful in bringing new thinking, approaches and business to their organizations.

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