



The Raphael Report

**Observations on marketing,
advertising, sales and
promotions
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My New Year's 2006 Marketing Resolutions

It's that time of year again.

Yes, it's time to set the alarm at 6 a.m. and run for 30 minutes a day. To read the New York Times every day from cover to cover. To avoid commenting about your niece's latest piercings.

Yes, it's the time to start acting nice instead of naughty. It's New Year's Resolution time!

This year, I've decided to come up with my New Year's Marketing Resolutions. Since our business is both a consumer and producer of marketing, we have more than a passing interest in how people convince other people to buy products. Since many of you also produce ads and all of you are bombarded with advertising, I'd be curious if you'd share your thoughts on the list. Here are my 10 marketing resolutions for 2006. Let me know how these resolutions compare with your own:

1. Market more on the Internet: I just have to figure out how to do it and make money. Have any of you tried Google Adwords or the equivalent service from Yahoo? It's an interesting way to advertise. You pay through an auction system to have your ads placed beside searches. For instance, if you want to place an ad for a customer service book when someone types in a search for "customer service," you pay 10 cents or 50 cents or one dollar per click-through (a click-through is when someone sees your ad and clicks on your ad for your product). The more you pay, the better the placement of the ad.

I've tried this form of advertising several times with no discernable results. However, it must work for someone, because Google is worth a google of dollars now. So, my first resolution is to find out how this (and other Internet advertising) can work profitably for me.

2. Make our websites more customer friendly and change the content more often: Did you notice that my first two resolutions have to do with the Internet? Maybe it's only me, but I tend to shop, read articles and look for information on the Internet all day long. How did we manage without it? Assuming that

millions of other people are like me, it does make sense to make our Internet site our prime marketing medium. We need fresh content, easy ordering, better product descriptions. And we have to establish links with other sites that complement our products. Which leads to resolution #3 . . .

3. Learn to change the website myself: I know this is crazy. I know I should pay somebody to do this. But I'm dreaming of Dreamweaver because if I can make changes without waiting around for a web techie to do it and charge an outrageous amount, I will make changes in a more diligent and timely manner. I promise: This is the last Internet resolution.

4. Practice what I preach and send more postcards: I tell all our clients about the wonders of oversized postcard advertising. Big graphics, room for some compelling offers, easy to send out, best return on investment of any mailings we do. Postcards are also effective as a prelude or follow-up to other more detailed mailing pieces.

We already do postcard mailings. They work well for us as well as our clients. So I resolve to sink more money into the postcard budget and send more compelling messages more often.

5. Create a brochure about our new company: You know the old story about the shoemaker whose family goes barefoot. We are a marketing company (as well as a book publisher) but we haven't created a brochure for our company in years. We're always "too busy" to update our brochure, but that's a feeble excuse.

Well, we're starting a speaker's bureau this year as an addition to our business and we're going to do a brochure for it. Promise.

6. Be more loyal to our customers: I really do believe that your customers do not owe you loyalty. We have to take great care of our customers if we want them to stay with you. This is a resolution for all of us. If you work on just one business resolution next year, this should be it. I'm moving this to the top of my list. Our customers will receive better offers, surprise gifts, more news and more attention this year.

7. Make a timeline and marketing budget: If you're like me, you advertise a bit haphazardly. When you are busy, you neglect advertising because, well, you are busy. When business is slow you avoid advertising because you don't want to pay for it. If you can channel your innate obsessive-compulsive tendencies into making a marketing hit list with times and allocated funds, you will be much better off. I know I will be if I stick to this resolution.

8. Use the four-mula for success: Murray came up with this four-mula for success: four notes, four phone calls, four personal contacts and four AFTOs (ask for the order) each business day.

It works. The more I stay in touch with people, the more our business grows. I notice that if I'm away for a week on a vacation, I get a lot of calls and mail the first day I'm away, and progressively less each day that follows. By the time the week is up, it's as if no one cares any more. But when I start reaching out to people, the messages (and the business) start flowing again. Stay in touch personally and your business will thrive.

9. Have fun with our marketing! Study after study has shown that people shop more when they are being entertained. Having fun does not mean playing a joke on our customers or being hah-hah humorous. Having fun refers more to an upbeat way of presenting our products and ourselves. We will be enthusiastic. Accentuate the positive. Figure out innovative ways people can use our products and services. Try new ways of presenting the benefits of what we offer. Have a contest and give away prizes. New is good. We're going to have fun this year.

10. Have more people on our e-mail list: But only people who are interested in reading what we have to say. If you know of anybody else who may benefit from these resolutions and our columns, please ask them to contact us at neil@raphel.com.

Let us know how about your own marketing resolutions. We'll share your good ideas with all our readers.

Oh, and Resolution #11: I'll check this list again in a few months to see how we are progressing toward our 2006 marketing goals. Resolutions are only worth making if you follow through!