**B2B Marketing: 4 Components and 5 Tips for Success by Lisa Shepherd**

With 2012 winding down and companies planning new strategies for next year, Lisa Shepherd, author of ‘Market Smart’, shares 5 Tips to help companies improve their B2B marketing and increase profits in 2013.

For most businesses the year end is a chance to evaluate what worked, what didn’t and decide what strategies could lead to increased sales in the New Year. Many B2B companies are in the midst of setting a marketing budget and planning tactics for 2013. Lisa Shepherd, author of Market Smart: How to Gain Customers and Increase Profits with B2B Marketing. According to Lisa Shepherd “B2B Marketing is everything a company does in order to identify, generate, and support the securing of revenue opportunities”

The below graph represents four components to B2B marketing:

Defining where and how the company will compete

Generating awareness and leads

Supporting the sales process

Creating loyal customers

**1- Review, and Learn from, This Year’s Marketing Results**

Review the objectives you set for 2012. What initiatives had the most success and why? For those that didn’t achieve the intended results, explore whether it was simply a tactic that wasn’t the right fit, or if it was poor execution of a solid marketing idea. By taking the time to thoroughly assess performance, companies will improve their performance meaningfully, rather than randomly. Also, make time to analyze sales data and look for new trends that may inform market opportunities that are currently untapped.

**2- Plan to Capitalize on Emerging Opportunities**

Over the course of any year, opportunities always arise. Whether it’s a product upgrade or going to market with a new service, potential opportunities need to be explored. If you’re not holding formal business planning sessions for the coming year, you should. These are the perfect forum to discuss strategic opportunities, assess the firm’s capabilities, and prioritize what to pursue based on market size, customer demand and ability to execute internally. These new opportunities will be core pillars of the marketing strategy and plan for the following year.

**3- Prepare Initiatives to Market to Existing Customers – e.g. Bundling Products & Services**

If you have a customer who likes product A, they may not know that you also offer products B, C and D. If you do a good job educating your customer base about the full breadth of your offerings, you’ll sell more. But you have to tell them often and get that message out there consistently. One way to get customers to try something new is by adding it to something they already buy. If you sell a lot of product A, and you want them to try the brand new (or underperforming) product B, sell them together. People love getting free stuff – by getting B for free, they’re more likely to try it. You can start charging for B once people know how great it is.

**4- Make Lead Nurturing a Top Priority in 2013**

Research consistently shows that it takes seven touches before a potential B2B customer will remember the name of your company. The best way to manage that necessary series of customer touches is by using a lead-nurturing system or automation software. These automated programs let you send emails, newsletters, video case studies and more at pre-determined times to ensure that you get on your prospects’ radar and stay there.

**5- Consider Offering Free Trials to Potential Customers**

If your prospects can try it, they’re more likely to buy it. Allowing your potential B2B clients to use your product or service for a free trial period is a proven sales tool. Granted, this approach doesn’t work for every product or service. But it’s ideal for products such as software or high-margin items, ones in which a positive initial experience gives the prospect the assurance he or she needs to make the decision to start paying for your offering.