

Marketing Skills Assessment

Question #1

What education or background skills provide the BEST background for success in marketing management?

- 1. MBA case study experience
- 2. Field sales experience
- 3. A financial analysis background

#2 Field Sales Experience

Prior field sales experience provides the best background for marketing managers, because sales experience helps a marketing manager understand the human motivations behind a prospect's reasons for buying, or not buying, a company's products. Through a past track record of effectively addressing the needs and wants of prospects, prior selling experience also helps marketing managers do a better job of defining and developing the major sales benefits for their company's products, used in ads, brochures, and all other company marketing deliverables. While MBA case study and financial analysis experience can be helpful in helping marketing managers identify and correct high-level marketing issues, such as positioning, marketing strategy, or pricing, actual sales experience provides marketing managers with more practical background and

Question #2

What is the most important part of any marketing program?

- 1. Supporting and reinforcing the product's brand image
- 2. Meeting the ROI goals of your marketing plan
- 3. Swift and competent marketing execution

#3

Timely, competent marketing execution is the most important part of any marketing program. Poor execution, such as delays in ad placements, mailing dates, or poor coordination and implementation of printing projects and other marketing tasks, lead to missed selling opportunities in your company. Other objectives, such as reinforcing a product's brand image, are far less important than rapid, diligent, forceful execution on all of your company's marketing projects. While it is certainly important to meet company return-on-investment goals in your marketing program, this goal can only be reached after a marketing project has been successfully executed.

Question #3

The only goal of your marketing program is:

- 1. To generate sales
- 2. To establish brand awareness in your industry
- 3. To meet the ROI goals of your marketing plan

#1 To generate sales

The only goal of your marketing program is to generate sales. Your job as a marketing manager is to serve this goal in every marketing project. Other objectives, such as establishing brand awareness, are far less important than generating sales, and meeting marketing ROI goals are only achieved after sales are generated.

Question #4

The BEST description of focusing on the reality of your company's products in marketing projects means:

- 1. Describing their benefits, features, and applications in ways that meet the consensus viewpoint of your company's senior management
- 2. Focusing on their benefits, features, and applications, and describing them in a way that persuades the prospect to respond
- 3. Assigning company marketing resources to the products in your company which are more likely to generate the highest, most profitable sales response

#2 Focusing on benefits, features, applications....

In developing marketing deliverables for your company, you must focus on the benefits, features, and applications that your prospects want, and use copy and presentation techniques to persuade and motivate prospects to respond, to initiate the selling process: Calling your company's sales reps, linking to your Web site, filling out an inquiry card, etc. As a marketing manager, it is very important for you to see the key benefits of your company's products as your prospects see them, not as your company's CEO or other senior managers wish they would be seen, because senior management is often isolated from the realities of their company's marketplace.

Question #5

A company can achieve a “positive brand image:”

- 1. Through the application of creative advertising approaches in all company marketing efforts
- 2. Only through a long-term history of selling excellent products and providing excellent customer service
- 3. By consistently including its company tagline and product positioning statement in every marketing deliverable, and through all marketing media

#2 Through a long history....

"Branding" can best be thought of as a company's reputation in its industry and markets, and this reputation can only be achieved by a long-term history of selling excellent products, using honest business practices, and providing excellent customer service. And because the process of building a company's reputation is a long and difficult one, "branding" is not achieved by designing an attractive logo, and cannot be cheaply bought in a three-month ad campaign.

Question #6

Underperforming ads, mailings, or other marketing deliverables are often problems of:

- 1. Poor presentation, prospect targeting, marketing execution, or poor allocation of dollars in the marketing mix
- 2. Poor ad agency selection, or poor agency responsiveness, agency supervision, or inadequate planning
- 3. Unrealistic sales projections, poor selling skills, poor prospect follow-up, and lack of creative advertising strategy

#1 Poor presentation.....

Underperforming ads, mailings or other marketing deliverables are most often caused by poor presentation in deliverables, poor execution of marketing projects, incorrect prospect targeting, wrong allocation of marketing costs to underperforming media and methods, and other problems directly related to the marketing program. The genesis of these problems usually stem from lack of leadership and poor management on the part of marketing managers in supplying outside ad agencies with the essential direction in copy and strategy required to drive the process of creating, developing, and executing successful marketing projects.

Question #7

What is the PRIMARY purpose of the marketing function in most business-to-business, trade, and industrial companies?

- 1. To provide important sales support for the company's sales team
- 2. To promote and reinforce the company's brand image in all forms of trade media in the industry
- 3. To publicize the company's products in ads, mailings, trade shows, and other marketing projects

#1 Sales Support

The only purpose of the marketing function in a company, and your main function as a marketing manager, is to provide important sales support for the company's in-house sales team.

Primarily, this involves executing lead-generating programs through advertising and targeted direct mail, and other marketing activities, such as trade show support, sales force support, and Web

Question #8

Which of the following is the best source of information on your product's most effective sales benefits?

- 1. Trade publication ad readership studies
- 2. Skilled focus group research
- 3. Your company's sales reps

#3 The sales Force

Because they present and sell your company's products to real, live prospects on a daily basis, your company's sales reps know which of your product's features and sales benefits are most persuasive to their prospects, and the best ways to present these features and benefits to them. Collecting and adapting these sales benefits for use in your company's advertising, direct mail, and other marketing programs provides you with the best sales benefit copy for your company's products. Other methods, such as focus group research or market surveys, yield less trustworthy and useful sales copy benefit information than the real-world experience of your company's sales force.

Question #9

The prime benefit expressed by the headline in your company's advertising:

- 1. Should be the consensus of your product's best benefit, as seen by you, your ad agency, and your management team
- 2. Must be the best benefit you think will appeal to readers
- 3. Must be your product's key benefit, as perceived by your reader

#3 The Reader

Headlines should contain a prime benefit that is perceived as meaningful, relevant and persuasive to the prospect in the targeted market, not the benefit that you, your CEO, your company, or its ad agency thinks the prospect should see, or headlines dictated by ad agency "creative" approaches. For example, a prime benefit that is perceived as being important and useful for solving a prospect's real-world problem, as it is seen by that prospect, is the best prime benefit to use in sales copy for marketing projects.

Question #10

- The most important part of any direct mail project is:
 - 1. The outer envelope
 - 2. The mailing list
 - 3. The projected financial return

#2 The list

The most important part of any direct mail project is, by far, the mailing list used for the project. The "quality" of the names on this mailing list—i.e., their propensity to become purchasers of your company's products—determines the ultimate success or failure of the mailing. Even a poorly-written or implemented mailing piece stands a better chance of being successful if mailed to a top-quality mailing list; however, the best mailing piece mailed to a poor-quality mailing list is unlikely to generate adequate response.

Question #11

What is the most likely result of many first-time direct mail tests?

- 1. If carefully conceived, planned and executed, most first-time direct mail tests will achieve a successful end result, indicating that larger quantities can be "rolled out" once projected response can be justified by statistical methods
- 2. Most first-time direct mail tests will generate mixed results, and ultimate success depends on further scrutiny and improvement of different elements of the mailing, such as mailing list selection or sales copy
- 3. If poorly planned, implemented, or executed, most first-time direct mail tests will fail

#2 Results mixed

Most new direct mail tests and programs generate ambiguous response—they are neither complete successes nor total failures. Careful analysis of results, identification of factors that can improve response, such as emphasizing better or different product features and benefits, and fast correction and execution of new follow-up mailings often yields a better result in subsequent mailing efforts.

Question #12

Ideally, marketing materials under development should be reviewed and critiqued by:

- 1. As many key company employees as possible, to insure company-wide "buy-in" to your marketing projects
- 2. You, your sales manager, and your company's CEO
- 3. A focus group, prior to any public release

#2 Smaller group

The more people who are "in the loop" to review a marketing piece, the more its completion will be delayed, and the greater the chance the quality of the final product will be lessened. Limiting the number of people who review and critique marketing deliverables under development helps to increase the chances these projects will be completed on time.

Ideally, this

means limiting the review of a deliverable to the few, responsible people inside your company who can add the most value to it: You, your company's sales manager, and your company's

Question #13

What is the most likely reason a smaller, fractional-page ad will repeat, month after month, in a trade publication?

- 1. These ads usually generate solid sales response every time they appear in the publication, so therefore they continue to run, unchanged, month to month
- 2. Advertisers who run smaller ads repeat them regardless of their response, because they feel compelled to keep their product's name in front of the market
- 3. These fractional ads are strictly "image" placeholder ads intended to impress company management

#1 They work

A telltale sign that an ad generates good sales response is the fact that it repeats, month to month, in every issue of a publication. Smaller, inquiry-generating ads run by trade, industrial and business-to-business advertisers prove this point, and pay their way by generating sales response, not merely brand awareness, with every placement.

Question #14

The longer an advertising deliverable or layout remains unfinished, or in development, the greater the chance that:

- 1. Your ad agency will develop an even better ad layout or concept
- 2. It will never see the light of day, since too many people may add their own suggestions and changes to the ad, leading to a breakdown in execution
- 3. It can be improved, since input from as many people as possible in your company can only improve the quality and effectiveness of any marketing deliverable

#2 Too many cooks

The quality of an advertising program, and its timely execution, will always suffer by having too many people involved in the creative and development process; this reduces the ad's effectiveness and delays its timely completion. Given unlimited time, any advertisement can be made better, but timely execution is always better for your company's marketing program than delaying the execution of ads or deliverables to achieve perfection.

Question #15

Which statement below BEST describes the role of the Internet for established companies selling their products in business-to-business markets?

- 1. The Internet extends an established company's real-world sales and marketing activities
- 2. The Internet empowers established companies to abandon their current "old economy" ways of doing business
- 3. The Internet has had virtually no impact on established ways of doing business among companies selling to other companies

#1 It's here to stay

For established companies, the Internet is neither a reason to abandon current marketing methods, nor a phenomenon that can be ignored. The most successful established companies in business-to-business marketing utilize the Internet to extend and complement their current marketing methods and ways of doing business, without threatening their current, profitable "bricks and mortar" distribution channels. For example, by using the Internet to move important marketing, product, and sales information more quickly to interested prospects, a company can shorten the time it takes for a prospect to make a buying decision, thereby shortening the company's sales cycle

Question #16

Which item below is NOT an example of an effective use of multimedia for a business Web site?

- 1. A video product sales presentation
- 2. Video product site introduction or demonstration
- 3. A Flash "gateway" screen with company logo and promo message which appears before the home page is displayed

#3 Too much of a good thing

Flash animations are one of the most-abused and least-useful features in Web site development. Often implemented as animated "gateways" on Web sites, they nearly always irritate site users by delaying their access to the information users want to see on the site. Flash animation should be used sparingly, if at all, on business-to-business Web sites, and works best for animated display of text, such as sales headlines or bullet points, on small areas of conventionally-designed Web page layouts.

Question #17

Should a marketing manager spend time in their company's trade show booth giving sales presentations to prospects?

- 1. No, the marketing manager should never interfere with the company's sales staff
- 2. Yes, because "face time" improves the effectiveness of company marketing programs and deliverables
- 3. No, because time is better spent assessing the competition and getting new marketing ideas at the show

#2 Face time with customers

Just as prior sales experience is a major advantage in a marketing manager's professional background, getting live "face time," by talking with prospects and customers at the trade show provides invaluable response that helps marketing managers improve their company's marketing program, by helping marketing managers improve the sales copy, presentation, and targeting of their

Question #18

Where is the BEST location for a booth at a trade show?

- 1. Front row, facing show entrance
- 2. Front row, facing rear of show floor
- 3. Rear corner location, facing inner aisle

#1 Front and center

Booth locations that directly facing the show entrance at the front of the show floor are the best locations for your trade show booth, because they attract interested show visitors early, before they can visit other exhibitors' booths.

Question #19

Which of the following is NOT one of the guiding principles of your company's public relations program?

- 1. To send out press releases only when your company has something to talk about
- 2. To think of how your press release or announcement will be received by the writer or editor at the other end of the exchange
- 3. To aggressively publicize every company news announcement, large and small, to trade media contacts

#3 You can overdo it

The guiding principles of successful business-to-business public relations programs include seeking high-quality editorial coverage by making news announcements only when your company has "something to talk about," and thinking of how your press release or announcement will be perceived by the writer or editor at the trade publication. Aggressively publicizing every news announcement, regardless of its importance to your company or its industry, dissipates your PR program and reduces your company's reputation in the eyes of trade publication editors and writers.

Question #20

The ultimate success or failure of a start-up or new product launch is not dependent on events, but depends:

- 1. Upon your response to these events
- 2. On the impact of external market forces
- 3. On your company's senior management

#1

In many instances, the result of a marketing program for a start-up or new product launch is neither a success nor a failure. Often, ultimate success is determined by your response to these events—that is, your mindset, the measures you take to assess the causes of poor sales response, and the steps you execute to correct the problems identified by the calm observation of the results of

Question #21

What is the role played by creativity in the marketing process?

- 1. Creativity is a tool used in the service of salesmanship in marketing projects
- 2. Creativity should always be encouraged, because it leads to ads, mailings and marketing deliverables that boost product awareness
- 3. Creativity should always play a secondary role meeting the expense and ROI goals of the marketing plan

#1 Serve sales

Salesmanship is always the most important element in the development of marketing projects. It is the catalyst that makes every aspect of marketing deliverables effective and persuasive in the market: Copy, design and layout and production. The role of creativity is to serve the salesmanship that determines the product's key sales benefit, positioning and call to action. Creativity also plays a role in the "downstream" aspects of copy, design and layout for marketing deliverables, but always works in service to salesmanship

Question #22

As a general rule, what is the minimum size and frequency required for effective ad placements?

- 1. Full page ad placed in 6 consecutive issues of the highest circulation publication in your industry
- 2. The largest affordable fractional ad, at a minimum three-time insertion in the top two publications in your industry.
- 3. A series of at least two fractional "image-builder" ads, placed on successive right hand pages of a publication

#2 Reach and frequency

To maximize the cost, impact and coverage of your advertising program, run the largest fractional ad your company can afford, with a minimum three-time placement schedule in the two top publications. This strategy maximizes the three key goals of every advertising program: Effective deliverable (largest ad page size), frequency (minimum three-time placement), and coverage (top two publications), and provides your program with the highest chance for success with the most efficient use of your marketing budget

Question #23

If, after examining all mailing-related elements of an underperforming direct mail test, you determine that direct mail that is sent out "cold" to your marketplace is not a viable marketing approach for your company, what is the next option to explore?

- 1. Immediately divert marketing dollars to a high-visibility print advertising campaign
- 2. Add telephone follow-up by your company's sales reps to prospects on your next direct mail test
- 3. Conduct another small direct mail test to the same list, to validate the poor performance of the previous test

#2

Follow-up phone calls made by sales reps to prospects who have recently received the company's direct mail packages are often a necessary step in the sales process for many companies in business-to-business markets, and underperforming direct mail projects will often require additional follow-up contacts by the company's sales reps to boost mailing response.

Alternative marketing options, such as print advertising campaigns, often generate far less response compared to making the basic changes often necessary to correct a poorly-

Question #24

As a marketing manager, what is the best way for you to manage the public relations process in your company, to receive the best results for your marketing program?

- 1. Time press release distributions to coincide with display advertising placements
- 2. Plan ahead and develop news announcements to support concrete news events in your company, such as new product announcements
- 3. Hire a skilled, experienced PR firm on a monthly retainer, and let them decide what is newsworthy in your company

#2

Since "hard" news events occurring in your company, such as new product announcements, have the highest chance of receiving coverage in your field, they should be the focus of most of your PR planning efforts.

Also, since these events are often supported by new marketing initiatives, such as ad campaigns, mailings, and trade show appearances, simultaneous editorial coverage occurring alongside these marketing projects can be a significant boost to your company's marketing program. Placing total reliance on your company's PR firm to generate publicity for your company, without direction on major news events from you, is most likely to create a costly,

Question #26

What s the MOST likely outcome of many marketing projects undertaken in new media, markets or industries?

- 1. If careful research and market assessment is performed beforehand, many new marketing projects will likely be successful
- 2. They are neither complete successes nor total failures, but often yield clues that can generate better results on the next attempt
- 3. Most new marketing projects are likely to fail, so marketing managers should move very cautiously and conservatively

#2

- Marketing projects launched in new markets or marketing programs for start-ups or new product launches, often yield mixed results, in that they are neither total failures nor complete successes. Smart marketing managers realize they must be alert to detecting the clues from these first efforts—such as copy changes, media selection or better prospect targeting—that can yield better results on the next implementation. Prior research, or market surveys usually do not reflect the actual reality of sales response to a product, and are never a substitute for “asking for the order” in live advertising, mailings and other hard-dollar marketing projects.

Question #27

Every marketing project begins with a three-step process of:

- 1. Identifying prospects, locating prospects and applying the best marketing tools available to reach these prospects
- 2. Establishing a budget, allocating the budget to marketing activities and developing a marketing strategy for the project
- 3. Assumptions, goals, analysis

#1

Keeping your focus on the only goal of your marketing program—to generate sales for your company—requires a steady focus on reaching the audiences who are most likely to buy your company's products. This focus means centering your marketing plan on the tasks of identifying and locating prospects and applying the best marketing tools to reach them. Budgets, strategies, assumptions and goals are secondary to the marketing manager's main objective of creating marketing projects that sell the company's products to the most-likely prospects

Question #25

Marketing Managers should learn the basics of writing sales copy for their company's products so they can:

- 1. Publish their copy in ads and brochures produced by the company's ad agency
- 2. Recognize effective ad copy, and reject copy that does not effectively sell their company's products
- 3. Reinforce their company's brand image

#2

Although marketing managers usually do not write the copy for their company's advertising and marketing collateral, they should be proficient in communicating the key benefits of their company's product or service so they can identify copy approaches that sell their company's products, and reject copy that doesn't present the product's major benefits. Other goals such as brand reinforcement are secondary to the main goal of presenting copy that sells.

Question #28

The key selling objective of your Web site's home page is determined by:

- 1. The specification and content developed by your ad agency or Web design team
- 2. The rough, initial Web design specification created for the Web development project
- 3. Your company's industry, products sold, price and existing sales and marketing channels

#3

Important characteristics of your company such as its industry, products sold, their price and your company's existing sales and marketing channels define the site's key selling objective. These characteristics dictate the content and presentation of the initial Web site design specification. For example, Web sites for companies selling complex, high-ticket technical products will feature more technically-oriented pre-sales information, such as company white papers, datasheets, performance data, etc. than companies selling more easily-described products. Also, a company having extensive, long-established dealer and distributor sales channels may decide not to add online ordering features for its products.

Question #29

The need for branding and brand reinforcement:

- 1. Is generally important only to the largest consumer products companies or companies that are already well-established
- 2. Applies to any company, large or small selling products and services to today's busy, distracted readers and viewers
- 3. Is the most important goal of your company's marketing program

#1

Yes, it's true. The need for "branding" and brand reinforcement generally applies to those kinds of companies who can afford to implement massive saturation advertising campaigns to gain incremental market share in very large and mature markets. The importance of "branding" as a goal has been grossly overstated for small and mid-sized companies selling their products in industrial markets and is often a costly distraction from the far more important goal of using effective salesmanship and clear, persuasive presentation in company marketing projects

Question #30

The BEST description of focusing on the reality of your company's products in marketing projects means:

- 1. Describing their benefits, features and applications in ways that meet the consensus viewpoint of your company's senior management
- 2. Focusing on their benefits, features and applications and describing them in a way that persuades the prospect to respond
- 3. Assigning company marketing resources to the products in your company which are more likely to generate the highest, most profitable sales response.

#2

- In developing marketing deliverables for your company, you must focus on the benefits, features and applications that your prospects want, and use copy and presentation techniques to persuade and motivate prospects to respond, to initiate the selling process: Calling your companies sales reps, linking to your Web site, filling out an inquiry card. As a marketing manager, it is very important for you to see the key benefits of your companies products or services and your prospects see them, not as your CEO or other senior managers wish they would be seen, because as we all know, senior management is often isolated from the realities of their companies marketplace.