

## THE DRILL:

# Nine Questions to Answer Before You Begin Any Marketing Communications Campaign

Answer each of these questions completely before you move on to the next. When you're done, you'll know what to say in each piece of communication you prepare.

1. WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

Don't try to answer in statistical categories like demographics or psychographics. Instead, try to find the common-thread mindset of your prospect group. (Bad answer: "Women 25-50 with HH incomes \$50K+." Good answer: "Anybody who's planning to buy a medium-to-high-end refrigerator in the next six weeks.")

2. WHAT ARE THEIR PRECONCEPTIONS OF OUR PRODUCT CATEGORY?

Not a general answer, but an answer specific to your isolated target group.

3. WHAT ARE THEIR PRECONCEPTIONS OF OUR PRODUCT IN PARTICULAR?

If any.

4. WHAT ARE THEIR PRECONCEIVED WANTS FROM OUR PRODUCT CATEGORY?

Make a list, then prioritize them. And play fair. Don't try to make it match what you think you have to sell.

5. WHICH OF THESE WANTS DOES OUR PRODUCT LEGITIMATELY MEET?

A hard-nosed, not a forgiving answer.

6. GIVEN ALL OF THE ABOVE, WHAT CAN A COMMUNICATIONS EFFORT REASONABLY HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?

Pick a reasonable goal. Good answer: "To become recognized as the best-designed refrigerator in our price category." Bad answer: "To increase sales 25%." Communications can work wonders, but too many other factors influence sales—pricing, distribution, production problems, discounting by the competition, etc.

7. HOW MUCH MONEY DO WE HAVE?

Reality check.

8. IS THAT ENOUGH, OR SHOULD WE BACK OFF ON OUR GOALS?

A message needs to be repeated before it sinks in. It usually takes at least a year before the snowball starts to grow.

9. WHAT'S THE PRECISE OBJECTIVE FOR THIS PIECE OF COMMUNICATION?

Nothing so vague as "to increase awareness" or the like. Instead, something like "to make the target prospect phone the 800 number with the expectation that, if we prove to be as advertised, they'll move forward in the buying process."

Then you can do a mailer, an ad, a poster, a TV commercial or whatever. And once it's done, you can look at it and ask a tenth question.

10. IS WHAT WE JUST DID STRONG ENOUGH TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE?

It's a pass or a fail. If it passes, you've done well. If it doesn't, try again.

Most of the ads you see today wouldn't survive this drill. Use it faithfully, and you'll start out way ahead.