



Adapting your Marketing Approach to Engineering Markets. What Needs to Change?

I came across an interesting article recently in Marketing Today (marketing magazine) which focuses on how the marketing of products and services to engineering companies needs to be different to that of general consumer marketing. Because at Industrial Marketing Solutions "marketing to engineers is our business" I thought I would include an abstract of this article for your review.

The article focuses on six points to take into consideration when adapting your marketing approach to an industrial or engineering company. These are:

1. Advertising: Keep it informational and professional

Most engineers have a low opinion of advertising for the simple reason that they want to believe they are not influenced by ad copy - and that they make their decisions based on technical facts. The lesson for the business-to-business marketer? Make your advertising and direct mail informational and professional, not gimmicky or promotional. Avoid writing that sounds like "ad copy." Don't use slick graphics that immediately identify a brochure or spec sheet as "advertising." The engineer will be quick to reject such material as "fluff."

2. Engineers do not like a "consumer approach."

There is a raging debate about whether engineers respond better to a straight technical approach, clever consumer-style ads or something in between. Those who prefer the creative approach argue, "The engineer is a human being first and an engineer second. He will respond to creativity and cleverness just like everyone else." Unfortunately, there is much evidence to the contrary. In many tests of ads and direct mailings, I have seen straightforward, low-key, professional approaches equal or out pull "glitzy" ads and mailings repeatedly. Engineers respond well to communications that address them as knowledgeable technical professionals in search of solutions to engineering problems. Hard-sell frequently falls on deaf ears here - especially if not backed by facts.



3. The engineer's purchase decision is more logical than emotional.

Most books and articles on advertising stress that successful copy appeal to emotions first, reason second. But with the engineering audience, it is often the opposite. The buying decision is what we call a "considered purchase" rather than an impulse buy. That is, the buyer carefully weighs the facts, makes comparisons and buys based on what product best fulfills his requirement. Certainly, there are emotional components to the engineer's buying decision. For instance, preference for one vendor over another is often based more on gut feeling than actual fact. But for the most part, an engineer buying a new piece of equipment will analyze the features and technical specifications in much greater depth than a consumer buying a stereo, VCR, CD player or other sophisticated electronic device. Copy aimed at engineers cannot be superficial. Clarity is essential. Do not disguise the nature of what you are selling in an effort to "tease" the reader into your copy, as you might do with a consumer mail order offer. Instead, make it immediately clear what you are offering and how it meets the engineer's needs.

4. Engineers want to know the features and specifications, not just the benefits.

In consumer marketing, we are taught that benefits are everything, and that features are unimportant. But engineers need to know the features of your product - performance characteristics, efficiency ratings, power requirements and technical specifications - in order to make an intelligent buying decision. Features should especially be emphasized when selling to OEMs (original equipment manufacturers), VARs (value-added resellers), systems integrators and others who purchase your product with an intention to incorporate it into their own product. Example: An engineer buying semiconductors to use in a device he is building doesn't need to be sold on the benefits of semiconductors. He already knows the benefits and is primarily concerned about whether your semiconductor can provide the necessary performance and reliability while meeting his specifications in terms of voltage, current, resistance and so forth.

5. Engineers are not turned off by jargon - in fact, they like it.

Consultants teaching business writing seminars tell us to avoid jargon because it interferes with clear communication. This certainly is true when trying to communicate technical concepts to lay audiences such as the general public or top management. But jargon can actually enhance communication when appealing to engineers, computer specialists and other technical audiences. Why is jargon effective? Because it shows the reader that you speak his language. When you write direct response copy, you want the reader to get the impression you're like him, don't you? And doesn't speaking his language accomplish that? Actually, engineers are not unique in having their "secret language" for professional communication. People in all fields publicly denounce jargon but privately love it. For instance, who aside from direct marketers has any idea of what a "nixie" is? And why use that term, except to make our work seem special and important?



6. Engineers have their own visual language.

What are the visual devices through which engineers communicate? Charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, blueprints, engineering drawings, and mathematical symbols and equations. You should use these visual devices when writing to engineers - for two reasons. First, engineers are comfortable with them and understand them. Second, these visuals immediately say to the engineer, "This is solid technical information, not promotional fluff." The best visuals are those specific to the engineer's specialty. Electrical engineers like circuit diagrams. Computer programmers feel comfortable looking at flow charts. Systems analysts use structured diagrams. Learn the visual language of your target audience and have your artist use these symbols and artwork throughout your ad, brochure or mailer.

About Industrial Marketing Solutions :

We are a sales, marketing and channel development agency specializing in the electronics, engineering and industrial markets. Located in Ireland and the UK we support companies seeking to develop their domestic markets further as well as export-led companies looking to develop European markets.

We work in a hands-on and implementation focused way with our clients providing experienced and professional outsourced support for both one-off and ongoing market development programs. Whatever your budget, we can assist you in maximising your resources through practical, measurable and return-on-investment focused plans and activities.

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