



Top 14 Marketing Tips for Technology Businesses

The sluggish economy makes it one of the best times to re-evaluate your company's marketing strategy. Here are some proven marketing tips for technology product or services companies.

#1: Create a Marketing Rulebook.

When starting your company or launching a new product line, make sure you are consistent in everything you do. From the president of the company to the receptionist, all should have the same idea of what your company is, and how you present it to the outside world. Your marketing rulebook should have both internal and external positioning. You should have defined target audience(s).

Another important aspect that fits into your marketing rulebook is consistency in your form and style. This might seem like the simplest of all the rules, but it is one of the most important. Your target audience should see your logo, contact information, and URL in everything you send outside your organization. It should be in press releases, articles, blog syndication websites, and partners' websites, and then your target audiences will become familiar with your company.

#2: Research your marketplace before spending.

It's amazing how many companies spend marketing dollars unnecessarily. This is why it is important to research your marketplace before you spend money on a service or campaign. There are many internet tools that help you determine the wants and needs of your target audience. For example, SurveyMonkey and Zoomerang are both online survey tools, which can help you get a feel for what your target audience needs. These services can range from 10-question free surveys to an unlimited amount of questions for only \$20.

However, the more intricate your survey, the more expensive it will be. Nevertheless, this can be a worthwhile investment, because the more you spend on the survey the less you will unknowingly spend on useless campaigns.

It is also important to check out your competitors online. This can be as simple as entering what a prospective client would type to find your service in a search engine. When researching competitors, you should check out the marketing campaigns they have conducted.

Also, you should determine your ideal prospect profile. You can use a more pricey service such as Hoover, which generates a complete list of all the companies you might want to target. However, there are also other free options, such as ReferenceUSA. In order to access this business database you can often create a free account through your local library, and in turn they will allow you access to multiple databases, including ReferenceUSA. InfoUSA databases are also usually available for free through a library service.

#3: Establish a marketing budget.

Once you have researched your market, establish a 12-month marketing budget. We advise companies to create gold, silver and bronze budget amounts and then you will be ready if you have to slash or increase budgets throughout the year. You will also be making conscious decisions NOT to conduct certain campaigns.

#4: Make sure your branding is clear.

There is nothing more frustrating to a prospect than trying to figure out what a brand is all about, and finding out in the end that your product or service is not the one he wanted.

In addition to consistency of design elements, you should have consistent messaging and positioning. If your press releases are not aligned with your website, for example, you are greatly confusing your prospects.

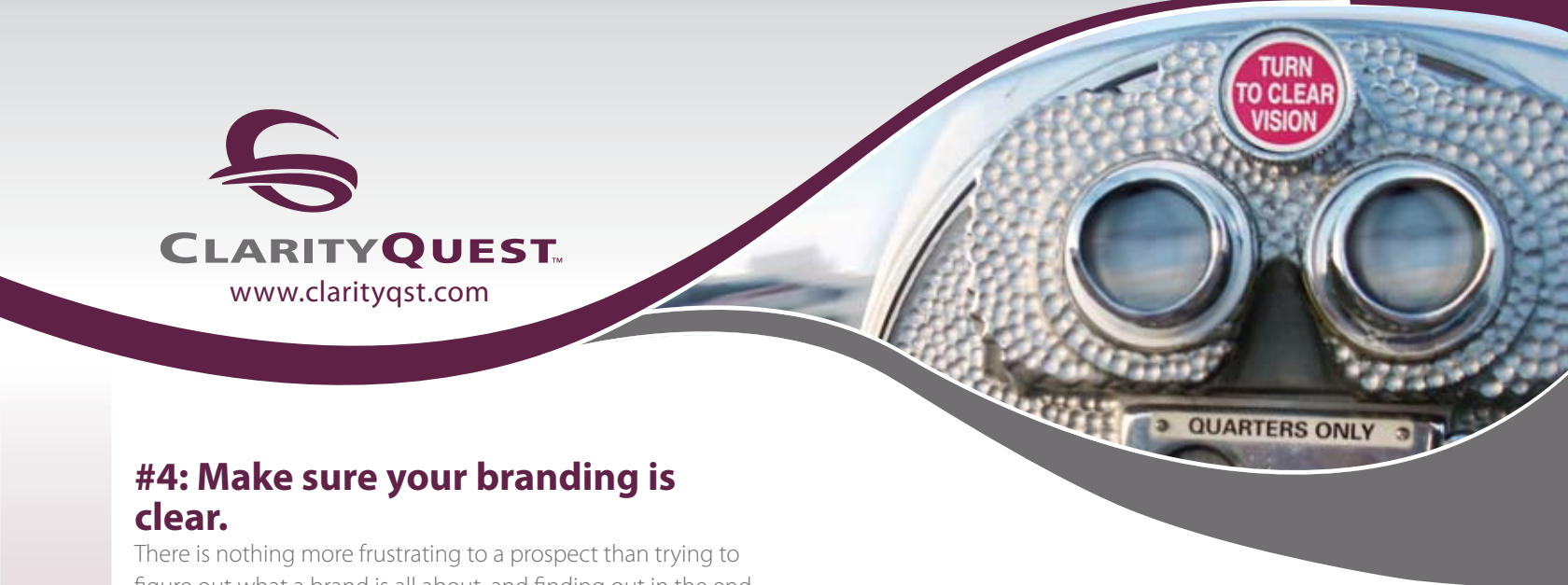
In addition to being precise in what you are selling and to whom, it is important to capture your target audience's attention. As a technology company, your branding should also align with your current and future product/services roadmaps.

#5: Clearly articulate your technology products or services.

In order for your clients and prospective clients to understand what you are truly selling, then you must be clear in your presentation. This is especially important for technical services.

Harry Beckwith, author of *Selling the Invisible*, writes that services are not like a tangible product that you see before you pay. Thus, it is important to let your clients know the details of what you will be providing, in order to satisfy their questions. Beckwith suggests seven positioning questions that should be answered.

1. Who are you? (Your company's official name)
2. What business are you in?
3. For whom...what companies/users do you serve?
4. What need...what are the special needs of the company you serve?
5. Against whom...with whom are you competing?
6. What's different...what makes you different than the competition?
7. Unique benefits...what are the unique benefits a client derives from your services?



These seven questions work equally well for products. By answering these questions, your customers and prospective customers should be able to get a better understanding of what you will provide.

#6: Get testimonials and endorsements.

In order for potential clients to validate your offerings it is imperative to have your customers vouch for you through testimonials. It is very simple and sometimes overlooked. Testimonials are easily accessible and all it takes is a simple quote. Online video testimonials are now easy to produce and even more effective than written quotes. The testimonials should be posted on your company's website, but can also be used in other collateral. If your industry has issues with believing testimonials there are services such as Authenticated Testimonials which provide validation and a seal for your reference quotes.

#7: Use word-of-mouth technique.

Whenever you see a movie you like or try a new restaurant that was amazing, you usually pass this information on to a friend or acquaintance. Why not tailor this technique to marketing your products? Word-of-mouth marketing is not a new technique but it is one that has been overlooked by many marketing professionals. WOMMA.org states that word-of-mouth marketing empowers people to share their experiences. It's harnessing the voice of the customer for the good of the brand. And it's acknowledging that the unsatisfied customer is equally powerful." WOMMA also shares the 5 basic elements to word of mouth marketing:

1. Educate people about your products and/or services
2. Identify people most likely to share their opinions
3. Provide tools that make it simpler to share information
4. Study how, where, and when opinions are being shared
5. Listen and respond to supporters, detractors, and neutrals.

Urefer.com is an interesting online referral engine that recently launched.

#8: Use pay-per-click.

The Internet is an efficient and inexpensive way to reach your audience. Tradeshows and print ads can be expensive and are aimed at passive buyers - people that are simply browsing with no intention of using your services. For example, a full-page advertisement in a trade magazine can cost between four to five thousand dollars, compared to pay-per-click (PPC) campaign that generates the same or more impressions for \$500-\$1,000. In addition, by using the web you can reach your targeted audience and your target audience can reach you. For example, if someone searches "marketing firms in Southeast Michigan" then they are more than likely actively searching for just that. This makes it more likely that they will see your webpage and possibly use your company. When using Google Adwords, try using exact keyword and phrase matching instead of broad match for even bigger bang for your buck. Once you have mastered exact keyword match campaigns, Google Adwords' embedded match is an exciting alternative for ad targeting.

#9: Ask for Referrals.

If you know your customer is satisfied, which hopefully they always are, then you should ask if any of their friends, colleagues or partner companies need your services. Referrals are also very simple because all it takes is one simple question to your client. Although this sounds simple, many companies do not do this, and lose potential business. It is said that everyone knows at least 250 other people. Imagine if you were able to get just 20 people to refer just 5% of all their network of friends, family, and associates to your business next month. That would result in over 250 referrals to your business in just one month! This is a very useful marketing technique because your clients can be the best persuaders for others, because they know your work first hand. There are several firms that automate referral reminders, programs and gifting.

#10: Cross promote your product or service.

Cross promotion is two or more companies or organizations combine forces to advertise a product or service (think an OEM and reseller). Each company or organization helps promote the other's product or service. By teaming up with synergistic companies you will save time and money. It will allow you to gather more information than you could on your own, for example lead lists. The cost of advertising and renting booth space at a trade show can be very expensive; by teaming up with another company you can save money.

#11: Integrated Marketing.

Diversification is a key to more than just stock portfolio success. To reach your target audience you must use many different marketing techniques. You should be using different forms of marketing in parallel such as internet marketing, public relations and advertising.

#12: Continually Communicate.

Monthly e-newsletters containing informative articles or case studies can be an effective way to nurture leads. We recommend using a service with robust features such as analytics and double opt-in functionality. Constant Contact and AWeber.com are two such services.

#13: Analyze your leads.

To maximize your profits figure out who is hitting your website. There are many ways you can do this; two free services are Google Analytics and StatCounter. While these services are free, you do have to manually search by IP address the company that visited your website unless you create custom scripts. However, they are solid choices for a free analytics service. Other services are LeadLander, Visitortrack by NetFactor or



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LoopFuse. They are more expensive choices, costing \$1,900 to \$4,800 per year; however they provide you with customizable automated detailed lead reports, ties into Jigsaw and LinkedIn databases, and customized email alerts.

#14: Test customer satisfaction on an ongoing basis.

It never hurts to know exactly how your clients feel, and get important feedback about the positives and negatives of your job. This can be as simple as a phone call to your clients, or an anonymous survey on your website using a free tool such as 4Q. A phone call or email is more personal, and your client will know that you value their opinion and business. An anonymous survey on the other hand allows you to truly know how you conducted your service or how your product worked for your clients. This allows for the communication of productive criticism, helping you tweak your products, services or messaging.. To get the best results you should consider conducting both types of customer satisfaction tests.

The time to re-assess your marketing department is now.

For more information on the benefits of a outsource marketing department, or to arrange a marketing assessment meeting, contact us at 734-864-4094 or visit <http://www.clarityqst.com>.

About Clarity Quest

Clarity Quest Marketing combines technology know-how with marketing and business acumen to provide marketing services to high-tech companies across the U.S. Founded in 2001, Clarity Quest serves companies in the biotechnology, software, hardware and professional services industry. Clarity Quest is headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan with a satellite office in Seattle. The company publishes the Out of the Fog Marketing blog (<http://www.clarityqst.com/blog.asp>).