Dear Client,

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

Best wishes,
John Harrison

Marketing Messages - Getting to the Point

Regardless of the type of business that you run, your customers will have one thing in common. As a result of technology, they are bombarded by marketing messages. Customers are more time-poor than ever before so if you want your marketing communications to stand out, you should consider cutting down the length of your messages and getting to the point.

Identify the message that matters most and make sure it's memorable. Marketers have known for decades that there's value in identifying and driving home the most important point or benefit. It goes all the way back to when the best businesses began to identify their unique selling proposition (USP) for every client.

The difference today is the way that viewers and readers consume media. Today's reader or viewer is overwhelmed with an astounding number of media choices and channels. In fact, consumers are exposed to so many messages that they notice fewer of them. Here are a few tips to help you get your point across.

Focus on what is most relevant to your customers - Focus on what your target audience see first and outline what is most important and relevant to them. Avoid the temptation to use that first impression to deliver what you or the management team finds most interesting, unless you're also the target audience.

Write active rather than passive sentences - Active sentences are more vigorous and put more life into the message. Here's an example: "We deliver shipping services to clients nationally." This is much punchier than saying "Shipping services are delivered by us to clients nationally."

Avoid jargon - Try to avoid formal, overly corporate language. Where possible avoid using big words with several syllables. The business world is now very much a global market and English may not be your customer's first language.

Make it about them - Use the words "you" and "your" much more than "I" and "we." If you catch yourself saying "I" and "we" a lot, then you're talking about yourself too much. Get back to being focused on your reader and their needs and concerns.

Be concise - If you can say something in 10 words don't use 120 words instead. Cut out the fluff and keep your message concise. Remember, your potential customer is time-poor so you need to keep the message relevant.

Tips for Going Paperless

Many businesses recognise that going paperless is the future. Converting physical into digital files and storing them in an organised system has multiple benefits, not least protecting the environment. A firm can also benefit from reduced operational costs, increased working efficiency and protection against data loss as electronic files can be backed up quite easily.

Don't go paperless too early - Going paperless is a big change for any business. Don't make the mistake of rushing to buy a scanning solution and rolling it out across the business without preparation time. Take time, plan out filing systems and map processes with your management team. A working group should be established and tasked with understanding how best to implement a paperless solution that works for the business.

Include management and employees in your decision - The working group should present its plan to the business and ask for feedback. The employees who will be working with the paperless solution should be involved in the planning process and management needs to champion it. Explaining the time and money-saving benefits to staff across the whole firm will go a long way in ensuring the project is adopted.

Map out a process for new paper and electronic documents - The working group should create suitable plans for the paper that is currently in the office or stored off-site. The group should also create processes that cover new paper and electronic documents that come into the office after the document management system has been put in place.

Rolling out the solution in a phased manner - Attempting to go paperless in all departments or locations at the same time can be problematic. Most businesses find they gain additional experience and knowledge as they fine-tune their programme during initial setup and use. The working group should outline, as part of its plan, how the rollout will come into effect. The group should regularly ask managers and teams for feedback so that systems and processes can be continuously improved upon and refined as the rollout progresses.

Use the right scanning solution - For most document imaging applications, scanner speed is going to be an important driver of efficiency. Ideally, the working group should speak with a knowledgeable consultant before purchasing any scanning hardware. If your business has an IT department or an IT manager, they should be fully involved in this conversation.

Consider legal and regulatory compliance matters - Before signing off on your paperless plan, you should consider any legal or compliance obligations that your business must adhere to. Most businesses are regulated in some way or another and you should consider seeking legal advice to ensure that you comply with regulations relating to customers records, filing, financial data management and data protection laws. It is important to be proactive in this regard as non-compliance can prove to be an expensive mistake for any business.

Training your Team to be More Resilient

Why do some people bounce back from difficult situations more easily than others? How is it that they are more resilient? Training can help. Managers can help their teams to become more resilient and confident. Training your people to handle difficult situations helps them to respond appropriately.

Letting people fail - Allowing people to fail builds resiliency. People need to try, to risk, and then try some more. This comes from failing a few times along the way. Resilient people are not people who have never failed. They are people who have learned from trying, failing, and trying again. Richard Branson for example, has failed several times along the way to becoming a billionaire business leader. Steve Jobs failed - he was pushed out of Apple in 1985 even though he was one of the founders of the company. He returned to the firm in 1997 and it is now the worlds largest company by revenue. One of the issues today is that people are afraid to allow for mistakes, and they want to protect others from failure. However, every good manager knows that if we never fall over, we won't learn how to get back up again.

Teaching your team to solve problems - Solving problems doesn't mean solving them all yourself. The most difficult task a manager has is to resist doing something themselves even though they may be able to solve the problem more quickly. Instead, managers need to step back and ask their people: "What is the next step?" or "What do you think you should do?" It is really hard watching people make mistakes without stepping in, but your team will never learn if someone else is doing their job for them. It will pay off in the long term as your team becomes more capable and confident.

Focus on the big picture - It is easy for your team to get discouraged if they only see the failures. Teach them to consider the big picture. They should be encouraged to see every step of the learning process as being a step towards success, even if that attempt doesn't result in a solution to whatever problem they are facing. Getting it wrong along the way should be ok in the grand scheme of things. Equally when they get it right, encourage them to see how this has contributed to the overall success of the business.

Accountability - Making allowances for people to fail does not mean that people shouldn't be held accountable. Failure without a lesson is failure in its worst form. By contrast, failure with a lesson is a learning process. Encourage your teams to consider what went right and what went wrong, and to note what lessons have been learned from the process. Your team should take note of the failures and figure out a way to avoid failing in the future. They should be encouraged to accept responsibility for the problem and move to create a better outcome.

A problem versus an inconvenience - Problems are serious issues that are a real threat to the business. Inconveniences are when you get stuck in traffic on the way to the office, for example. You and your team should focus on letting the inconveniences go and focus on solving the real problems.

Implementing a BYOD Policy

Bring your own device or "BYOD" is a relatively recent trend that allows employees and employers to access company data and email through personal devices such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets. BYOD is frequently used by businesses as a way to increase work efficiency and reduce business cost and for enterprise mobility. However, if you want to utilise BYOD in your business you should have an appropriate policy in place.

What Happens without a BYOD Policy? - Without a BYOD policy, employees will have the freedom to access company data in whichever way they like, especially if needed after office hours. This means the use of personal devices to send and retrieve emails, download company's files and edit documents. Such practice could expose a company's confidential data and could be detrimental to the business. Every device has its own security settings and configurations. As such, your business needs to set out its minimum data security requirements in order to manage business risks.

Creating a BYOD Policy - You should consider what is expected of your employees, the data they can access and develop appropriate training to ensure staff fully understand how BYOD works in the firm. Your BYOD policy should address the points outlined below.

Acceptable Use - This section of your BYOD policy should set out what can and cannot be used when utilising company online access points as well as outlining restrictions and limitations.

Devices and Support - The device models that are permitted and have been checked by the IT department should be set out in the BYOD policy. Ideally, your IT manager should have the capability to remotely wipe a device in case it is lost or stolen.

Reimbursement - The full or percentage of cost (if any) that the company will reimburse employees for purchasing a new device.

Security - The environment in which the device can be used, which includes strong passwords, and non-usage of rooted or "jail broken" devices. In many instances it makes sense to install an app or software programme on employees devices in order to allow them to securely access company data.

Risks and Liabilities - The BYOD policy should clearly communicate that using personal devices for work comes with risk that the employee must accept and assume full responsibility, in line with company requirements.

John Harrison & Co
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.