



# the **MARXGROUP**

Business Strategy

Marketing Communications

October 1, 2002

## **Leveraging AAPEX/SEMA**

*By Tom Marx*

When it comes to the perception of what customers really want, have you ever noticed a gap between belief and reality? Sales teams often focus on the lowest price, and corporate marketing folks want to maximize margins. Both have reasonable expectations, but are these expectations in direct correlation with customer needs? Assuming knowledge of customer needs, without asking directly, is still assuming. We all know the results of assumption.

**The question is, do you really know what's important to your customers and prospects – from THEIR perspective?**

**Why not use your presence at AAPEX/SEMA to find out?**

### **Questions**

Here are some of the questions you might want to ask:

- \* Why do/don't you buy from us?
- \* How do you evaluate our products as compared to competitors (specifics are important)?
- \* What improvements can we make in order to keep and grow your business?
- \* What are the three most/least important reasons for your buying decision?
- \* What are your chief complaints/benefits about our products or services?
- \* What products or product lines do you need help with sourcing?
- \* Where do you see your business going over the next 12 months?
- \* How can we help you achieve your business goals?
- \* Why are our product/services important to you?

### **Benefits**

Gathering this essential information can cost you practically nothing and will give you at least three distinct advantages:

1. Your customers will feel listened to, as in "they care about my opinion."

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2. By collaborating on gathering the data and making assessments about the results, there is a remarkable improvement in the cooperation and cohesion between the marketing and sales teams. This can only enhance the relationship the two teams have with the lifeblood of your business: your customers.
3. You'll have updated information for your contact database (current address, decision makers' names, correct email, etc.).

### **Branding**

When you find out what your customer wants, from their viewpoint and in their language, you can then provide them with products and services that meet their needs. You'll get the long-term benefits of improved customer retention and lifetime value. The result is that your brand equity can only grow stronger. Consider ---

1. What if your company was famous for truly paying attention to customer needs?
2. What if sales and marketing were in alignment and could harmonize their efforts towards fulfilling customer satisfaction?

### **How is your brand perceived?**

### **Incentives**

Incentivize your customers and prospects with a giveaway (i.e. during AAPEX/SEMA, a drawing every two hours or once each day) that has value to them, such as a trip for two to someplace exotic, or free product, or a quality premium (like a branded leather jacket). The incentive does not have to be really expensive, but should be something that will grab their attention and compel them to participate in your questionnaire. Give them something valuable and they will associate it with your company name for a long time to come.

### **What would STOP your customers at the show long enough to fill out a 5 minute survey?**

### **Would it be a trip to Hawaii, a one-day driving school adventure with Richard Petty, \$300 in free product?**

### **Actions**

Here are some tips on how to get started:

1. The questionnaire should be a one pager and take less than 5-minutes, max, to fill out (it could also be online, as well, for pre-show traffic building and post-show follow-up).
2. Incentivize your show team -- whoever fills out the most surveys wins \$200.
3. Start every sales conversation at the show by going over the daily results of your questionnaires. This will steer your team towards important conversations.
4. Announce the winner(s) at the show and pre-alert the press about time and place.

### **Next Steps**

If you choose to do this survey, we'd appreciate hearing back from you after the event. Let us know how successful the effort was -- what worked and what could be improved.

Or, give us a call, or email Tom at [tmarx@themarxgrp.com](mailto:tmarx@themarxgrp.com), and we'll be glad to give you a hand with starting your survey process.

### **AAPEX/SEMA is the perfect place to capture this essential information.**

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