

CATALYST

the **MARXGROUP**

Business Strategy | Marketing Communications

December 6, 2005

Sometimes Little Things Make a Big Difference

By Tom Marx

Would you adopt a new practice if we told you it would:

- **Save time**
- **Decrease expenses**
- **Increase efficiency**
- **Improve communications**
- **Reduce stress**
- **Create more certainty?**

This practice is so simple it's almost embarrassing. And, it's one our most powerful communication tools.

First, a little background. Just recently we completed our annual planning session. Our outside facilitator asked us what we thought was unique about the way we do business. One item we mentioned is the "Marketing Action List" we have for each client, and the fact that we review this action list with our clients during our regularly scheduled joint status meetings.

Our facilitator was amazed. He asked if we do this with every client and we said YES. He asked if we do this only after the client insisted and we said NO – we put the practice in place at the beginning of any client relationship and we continue with the process month-after-month.

We heard similar amazement from one of our clients, as well as a couple of prospects. They said that the promise for keeping an action list like this is often made when the relationship begins, but usually fades away as time goes along. These responses surprised us. Can we be the ONLY marketing firm that utilizes this kind of communication tool?

(more)

The components of this practice are:

1. Create a Marketing Action List template – for the ease of editing we use a simple table graph in Word, with the following column headers:

a. Title of the project or event

- b. Job number (or some other identifying method, if needed)
- c. Brief description
- d. List of next actions with due dates, and if needed, who is responsible

2. Have regularly scheduled meetings (face-to-face or Telemeeting)

- a. Review and update the Marketing Action List
- b. Address any concerns, delays or other possible challenges

3. Distribute updated list immediately after the meeting to everyone that touches the marketing items within the list, including upper management

Some of the obvious gains from following this system are:

● **Saves time**

- With an ongoing written document to refer to, meetings take less time and usually fewer meetings are needed
- The list updates everyone on the status of each project

● **Decreases expenses**

- When you look at the cumulative cost of all those people sitting around the table or on the phone, you can see how this efficiency decreases expenses
- Challenges uncovered earlier means lower remedial costs

● **Increases efficiency**

- The system helps keep projects on time and on budget

● **Improves communications**

- When all players know what's going on, communications improve

● **Reduces stress**

- Knowledge is power and the confidence provided creates less stress

● **Creates more certainty**

- You know where you are on a project at all times – fewer surprises builds confidence in the project and with the people

We use this system internally, as well as with our clients. You can use this system to support communications between teams, including an advertising or PR agency and the internal marketing team, or between sales and marketing (which helps get these teams out of their silos.)

As I wrote at the beginning of this article, it's embarrassingly simple. So why not start today?

PS/ If you'd like to give the Marketing Action List a try, email Tom Marx at tmarx@themarxgrp.com and we'll send you the template.