



Master Strategy

Grow Profitably.

The Pressure for Profitability

How Mid-Sized Companies Can Overcome Challenges and Win by:

- Leveraging High-Engagement Communications
- Enlisting the Team
- Intelligent Use of Outsourced Marketing Services

In MASTER STRATEGY's two decades of service to mid-sized companies*, we've found one factor that's universal: the pressure to increase sales and profitability is unrelenting. Senior management wants business development to fire on all cylinders, but there never seems to be enough time to keep the strategy on track, the collateral up-to-date, and the team informed and energized.

Meanwhile, management is barraged with a parade of come-ons for sales and marketing tactics, each touted as the next magic bullet—from video business cards to micro-blogging. Unfortunately, the return often fails to justify the time and dollars spent.

Exacerbating the situation, smaller and mid-sized companies often make the mistake of trying to market themselves like large corporations. They cast as wide a net in the marketplace as they can, with the highest-quality materials they can afford. But since larger companies can afford to spend in an afternoon what smaller competitors can budget for a year, the playing field is never level.

How can a mid-sized firm, with limited time and budget, consistently gain greater business-development traction, steady sales, and profitable growth?

To do so, they must conquer three challenges.

The Challenge of Engagement

Complexity is a signal feature of our business age, as are speed and unpredictability. And few areas in the current business climate are as complex as marketing. Yesterday's formula of defining a value proposition, crafting proof points, assembling copy and visuals, sending a message and waiting for sales cannot be counted on.

Today, the best marketing is an active dynamic between seller and purchaser; marketer and prospect. We're not just talking about interactivity, but rather real engagement.

What's needed is communication that both engages prospects intellectually and engenders a positive working relationship based on confidence and trust. Used correctly, new forms of marketing technology can cut through the complexity of today's business environment, rather than adding to it.

Well-executed, high-engagement communication is successful precisely because it demands involvement, serves as education, and inspires buy-in.

*While MASTER STRATEGY works with a wide range of companies, we define a mid-sized firm as one with between 50 and 500 employees, multiple office locations, and a regional or national market focus.

The Challenge of Targeting

Many enterprises mistakenly equate marketing with “advertising,” or the idea of “getting our name out there.” When they think of gaining new business, they jump to the ill-conceived conclusion that their highest priority should be ensuring that “everyone” should know who they are.

This approach is almost never the most profitable because, in most cases, smaller and mid-sized companies (1) do not sell products/services that are suitable for the mass market; (2) do not have the budget to successfully mass market; and (3) must expend far more (in time, dollars, and other resources) to generate business from “total strangers” than from current customers, clients, or referrals.

One target audience many companies ignore in their marketing efforts is their own team of employees—not as potential customers, but as their core group of stakeholders. (We’ll wager that as a consumer, you’ve had the experience of reading an advertisement and then asking an employee about the offer—only to be met with a blank look.) It stands to reason that a fully engaged team—where each member is actively engaged in either “serving the customer or serving someone who does”—will generate far more results than a team that’s mostly uninformed and uninvolved.

As for current customers, they are far more likely to purchase again, and to refer others, as compared to non-customers; however, we’ve seen companies skip right over them when seeking more and new sources of business.

And when it comes to the broader marketplace, many companies may talk about strategy, but effectively operate with an “if we build it, they will come” approach. They lack the consistent discipline to truly analyze their market and target priority prospects only—their most likely buyers based on industry, geographical area, number of employees, or other characteristics. This disciplined approach is essential to consistent results.

Any company has a finite amount of resources to spend on relationship development and new business outreach, and therefore must strategize how to spend those resources so as to generate the highest return possible.

The Challenge of Messaging

Surprisingly, we’ve found that many companies fail to make value-to-customer the consistent driver of their business development efforts. For example, we frequently see marketing collateral that describes how great a company is, rather than detailing the company’s ability to address customer needs.

Although companies may be expert at what they do, it is often difficult for them to perceive the buying situation from the customer’s perspective—a critical element for marketing success.

Imperative #1: Gain Leverage from High-engagement Communication.

At MASTER STRATEGY, we recommend our clients make customer education and relationship development the primary focus of all marketing communications. This approach is especially critical if the products or services you offer are technical or complex.



High-engagement communication is about changing monologue to dialogue. It means:

- Marketing that doesn't trumpet a message, but rather asks questions; that doesn't preach, but rather encourages the prospect to think about, assess, and then express needs.
- Presentations and other sales development items that don't deliver imperative commands, but rather launch self-evaluations—within which marketers' products or services are both engagingly and honestly positioned as relevant and useful.
- Communiqués that solicit opinions about a potential customer's business, showing respect for and curiosity about the customer's target market.

MASTER STRATEGY advocates an approach to business development that:

- Leverages interactivity.
- Offers free information.
- Asks questions vs. lectures.
- Encourages self-evaluation.
- Demonstrates vs. claims.
- Tailors the message to the medium.
- Offers different levels of complexity, to allow prospects to “drill down” into the details of your message.

Imperative #2: Enlist the Entire Team

Many companies lack a centralized, structured way to engage all of their employees in the business development effort. This represents a missed opportunity. Smaller and mid-sized companies can gain valuable leverage if everyone contributes to the business development effort, not just a few assigned individuals. All too often, however, only a subset of employees is engaged, well-informed, and up-to-speed on the company's strategies and tactics. To compound matters, the business-development tools, information, and materials the team needs may be out-of-date, disorganized, hard to locate, inadequate for current needs, or not yet created.

To help, MASTER STRATEGY has developed a customizable intranet site called the Sales and Marketing Mastersite, or SAMM[®]. Its purpose is to provide a centralized, well-organized, easy-to-use repository for all of a company's business development-related content, plus helpful guidance, engaging content and expert advice.

A company's SAMM intranet site is pre-configured to manage content/features/capabilities such as:

- CEO/Senior Management Messages
- Business Development Goals & Objectives
- Case Studies and Success Stories
- Marketing Materials and Templates
- How-To Tutorials, Training Programs, Checklists
- Video Interviews, Demonstrations, Role Playing Examples
- Interactive Educational Curricula, Self-Assessments, Surveys

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- Sales Statistics, Results Reports, Sales Contests
- Event Calendars, News/Announcements, Press Release Archives
- Contact Information/Directory
- Company Policies & Values
- Reference Materials, Order Forms, Helpful Links
- Brand Maintenance Guidelines

SAMM is not just a repository for materials; it's a training tool for personnel. Marketing materials alone do not drive sales; people who utilize them do. And getting all company personnel "on the same page" and actively engaged can make a significant difference in business development results.

Imperative #3: Intelligently Outsource Marketing Services

Should design and production of marketing materials be outsourced by mid-sized companies? More and more, the answer is yes—not to replace in-house personnel, but as results-generating enhancement and support.

Outsourcing marketing can reduce workload on over-stretched employees, freeing them from responsibilities and jobs for which they are not equipped. It can eliminate distractions, allowing employees to concentrate on core competencies and activities. It will also build-in added discipline to keep all of your marketing initiatives on budget, on time, and on track.

A second reason is to put the job of marketing materials production in the hands of seasoned, experienced specialists. By having the as-needed, "one-stop shopping" of an outsourced marketing department, companies gain tremendous convenience, access to the latest technology and techniques, and the valuable ability act rapidly.

Another significant benefit is cost savings. On average, outsourcing companies realize a 9 percent cost savings and a 15 percent increase in capacity and quality over doing the same tasks in-house, according to the Outsourcing Institute. In our own experience, these projected levels of savings are conservative.

Finally, gaining a third-party, customer-centered perspective on marketing strategy is probably the greatest benefit of all. In the final analysis, prospects don't want to be "sold"—but if they perceive that your firm understands and can address their needs, they'll welcome you to assist.

MASTER STRATEGY specializes in profitable growth for business-to-business service companies and mid-sized professional firms. We provide a comprehensive range of services on a cost-effective, as-needed basis. For further information, visit our website at WWW.MASTERSTRATEGY.COM.

