Marketing Strategies to Boost Your Brand’s Authority Effectively and Ethically

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From scrolling down your YouTube reel and clicking video after video with deceptive and even unrelated thumbnails to downloading software and buying products with totally misleading ads, unethical marketing is becoming a sad feature of today’s advertising.

The intersection between ethics and business has been a space for dispute for a long time. Ethics has always conflicted with the historical essence of business which is to make money. The reason for this is simple; Ethics has subjective definitions in different quarters.

Ethical marketing is a system where a company passes its business through tests of fairness, honesty, as well as social and cultural sensitivity before rolling it out. It is not a marketing strategy per se, but a marketing philosophy that guides all marketing efforts a business might choose to embark on.

If done right, ethical marketing would bring brand loyalty, authority, increased trust, and increased ROI to every business. However, the main reason brands should discontinue unethical marketing practices is because it is the right thing to do.

Increase Your Brand Loyalty

Customers have continually complained of sensationalism in business ads and marketing content. Businesses have intentionally exaggerated the services their business offers by creating ads that show a grander or outrightly untrue image of their goods and services. This isn't illegal and it even draws in the cash…initially at least.

The effects of sensation-driven marketing are often observed in the long-term; reduced customer engagement and patronage are the clearest signs of a dwindling loyalty level.

These realities emphasize the importance for businesses to be authentic in their marketing efforts. This means realistic ads that are as close as possible to the actual products and services you offer, this means non-exaggerated promises and offers like stating that you are offering a service "100% free" on an ad when the reality is that you are only offering an appetizer for free and then the entree for a price.

Chris Thomas the founder of Yonder Agency, puts it succinctly when he states, "Authenticity is your greatest achievement." In other words, everyone loves a person that says what they mean and means what they say.

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Ingrain a Perception of Quality

What is seen as a quality product or service is subjective and is often dependent on the experience of the customer and the feelings you are able to invoke in the customer by your marketing. One feeling that is very difficult to mistake is the feeling that you have been scammed or lied to. The stink never really goes away.

There are a variety of ways you can increase the perception of

quality that customers have towards your business without resorting to sensational and misleading advertising.

Customers are drawn and emotionally invested in products that are promoted by people they trust or hold in high regard. This is the mechanism that propels the Exclusive Advertising Model that has pervaded the social media advertising space.

The business model initially created and pioneered by Jennifer Brooks, the CEO of the influencer marketing giant, International Loops, leverages on known faces, influential people, and celebrities to take influencer marketing to a new level.

The effects of this model amongst others in fighting sensationalism and unethical marketing have been glaring. The model offers advertisers a ripple effect on their ad by leveraging trusted celebrities that they already have on their roll.

The effect of this and such creative marketing and influencer marketing, in general, is that the customers trust the product because of the personalities attached to it and the personalities have to verify the validity of the product because of their image and reputation. This eliminates sensationalism and deceit, while still presenting the product as spectacular, and creating a heightened perception of quality in the customer’s mind.

For instance, a well-shot creative video ad coupled with powerfully written content will create a long-lasting perspective of quality in the mind of the customer without making untrue claims as to the qualities of the product or service, or any claims whatsoever for that matter. This way, customers can experience the product and judge it themselves. Creative marketing allows you to make a statement without crossing the line into unethical marketing.

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Building Trust With Ethical Content

Mails and ad copy amongst others are one of the most prevalent tools for unethical marketing as businesses send out countless “offers” every day to their unsuspecting customers with alluring and often misleading headlines that are designed to make them click, milking their lists for traffic.

I once sent a mail out with the headline, “Here is the Problem We are Having.” This attempt at being vulnerable about the problems we were having with getting customers to respond to our feedback requests was also an attempt to build trust. It worked wonderfully in reversing the trends. It is also a great example of ethical marketing as opposed to sending out another mail with a sham offer in a bid to reactivate our customer base.

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One other major key I have found to work extremely well is my insistence on obtaining digital signatures for all my correspondence with clients and customers. Most mails and even contracts sent out digitally by SMEs are unsigned and I found that in my case, from simple emails to e-receipts, invoices, and even contracts, my simple signature screamed “trustworthy.” This also makes my copy stand out from the competition and reduce the growing tendency for customers to suspect deceit and fraud.

Ethical content is content that reassures your customer base of your fairness, availability, and willingness to engage. It is your quick response to their complaints and reactions to their feedback. It is you using your content to create trust in the hearts of the people you trust and that requires traits like honesty, vulnerability, consistency, and sensitivity.

One of my favorite passages from the bible is found in

Proverbs 23:23. “Buy the truth and sell it not.” I feel that this speaks a lot to the attitude of customers towards brands. In the long term, customers will always buy the truth and reject lies, and exaggerations. It is in your business’s best interests to build your brand authority with the long-term mindset that ethical marketing affords.

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