

# marketing *sider*

ISSUE 02 | 2020

NEWS AND KNOWLEDGE FOR  
TODAY'S MARKETER



Add the  
*Human Touch*  
to Your Brand

Dear Fellow Marketer:

*Reach out and touch someone.* The iconic AT&T tagline is just as meaningful today as it was more than 40 years ago. It was an emotional call-to-action to stay connected to family and friends who were out of arm's reach by picking up the telephone.

A new definition of "physical distancing" has changed the way nearly every brand – big or small – will stay in touch with and serve their customers, now and later.

Whether we've been reminded of its power or are seeing it fully now, connecting with people as people rather than job titles or a means-to-an-end (sales) is how a company defines what it is to its customers, employees and all stakeholders.

Beginning on **page 6**, marketing influencer Carla Johnson offers ideas for how to find your brand's authentic voice so that you can speak to your "peoples" in more personal ways. The good news, says Carla, is that it "doesn't have to cost a boatload of money, and it doesn't take years to get right."

Taking time to fully understand your customers, the challenges they face and how you might be able to help solve them has always been the right approach. If we learn anything from the extraordinary business disruption of 2020, it is that no one is an island . . . even in isolation. In whatever ways you define your communities, chances are they are – or can be – stronger than ever.

Please let us know if there is anything that we can do for you, even to just talk. We can do that virtually or offer a safe way to meet in person. Either way, we are here for you.

Take care,

Your friends at Allegra





## C o n t e n t s



### **06 SPOTLIGHT**

#### **Add the Human Touch to Your Brand**

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Consider the top brands that have hit – and missed – with their taglines through the years.



# 10 WAYS

**D**on't underestimate the business impact of giving people reasons to feel good. Typically, we think of service as purely sales-focused, beginning and ending with the immediate transaction. Widening the view, regular customer appreciation activities can have a big impact on valuable long-term loyalty, too.

Does it need to be costly? No. Does it need to be consistent? Yes. Is it worth it? Absolutely!

Of course, appreciation and recognition should be happening "in house," too. When formal and informal recognition is built into your company culture, it can help you to attract and retain top performers while deepening commitment to your organization. According to a recent study by Bonusly, 82% of employees consider recognition an important part of their happiness at work.

Here are 10 ideas that may be small investments in time and money but can pay big dividends.

## YOUR CUSTOMERS

- 1 SEND A CARD.** Always thoughtful and often unexpected, a word of thanks is nice after a first, large or repeat purchase, or in appreciation of a referral. While email may be efficient and easy for broad-reaching acknowledgments, nothing tops the touch and feel of a personalized, handwritten note on high-quality stationery or a notecard with your logo embossed or foil-stamped on the front.
- 2 PICK UP THE LUNCH TAB.** For top business-to-business clients, offer to send lunch to their location. You can send along logoed, reusable lunch totes, or branded water bottles or travel tumblers. When the time is right, business-to-consumer companies can host an open house, sending an inexpensive postcard to invite loyal customers to a pre-sale event with preferred pricing.
- 3 EXTEND THE GOODWILL.** Send a gift of appreciation for a substantial order, referral or an anniversary of your business relationship. A branded crystal candy dish filled with treats, for example, creates an opportunity for your sales team to extend good feelings by refilling it on subsequent visits.

*Thank you*

# TO GUARANTEE YOUR CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYEES KNOW THEY'RE VALUED

**4 GET PERSONAL.** If your customer data is robust and includes birthdays, anniversaries or other significant dates, you can build in recognition beyond typical business-related occasions with personalized offers and gifts. Have clients who are into fitness? Pick logoed pedometers or exercise mats to show you know . . . and care.

**5 END ON A HIGH NOTE.** Year-end holidays are a prime time to send cards and gifts. Tried-and-true, printed wall calendars have secured their spot in the workplace despite the plethora of electronic options. Welcome desk accessories include journals and portfolios or electronics, like power kits or Bluetooth speakers.

## YOUR TEAM

**1 BE SPECIFIC.** While acknowledging an employee of the month is good, better yet is rewarding your team members in the moment. Drawstring backpacks, headphones or travel blankets with your company imprint are all on trend.

**2 ENCOURAGE PEER RECOGNITION.** Enable employees to acknowledge one another for going the extra mile. Have them nominate deserving co-workers for company-issued gift cards or tokens redeemable for office perks.

**3 PUT IT IN WRITING.** Top-performing companies prioritize employee communications as sharing your organizational vision and mission is essential for engagement. Salute those who embody your company values during staff meetings and highlight their personal stories and achievements in your printed company newsletter.

**4 TIE REWARDS TO COMPANY GOALS.** Get the most from your employee appreciation program by linking some awards directly to your goals: increasing sales, improving customer service or identifying cost savings. Traditional plaques and crystal trophies can instill pride in high-level accomplishments.

**5 REMEMBER REMOTE EMPLOYEES.** Teleworking from home or locations far from the main office has grown more common. Reinforce their sense of connection by ensuring all employees are represented in recognition opportunities. ■



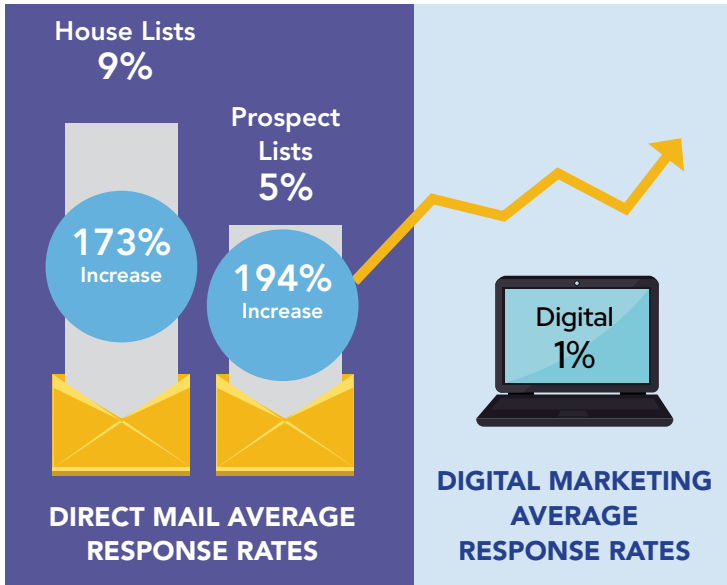
Looking for creative ways to share the love with customers and employees? Let us know. We can help!

# TARGETED DIRECT MAIL

## Put your stamp on success!

Given a well-researched mailing list, few (if any) media options can reach your target prospect with the precision of direct mail!

### DIRECT MAIL RESPONSE RATES ARE SOARING



Source: 2017 Data and Marketing Association (DMA) Report

### DIRECT MAIL OUTPERFORMS EMAIL

#### SO THEY OPEN IT...

66% of mail is opened vs. 17.62% of emails



#### ...AND THEY TAKE ACTION

79% act on direct mail offers immediately vs. 45% that act on email offers immediately



Source: Mail Shark

### DIRECT MAIL CONNECTS WITH AUDIENCES



#### IT'S PERSONAL

Personalizing direct mail with your prospect or customer's name **increases your response rate.**



#### IT'S ENGAGING

Your potential **customers' brains are 20% more engaged and motivated** by print advertising like direct mail.



#### IT'S TRUSTWORTHY

**56% of people feel** print advertising is the most trustworthy form of marketing.



#### IT'S MEMORABLE

People are **70% more likely to remember** a business seen in print vs. online.

Sources: DMA | Canada Post | InfoTrends | Canada Post

### DIRECT MAIL COMMANDS ATTENTION



**107**  
Emails received per person per day



**63**  
Display ads seen per person per day



**2**  
Pieces of mail received per person per day

# PRINTED, ELECTRONIC . . . BOTH!

## Nurture Relationships with Newsletters



**F**or regular planned outreach, the tried-and-true newsletter remains an affordable and preferred way to deliver information, drive engagement and build relationships with customers, donors or employees.

According to the Content Marketing Institute's *2020 Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends Guide*, eight out of 10 B2C and B2B marketers outsource content creation. The good news is newsletter content easily pulls double- or triple-duty when you repurpose parts of it for social posts, blogs or infographics.

When you sit down to write your newsletter or provide direction to an outsource partner, think in terms of articles and graphics that are educational rather than sales-y with the goal of providing information that your readers would deem valuable. Here are a few idea-starters:

- **Awards and recognition** – For employee or donor recognition, putting faces to your news is a tangible demonstration of appreciation, showing you value those who are important to your organizational mission.
- **Best-of lists** – Busy people appreciate the time you take to “round up” quality information presented in easy-to-digest compilation reports.
- **Case studies and success stories** – Present the benefits of your products or services by letting your customers or those helped by your organization make the case for you.
- **Behind-the-scenes and how-to articles** – Do you have an unusual production process? Source materials in a far-off place? Have alternative uses for a standard product? Share your stories creatively to increase brand awareness and connect on a deeper level with buyers.
- **Interviews** – Customers, donors, company executives and employees have unique perspectives that are a natural fit for a Q & A format.

- **New product or service launches** – Give detailed information about complex products or services in a narrative that complements manuals or expands upon short-form advertising.
- **Opinions and analysis** – New regulations impacting your industry? Consider an opinion piece that delves deeper into potential implications that might affect your target audiences.
- **Quizzes and contests** – Quiz questions and trivia contests are light and fun for readers.
- **Running late? Curate!** – Subscribe to news feeds or digests, and save links to online content that you would feel good about sharing. Be sure to credit the original source of information that you pass along.

### Print or electronic?

A printed newsletter may stand a better chance of standing out, opposed to its digital counterpart that competes in a crowded in-box . . . and can be subject to a quick or mass delete. Research supports the perception that a printed piece has more substance and value. By using your own customer database or a highly targeted prospect list, printing and postage costs can be minimized by avoiding unnecessary widespread distribution.

The nimbleness and affordability of an e-newsletter make it a great choice when used in concert with other marketing channels. As with direct mail lists, your e-newsletter will be best received when you segment your list and target your messages with relevant content. Your open and click-through rates will let you know right away if your material is hitting the mark.

Optimize your newsletter outreach by encouraging feedback. Allow readers to comment, suggest topics for future issues and even submit their own articles. Be sure to offer newsletter subscriptions on your website's home page, social media pages and in other print communications. ■

**Let us know if you're ready to get started with newsletters. We can help!**







The background of the page is a light blue gradient with several large, faint fingerprint patterns in white and light blue. One prominent fingerprint is centered near the top, and another is in the bottom right corner. The title text is overlaid on this background.

# Add the *Human* *Touch* to Your Brand

By Carla Johnson

**E**very year *Forbes* magazine comes out with a list of the world's most valuable brands. You can juggle the rank, but the top few spots usually consist of Apple, Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Disney and Coca-Cola.

Although everyone's fighting for attention – every big company, every startup, every influencer – we all know these brands. We also are intimately familiar with smaller companies in the industries in which we work or where our personal interests lie. Why is that?

The brands we know, love and trust are the brands who understand how to make a big impression. They regularly practice common branding rules, and you can tap into them as well. Creating an impactful brand doesn't have to cost a boatload of money, and it doesn't take years to get right.

You just have to start with the same common denominator that each of the brands you envy uses: Emotion.



We're attracted to quirky pictures, entertaining videos and funny memes because they evoke our human emotions: laughter, sentiment, fear and any number of others. Bringing out these emotions in your brand is how you create an unforgettable, enduring relationship with people.

This is particularly true in our present situation. The coronavirus pushed everyone to digital channels, which is great for efficiency and access, but makes it harder to connect with each other emotionally. You can counter this dynamic and create a brand that is memorable.

Following are five simple changes you can start today that will make a tremendous difference in how people perceive your brand, and the influence you'll create in capturing their attention.

## 1 STORY FIRST. FORMAT SECOND.

If you do nothing else to change how you're perceived in the world, make this switch. Here's why:

When a team decides to create something new, the first question someone asks is, "What format will it be in?" They see how much room they have and decide what story will fit. You want a landing page? Make it as long as possible. An email? Keep it to less than 200 words. A 10-minute video? That gets you a 10-minute chunk of a story. But is it the right one? When you begin with the format, you're already constrained.

You have to flip the formula and start with the story first. Doing this grabs people's attention through emotions and gives you great breadth and depth with which to work. Next, include the elements of a great story structure – a theme, plot, characters, conflict, tension and resolution. This creates the intrigue and engagement with which you're able to keep people's attention as you move from the bigger brand story down to the products and services you sell.

**Ask yourself:** Do the people in your organization start with the format or the story?

## 2 DEFINE YOUR BRAND PERSONALITY AND VOICE.

Just like people have personalities, so do brands. And just like people aren't very interesting or magnetic without a personality, the same holds true for brands.

A brand personality is a set of human characteristics that a company exhibits. It increases brand loyalty because customers can relate to them.

Just like people have a way of speaking that seems natural to their personality, a company's personality comes out in how it expresses itself. Brand voice is how a company talks about itself in a way that conveys its personality. It's made up of the words, phrases, topics and attitude that makes a brand feel real.

**Ask yourself:** Could someone recognize your brand and its personality by the words and phrases you use?

## 3 COMMUNICATE INTERNALLY.

The biggest representation of a brand next to its logo is its employees. Yet most companies spend almost zero time communicating with them. In fact, a 2017 Gallup poll showed that 41% of employees don't know what makes their brand different from their competitors.

Communicating internally with employees in a way that's human means employees will not only understand what's going on but connect the dots to their own work. Informed employees are impassioned employees who care about the experience they deliver to customers.

**Ask yourself:** How does the amount, frequency and quality of your communications impact how employees feel about your brand?

# Brand Personality Framework



Stanford researcher Jennifer Aaker developed this framework to describe the nature of an organization and its characteristics.



## LET EMPLOYEES CREATE A HUMAN VOICE.

Some companies have gone beyond the brand personality framework and voice, and have a document that outlines the company's tone, specific ways to refer to products by name and a lot of official ways that the company is supposed to sound in 'official' communication.

That's important and it has its place. But here's why we need to remember that at the end of the day, customers are people who talk to our employees who – you guessed it – are people too.

The more believable employees sound, the more readers will trust them. That can be through employee driven blogs, company magazines, social media posts, guest contributions in other places, articles they write on LinkedIn, you name it.

**Ask yourself:** Does the content your employees publish add richness and dimension to your brand? Or does it sound like it went through a series of corporate departments to get approval?



## BE STRATEGIC ABOUT HOW MUCH CONTENT YOU CREATE.

While there's a push to create content to stay in front of your customers, the most impactful thing you can do is be strategic about when, where and how much you connect.

When you reach out to customers, prospects, employees and any other person in your audience, ask yourself this question: How will this help them? And know this, the answer is not because they need to know what you sell. What you're peddling only matters if it makes a difference to your recipient and helps them accomplish something. And if it does, then you need to put it into context for them, which brings us back to story first, and format second.

**Ask yourself:** Are you creating content because it's something you want to tell people, or because it's something people want to hear?

## YOUR NEXT STEP

Branding can feel complicated, overwhelming and all-consuming...but it doesn't have to. There's never been a better time to infuse your brand with the emotional approaches we've outlined. By prioritizing these five simple steps, you'll be able to create more impact for your brand, build the long-term interest of your customers and contribute to the growth of your company. ■



Carla Johnson is consistently named one of the top influencers in B2B, digital and content marketing. She travels the world teaching how to cultivate idea-driven teams that breed creativity and game-changing innovation.





**5 Ways**  
TO  
**Connect**  
TO YOUR  
**Community**

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## Nearly nine out of 10 consumers consider it a responsible business practice to invest in community or global causes.

2017 Cone Communications CSR Study

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**L**ocal business communities have been and will continue to be tested in unpredictable ways. “We’re in this together” is now a widespread rallying call for unity in the face of the unknown. The “shop local” message meant as a reminder of the importance to spend dollars in the community, when possible, is more meaningful than ever.

Across the country, local business leaders have found renewed energy by balancing professional responsibility with generosity to play a key role in their community’s recovery. Cultivating a personal and professional reputation is an essential part of your growth and development as a business owner or manager.

Where there is a great need, there is an abundant opportunity. To be strategic with your support, look for activities that align with your company values to determine ways to share your time and talents. It will be more meaningful for you and your team and help channel your resources so that you can make a real difference.

It’s also important to your customers. According to the *2017 Cone Communications CSR Study*, nearly nine out of 10 consumers consider it a responsible business practice to invest in community or global causes, and 88% said they would be more loyal to a company that supports a social or environmental issue.

Here are a few ways you can add a set of hands – or more! – to rebuild one or more of your communities:

**1 DONATIONS** – Sponsor a drive to help replenish the shelves of your local food bank. Donate goods to area schools or to support local arts. Underwrite gift cards to workers who have manned the front lines at hospitals, grocery stores and other essential businesses.

**2 PRO BONO SERVICES** – Smaller, local nonprofits that run lean in the best of times are particularly stressed when many reliable donors are facing economic uncertainty. In lieu of a financial donation, offer your services to those who serve the underserved.

**3 VOLUNTEERISM** – Your team members who have been working remotely, some for the first time, may feel disconnected from their colleagues and your organization. Volunteering to spruce up community space or your office park to get ready for business can fuel a sense of unified purpose. It’s beneficial to your business when you encourage your employees to have their own pet projects, too. Support from an employer has been shown to drive greater company loyalty and organizational pride.

**4 SPONSORSHIPS** – Some community events, like charity walks, have adapted to the current climate and moved online. Now’s a good time to get behind fundraisers as a sponsor. You build brand awareness and enhance your reputation, which are two key benefits of cause-related marketing.

**5 PARTNERSHIPS** – Look to your Chamber of Commerce and other professional organizations for business partnerships that can pool talent and resources to make a bigger impact. You also gain the opportunity to network with other business leaders who could be potential partners or even customers.

When you and your organization are woven into the fabric of your community, everyone wins. You enhance your reputation as a good place to work, allowing you to attract talent and retain top employees. You can also improve customer satisfaction and grow your business. ■





# Does Your Brand Have to Have a Slogan?

## YES, NO AND MAYBE



**A**pple, Whole Foods, and Starbucks don't have one. Subaru has one but doesn't emphasize it. Coke changes theirs every few years. And Nationwide and BMW haven't changed theirs in more than 40 years.

I'm referring, of course, to taglines – or slogans. The big question is: Does a company or a brand have to have a slogan? The answer is . . . complicated.

Every marketer dreams of that killer tagline, one that customers can bring to mind, or even better, one that becomes such a part of our culture that it is imitated, parodied, and sometimes blatantly stolen (“Got Milk” anyone?) Yet perhaps the biggest status symbol is the brand that doesn't have a tagline and doesn't really need one.

Slogans have been part of branding since marketing and advertising were invented. Using a handful of words (the fewer the better in most cases) to sum up a key differentiator works as a kind of shorthand for the customer to form an opinion about a brand. Slogans are also different from descriptor lines, which usually indicate a business or service category but make no claims or promises (e.g., Hellman's “Real Mayonnaise.”)

A slogan for a brand may start by simply stating a clear point of difference. When Miller Lite was introduced, it was not the first light beer on the market. But Miller was the first to make a lighter version of an established brand and used a now-famous tagline to do it, “Tastes great. Less filling.” That tagline was a clever way of saying “fewer calories” while promising no flavor was lost.

A subsequent tagline, “Everything you've always wanted in a beer and less,” was the next evolution. Fast forward 45 years to present day and Miller Lite's slogan has advanced to a far more subjective one that makes more

of an emotional appeal: “Hold True.” This one harkens to their roots as a pioneer of the light beer category as proof of the quality and legacy of their beer.

“Hold True” is in the same category of tagline as “Just do it,” though the former has yet to prove it has the staying power of Nike's legendary line. (I'll bet a case of Bud Light that it never will.) Lines like these seek to connect with customers' self-esteem by hoping they will see themselves as loyal in the case of Hold True, or as doers or competitors in the case of Nike. These are both emotions that can create connections to a brand given enough time and exposure to the concept.

Of course, there are taglines that are a waste of ink and pixels. Brands that use lines like “Since 1912” should rethink their selling proposition immediately. No one, and I mean no one, makes a buying decision about a product based on how old the company is that provides it. Would you buy a Honda because it's older than Toyota? No. (They're the same age, by the way.)

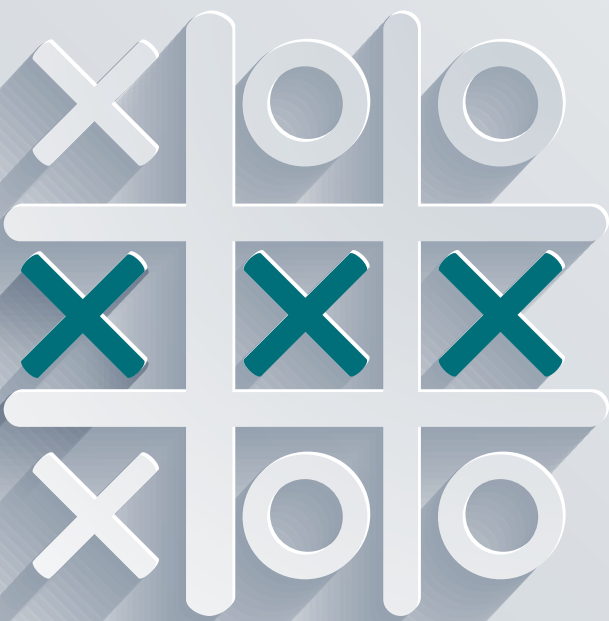
Another common tagline is “The brand you can trust” or “We provide solutions.” Here's the thing: All brands are about trust. That's what a brand is. All companies provide solutions, or they wouldn't be in business. So, please, just don't even bother with taglines that promise the obvious.

So, do you have to have a tagline? No. But most strong brands have had good ones in their history, even if, like Apple, they no longer need one. ■



Dave Taylor is the founder of Taylor Brand Group, a branding agency located in Lancaster, Pa. He focuses on finding consumer insights using traditional and non-traditional research techniques.





# 3 TIPS TO CREATE CAN'T-MISS CONTENT

Over time, content marketing provides better quality leads at a lower price per acquisition than other forms of marketing. There is a lot of confidence within the marketplace that content marketing works to generate leads and build brand awareness. And while nonprofits may be more challenged with budget restrictions, where they have a real opportunity is in sharing their story.

1

## Know Your Audience

Do you know what information they're searching for and how you can provide it to them? Go beyond the typical "buyer persona" and get more personal. Picture an actual person and think about the challenges they face that you can help solve. This helps to create content that people will "pay" for by giving an email address and other information in exchange.

2

## Market to the Mission

Ask yourselves if this content moves you towards your goal, whether it's awareness, lead generation or customer retention. It needs to be both good for your audience and good for your organization, or it's not worth creating. The best type of content is that which answers the larger questions of the prospect's needs or pain points, beyond the scope of your own products and services.

3

## Wait, Watch and Measure

How can you know if your content efforts are working? Go back to your goal, and measure against it. Avoid the temptation to measure marketing impact only. The number of people who read or share your blog post is nice to know, but unless it converts to a business outcome (like an email sign-up, white paper download or purchase), it's not an effective measure.

**Most important?** Have realistic expectations. Be aware that you won't see results right away. Most content marketing efforts typically start to show results around six months in. Don't drop your other lead generating tactics in the meantime.

Allegra businesses are independently owned and operated.

# Together We're STRONG



**You've been tested in ways that you couldn't have imagined. And here you are, ready to get back to it.**

So are we!

Let's talk about all the ways Allegra can help you re-ignite your marketing and print communications with powerful solutions to new business challenges.



We're your local, one-stop resource for:

- Direct mail campaigns
- Graphic design and branding
- Signs, posters and banners
- Promotional products
- Safety graphics
- Print and digital campaigns
- Mailing services
- Web services



**TOGETHER WE'RE STRONG! Contact Allegra to get started.**