



THE FOUR P_s PLUS TWO

Start with the Four Ps of marketing, add two more and now you have a plan for floriculture.

BY STAN POHMER

If we're passionate about our products and truly want to get our consumers to "catch our passion," we need to be passionate about the service we provide them. Everyone at every level in our industry, from breeders to production staff, salespeople to cashiers, all have an equal opportunity to invest their passion into what the consumer buys.

Business classes teach us that all marketing programs must include the Four Ps of Marketing — product, price, promotion and placement or physical distribution...and we've treated this mantra with the reverence of the Ten Commandments. But in today's competitive world, are the Four Ps enough to allow your company to stand out when every one of your competitors has read the same textbooks you did? With all of the marketing messages a consumer hears or sees every day (estimated to be more than 25,000 each day!), are the Four Ps enough to differentiate your message from everyone else's?

APPLYING THE FOUR PS

Don't get me wrong; all of the Four P concepts are absolutely essential, and without them you'll be at a serious competitive disadvantage. While each one of the tenets must be included in a marketing/positioning program, you have the ability to specialize in one or more of them to really stand out, and by specializing in one, you can decrease your dependence on one of the others. For example, if you emphasize product as your focus and really differentiate, you might be able to take some of the pressure off of price; if you emphasize price, you might be able to take some of the

pressure off of promotion. But remember that all four must be an integral part of the program; even if you emphasize one component, you still need to be competitive on all of the others.

Retailers may seem to have the "easier" challenge because they have to apply the Four Ps just to the consumer, while suppliers must develop programs that satisfy two masters...the retailer and the end consumer, assuming you subscribe to the fact that the end consumer is the ultimate customer for both the supplier and the retailer. But the reality is that there should be a symbiotic relationship between all three parties — supplier, retailer and consumer...something that doesn't happen enough in our industry. What's good for one should be good for all; what's important to one should be important to all. Ideally, the demanding consumer or one who has high expectations will frequent a retailer who employs the Four Ps and can satisfy his needs, and the retailer that this consumer shops aligns himself with suppliers who apply the Four Ps to develop and provide programs that allow him to meet his consumers' needs and expectations.

THE MISSING PS

In today's fickle world of marketing, I don't see the standard Four Ps accomplishing their goals

because these are no longer enough to entice consumers to buy our products or frequent our stores. There's something missing that can set us apart from other industries, something we haven't capitalized on...the two missing Ps: passion and pride.

Over the years, I've learned that if you're going to be good at getting customers to believe in you and your products or services, you have to love those products and services yourself. I've learned that in order to excel in marketing, you have to love what you do and have a real passion about it. Customers can sense if you have a heartfelt conviction about your products and services. If you can't be empathetic toward your customers; don't have deep-seated feelings and beliefs about the ability of what you provide to solve their problems; or can't exceed their expectations, then fear and doubt will come through in your marketing and the customer's experience.

Of all the industries I've been involved with over the years, the people in floriculture embody the love and passion they have for the products they deal with and the industry they're involved in. This industry realizes it is blessed to work in one with nature and that our products can truly make a difference in people's lives. We have the opportunity and challenge to share this passion with the con-

sumer. If we could only convey our feelings for the products to our consumers, this alone could set us light years apart from most of the competitive category choices consumers have available to them. The Coca-Cola Company doesn't just produce and sell bottled drinks; it "exists to benefit and refresh everyone it touches." Sounds like a pretty lofty and passionate mission to me. Yet they're selling a product that doesn't even come close to what plants and flowers can do to benefit the consumer; think of the potential we have if we can find a way to convey our passion in addition to the other Four Ps!

ADDING PRIDE AND PASSION

If we're passionate about our products and truly want to get our consumers to "catch our passion," we need to be passionate

about the service we provide them. Passion can be communicated and is contagious (in the best of senses). Everyone at every level in our industry, from breeders to production staff, salespeople to cashiers, all have an equal opportunity to invest their passion into what the consumer buys. It sounds hokey, but believe me when I tell you that there's a real difference between stuff coming off a manufacturing assembly line and something like plants and flowers that are produced with zeal and passion. And the best things about passion: It doesn't cost you one more cent; it's already abundantly available in our industry; it's a renewable resource; and it has the power to truly enhance the perception and value of the original Four Ps and make a difference in how we communicate to the consumer and how they perceive our products!

Pride is the other missing P. In the positive definition, pride is "justifiable self respect" and "elation over an act or possession" and is closely related to passion. But I look at pride as the demonstrable result of applying our passion...the attention to detail, the physical experience we provide to the consumer. It can be evidenced in the cleanliness of the facility, the caliber of people you hire, or the presentation and display of the merchandise. It can be the signage you provide, the ads you run, the services you provide and the guarantees you offer. Pride isn't a thing; it's a singular attitude that can pervade an entire organization; it's part of a company's culture, and it can't be taught. It's the summation of many small things, not one big thing, yet its effect can be sensed almost intuitively and is extremely powerful.

Pride is instilled through posi-

tive motivation and positive experience over time. The best example I know that can demonstrate the positive result of pride on perception is a slogan you've all heard..."The Few. The Proud. The Marines." (Semper Fi!) Pride can make a difference on your company's perception, but it has to come from the inside, not from the outside.

Passion and pride, the two missing Ps. Our industry and your company are in a unique competitive position to take the Four Ps to a new level...one that can set you apart from the competitive choices the consumer has. And it doesn't have to cost you one cent! GPN

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