

Everything You Need to Know About Marketing, You Can Learn from Basketball

by Lisa Fahoury

As an avid basketball player and fan, it occurs to me that the lessons of basketball — or any competitive sport, really — have much to teach us as marketers.

Now that the season's kicked into high gear, here's your excuse to get comfortable on the couch and settle back for a game or two. Consider it bona fide research to sharpen your marketing skills when you keep these common-sense lessons in mind:

Practice, practice, practice. What equates to practice in the business world? Testing. Are you doing all you can to make your next marketing effort a success — testing different offers, headlines or email subject lines, recipient lists, ad sizes...even the color of your art to see what resonates best with your audience? Top players are constantly adjusting their game plan to maximize their team's shot at success.

No competitive athlete steps onto the court without proper conditioning — working hard in the weight room and building the endurance they'll need to go the distance. Your off-court marketing activities are just as vital — staying on top of changing market conditions, researching the activities of competitors, and forming an accurate mental picture of your ideal customer's wants and needs.

Rely on the fundamentals. Sure, you're taking the offensive lead by integrating the latest tools like blogging, SEO, or RSS feeds into your marketing mix. But at the same time, be sure you're guarding your hard-earned marketing share by nailing the basics — great customer service, consistent messaging, attention to detail, and delighting customers every step of the way.

Basketball 101 also means knowing your competition. Are they selling on price? Reliability? Longevity? How does their unique selling proposition compare to yours? Have they introduced a new product, service plan, or positioning tagline that changes the flow of the game? Competitive awareness helps you maintain control and mount a more potent offense or defense.

Be prepared to sweat a little. Whoever said, "Don't sweat the small stuff" clearly wasn't a marketer. We know it's the so-called small stuff that can make or break your campaign, your sales, and ultimately your brand. Small to you (annoying site navigation, an unreturned phone call) can be huge to a customer. Your job is to make sure they're cared for every step of the way.

Take the pulse of your customer relationships often. Remember former NYC Mayor Ed Koch? He was famous for walking around the city, asking his constituents,

"How'm I doin'?" When was the last time you asked your customers for their opinions on your performance...and actually did something with the answers?

Double-teaming always leaves somebody open. Most everyone can name their "main" competitor — Goliath to your David, the company that generally gets the deal when you don't. When you're most often losing to the same opponent, it's human nature to concentrate on countering their specific activities — a bigger presence at the next trade show, or a slam-dunk offer designed to eclipse their latest promotion.

Don't get so caught up in the rivalry that you leave the rest of the court wide open.

(cont'd on p. 3)

in this issue...

Page 2

*A Winning "About Us" Page
Eye on Sports*

Page 3

*Pro Spokespeople: Worth
the \$\$\$?*

Page 4

Off the Bookshelf



trendwatch:
eye on
sports

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY would have to spend at least \$50 million on PR to grab the exposure it gained from going to the Final Four in the 2006 NCAA tournament. That's according to marketing professor C. Scott Bozeman of Gonzaga University, who studied the impact of the Big Dance at his own school.

THE LOWELL SPINNERS, a Massachusetts minor league baseball team, created a "Yankees Elimination Program" for local Little Leaguers this year. The team provided free junior Spinner uniforms to any youth team in the state that did not wish to be called the Yankees. What, there's a stigma?

ACCORDING TO THE Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, bowling topped the list as 2005's #1 sports activity in the U.S. From a growth perspective, lacrosse led the pack with a 77.5% increase in participants from 2004 to 2005, followed by fly fishing (+41.6%), surfing (+37.3%), and ice hockey (+29.4%).

THE CHICAGO WHITE SOX and 7-Eleven have reached an agreement that will make 7-Eleven a major sponsor of the team through the 2009 season, including the usual in-park signage, giveaways and broadcast drop-ins. The most unique aspect of the deal? Each weeknight home game will start promptly at 7:11 p.m.

“ Every strike brings me closer to the next home run. ”

Babe Ruth

Putting on Your Game Face: How to Write a Winning "About Us" Page

On most websites, the About Us page is at best an afterthought — a dry, corporate summary of your organization that gets nowhere near the creative attention of your home page.

But it doesn't have to be that way, says Barbara Zaccone of BZA, a NJ-based marketing communications firm. "Don't include your mission statement or the CEO's biography. There's no need to go into long detail about the history of your company." Shoot for concise, easy to read, and a balance between vanity and modesty, she advises. "Your About Us is also the place to showcase any niche expertise or areas of specialization."

An outstanding About Us page can help your site stand out in a sea of competitors, according to MarketingSherpa, which detailed the experience of e-tailer Evogear in a recent case study.

Founded in 2000, Evogear sells equipment for surfers, skiers and snowboarders. To create a point of differentiation in a crowded category filled with big-budget players like Sports Authority, Dick's, and even Amazon, they decided to capitalize on the "community" nature of outdoor enthusiasts. How? By showing customers that the Evogear team is filled with like-minded adrenaline junkies and sports lovers.

Creative staff profiles on the site now include answers to questions like: What brands have you stoked? What do you do besides work at Evogear.com? How did you get your start with the company? Profiles also include links to personal snapshots of the employees doing what they love — skiing, snowboarding, and surfing.

Highly personal flair and fun content definitely not written by some marcomm drone make this About Us a keeper. Customers clearly agree, as shoppers who view the About Us page convert at a rate 30% higher than those who don't. Gnarly!

Sources: BZA.com, Evogear.com, MarketingSherpa.com

Three Tips for Choosing a Business Coach

by *Renée M. Sussman*

Want to be at the top of your game? Consider hiring a business coach. Like a sports coach, every business coach has a different background and style. Here are some tips to get you started on the selection process:

Know what you're looking for — Before interviewing, consider your objectives and overall game plan. Also think about what kind of person motivates and inspires you, and those with whom you work well. This could help narrow the field.

Know where they're coming from — Once you've got your top picks, ask about their style, flexibility, background, credentials, experience, and references. Where did they train? Do they have an understanding of your industry/what you're trying to achieve? What else qualifies them to be on your team? Talk to someone they've actually coached.

Know whether it's a slam dunk — Meet in person, if possible, and trust your gut. Will they support you, help you broaden your thinking, honor your choices, and stretch you? Does everything else check out? Then they might be just what you need to bring your game to the next level.

Life, business, and workplace coach Renée Sussman helps individuals and companies clarify the change they desire, adapt to it, and transition smoothly. Learn more at reneesussman.com.

Sports Personality Endorsements: Worth the Investment?

The idea of using sports figures to promote companies or market products and services isn't exactly new. If you're launching a new offering, repositioning your brand, or are simply tired of struggling in anonymity, a celebrity spokesperson can be a quick, highly visible means for attracting attention.

But is it worth the risk? Though most athletes lead perfectly respectable lives on and off the field, they're generally not the ones making headlines. Would a Barry Bonds or a Kobe Bryant do more to hurt your brand than help it?

If you're considering a sports figure as spokesperson, here's a checklist of questions to ponder:

❑ *How relevant is the celebrity to your product and the market you're trying to reach?* Tiger Woods and Nike? A natural fit. Michael Jordan and Hanes? A bit of a stretch, but one that's worked for years mainly because of Jordan's pure likability factor.

❑ *How broad is their reach?* If you're shooting for a national presence, don't rely on a sports figure whose popularity is limited to your local market. Former Yankee catcher Rick Cerone maintains a high profile in New Jersey thanks to his community activities and former minor-league baseball involvement, but we'd suspect he's not exactly a household name in the Midwest these days.

❑ *What's their skill set beyond being a sports hero?* The right spokesperson must exude confidence and credibility across all the types of media you might use — in personal appearances, on radio, in print, and on TV. Is he or she articulate and versatile enough to succeed in any medium?

❑ *What are your ROI expectations?* Because your investment will probably be significant, have solid mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of your spokesperson. Are you looking simply to build buzz, or to generate measurable sales?

❑ *How good is your lawyer?* Before you start the search for the ideal spokesperson, have an ironclad contract in hand that spells out what behavior constitutes a deal breaker. Beyond the obvious — illegal activities or a morals clause — build in financial protection against shilling for the competition or blowing off a high-profile event built around their presence.

Hiring a sports celebrity as the "face" of your product or company has its advantages if you choose wisely — immediate recognition and overnight identity. But only you can determine if the benefits outweigh the significant risks.

Everything You Need to Know...*(from page 1)*

Be prepared to defend against other competitors who may be sneaking in along the baseline to steal your glory.

Dramatic three pointers get the crowd revved up, but high-percentage lay-ups put more points on the board. Sure, you want to pump up your target audience with marketing that boosts the 'wow!' factor, positions you as an innovator, and gets

people excited to do business with you. Just be sure to balance riskier approaches with tried-and-true tactics that generate qualified leads.

When mapping out your strategy for next quarter, give supporting players like "drip marketing" postcards or newsletters the playing time they need to lay the foundation for brand recognition and lead generation.

Games are won or lost by the whole team, not a single individual. The final score reflects the collective events of an entire game, not just a missed last-minute free throw or a flubbed in-bounds pass as the clock counts down. The results of every marketing campaign should be viewed in the same macro way.

Avoid assigning quick blame for poor performance to a bad list or an ill-conceived headline. Take a more strategic rather than a tactical view to tweak your efforts and improve results for next time.

Use your teammates — all of them — to best advantage. A great point guard instinctively knows where his teammates are on the court at all times during the game, as well as each individual player's strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to your employees, capitalize on the skills your vendors bring to the floor. For example, a great direct mail printer can often lead you to big postage savings with small tweaks — the size of your mailing piece, cleaning up your list, or using consolidation to improve delivery.

Just as true victory is more than the score of a single game, marketing is much more than the success or failure of a single effort. Analyze where you went wrong, build on what you did well, and you'll be on the way to executing a more effective marketing strategy. As soon as you get off the couch, that is.

Want to keep in touch with your customers with a newsletter like this one?

Call (973) 324-2100 for details!



Where Great Marketing Ideas Grow
is published quarterly by:

FAHOURY INK

201 Gregory Avenue

West Orange, NJ 07052-4529

Phone: (973) 324-2100

Email: compost@fahouryink.com

Subscriptions are free to qualified business professionals. Please send subscription requests or inquiries regarding editorial contributions to the email above. Kindly include your telephone number or email address for verification. All submissions become the property of *Creative Compost*. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity. Download free back issues at fahouryink.com/newsletter.

©2006 Fahoury Ink. All rights reserved.



Creativity on Call™

201 Gregory Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052-4529

How is marketing like
basketball? See inside...



Leading with the Heart

Successful Strategies for Basketball, Business, and Life

Mike Krzyzewski with Donald T. Phillips
©2000, Warner Books

What's the difference between management and leadership? Being a true leader demands an emotional investment in a successful outcome. And nobody embodies this concept better than Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski.

Leading with the Heart takes readers inside Coach K's background, from his undergrad days at West Point to his strong bond with his parents and family. More importantly, it chronicles his insights into leadership — and

his talent for turning others into successful leaders by example. Some court-side bits of wisdom to consider:

Study the nuances. Many coaches will pull a player if he or she gets called for two quick fouls during the first half. Recognizing this habit in an opposing team, Coach K's players will capitalize by aggressively pursuing a second foul on key opponents, forcing them out of the action for a good chunk of the half.

Recognize defining moments. Sometimes even the best-crafted game plan has to be tossed if the stars don't align in your favor. Be prepared to make tough judgment calls when the situation demands it, rather than sticking to a strategy that's clearly not in your team's best interest.

Set frequent "mini-goals." Nothing spurs a team on more than meeting a goal...even a small one. Plan and celebrate regular milestones. Soon enough, you'll be hitting significant achievements with ease.

Change your strategy, not your core beliefs. True leadership means maintaining the courage of your convictions, even in the face of blistering criticism. Knowing what you stand for makes taking the heat that much easier.

Learn something new every day. "Events change, circumstances change, people change," says Krzyzewski. "As a matter of fact, leadership is all about change. Leaders take people to places they've never been before."

It's not all about the game. Krzyzewski quotes his good friend, the late Jim Valvano, in what is probably the book's most important lesson: "A person really doesn't become whole until he becomes a part of something bigger than himself."

Cherish family and friends, lead with your heart, and make it your goal to leave the world just a little bit better than you found it — on the court, in business, and in life.