

Just what is marketing?

Copyright 2007 Wayne Hogue www.bayoustyle.com

Even though I work in the College of Business where it's taught, and it's a huge part of what I teach, and I do a whole lot of it in the real world for my little company, I am still continuously trying to figure out what marketing really is, so I can try to do it better.

We know marketing plays a critical role in the success of every business, but just for the sheer enjoyment of it, here's a textbook definition: "An organizational function and set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders."

Wow! Perfectly clear, right? So now we all know what marketing is... except for maybe those that fell asleep or jumped out the window during that definition (remember, I teach college students)! This clear-as-mud textbook definition doesn't really teach us much, but it does illustrate how hard marketing is to define.

In the real world, it's thought that marketing is simply letting folks know about your business, product, or service. The old saying is if you build a better mouse trap, the world will beat a path to your door. Well, they won't if they don't know about it... which is marketing's job right?

Problem is, today, someone is coming up with a better mouse trap all the time. Besides, what's better to me may not be better to anyone else on earth. Since "better" is in the eyes of the beholder, the whole world isn't going to beat a path to any door. Truth is, only a very select few who happen to need a mousetrap, and of those, only the ones that agree that your mousetrap may indeed be better, will even bother to notice your door, much less visit it.

Advertising is thought of as marketing but it's actually only a very small part of it... albeit a very expensive and inefficient part. Sales, CRM, customer service, and the infamous 4, 5, or 29 P's that the marketing books list (you know, price, promotion, product, etc. etc. etc.) are all the same; just small parts of marketing.

Okay, so what is it then? Actually... it's pretty much everything! Yes, everything that happens in a business has a marketing effect. If it has even the remotest effect on what someone thinks or feels about a business, consciously or not, it's marketing.

The condition of the restrooms impacts your opinion of a business... that's a marketing effect (a big one actually!). Even colors do it. Every color elicits a subconscious feeling or response in humans. It's not even a conscious thing, but it's still a marketing effect. In fact, big companies spend millions figuring out subtle marketing things like that.

Even the group that's possibly the farthest away from customers, accountants, affects marketing. Enron's accountants affected how we felt about that company didn't they? Voila... marketing effect!

So what good does knowing this do us? Well, if we know everything has a marketing effect, all we have to do to is make sure that the effect is the effect we want. Marketing made simple, huh?