

Illawarra Small Business Assistance

HELPFUL HINT – HOW WELL DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMER’S FRUSTRATIONS?

Knowing what they might dislike about your service can be just as powerful as identifying their real needs and desires. If you can articulate their fears and concerns and develop strong solutions that will address them you will go a long way down the path towards gaining their trust and delivering real value.

So how can you achieve this? Really the answer is so simple! You just ask your target market which part of the service they feel can be improved. Give them the chance to provide feedback and the first thing they will do is tell you not just what they like but equally what they don’t like!

Researching and surveying your target market is therefore fundamentally important for many reasons. Some proprietors tell me that because their service provision is “ordinary” or “common” they can’t differentiate themselves from any number of competitors. In the process they miss the point about identifying just what it is the market really wants. It’s similar to not appreciating that dissatisfied customers vote silently on your service by switching to other providers. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by making assumptions that you know what customers want and then blindly trying to make the business profitable. Until you understand the fears, frustrations and risks that customers perceive about your service and the negative perceptions they might harbour you are unlikely to ever achieve outstanding success.

In case studies about these types of marketing strategies, a **plumbing business** inevitably comes to the fore! I experienced a real live example just recently. The proprietor had done very little marketing over the past few years as the business had previously possessed a competitive advantage using a hi-tech capacity. However, the competition eventually caught up and sales were falling. In an attempt to generate stronger enquiry the proprietor decided to make a significant outlay on directory advertising. Sadly, the strategy was poorly conceived and there had been no focus on developing a customer needs analysis in devising the advertisement.

BLOCKED DRAINS	
[logo]	Plumbers – Drainers – Gasfitters
All Problem PLUMBING Lic. 1234567	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sewer camera• Electric eel• Pipe locator• Tap Washers• Water hammer• Hot Water repairs
Phone : 0 4 3 1 6 5 4 2 3 1	

During a quick brainstorming session we played devil's advocate and focused on what customers dislike about plumbers. Here's what we recorded:

- Don't always fix the problem
- Other problems develop after the work is completed
- Taps have to be turned off hard to stop leaks
- When the next storm comes the drains are blocked again
- Workmanship quality doesn't match the blurb
- Don't arrive on time
- Leave mess in the house and don't repair lawns and gardens
- Charge too much

Here's how we redesigned the advertisement focusing on the resolution of the identified frustrations:

<p style="text-align: center;">All Problem PLUMBING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No more leaking taps• Water hammer eliminated• Blocked drains gone forever <p>...and we call in advance, turn up promptly and get the job done right first time. We also clean up our mess – just ask any of our customers. If you're not absolutely satisfied with our service tell us immediately and we'll refund your money in full. Quality & Value Guaranteed</p> <p>Call now to get your FREE Quotation</p> <p>Phone: 0 4 3 1 6 5 4 2 3 1 Lic. 1234567</p>

The reassuring thing about the analysis we subsequently conducted with over 30 people was that not one selected the original advertisement. However, whilst this gave us confirmation of our strategy of highlighting solutions to identified frustrations we also identified several comments that lead us to further refine the wording. Rather surprisingly, a large majority did not recognise the significance of a sewer camera, did not understand what an electric eel was nor what it did and saw no situation in which they would need a pipe locator. On top of this many respondents did not know what "water hammer" was but they did resonate with the problem of "banging pipes". Consequently we changed the text from "Water hammer eliminated" to read "Banging pipes eliminated".

Can you apply this type of approach to the identification of your customer's frustrations when developing your marketing and advertising copy?

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