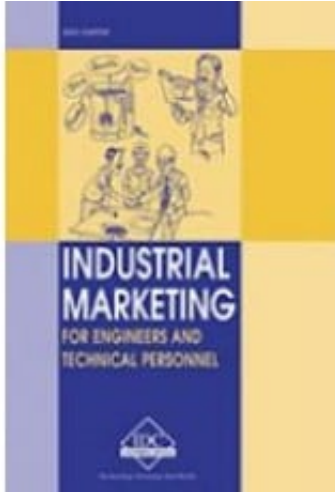


MK-E - Marketing for Engineers



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Short Description

This manual will provide you with the competitive advantage you need to prosper in the 21st Century. It will equip you with the knowledge you need to outsmart, outmarket and outsell your competition.

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First Chapter

Chapter 1: Understanding the Marketing Process

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What you'll Learn:

- What Marketing is
- Why Engineering Marketing is Different
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- Making Engineering Factors work for You

What is marketing?

Right from the start, it's important to understand exactly what marketing is and isn't: first of all, marketing is not just selling. Selling is a very important part of marketing, but it's only a part.

Although we'll get to some more formal definitions of marketing later on, marketing is essentially

“the whole process of persuading the customer that he's better off buying my goods or services, now and in the future”.

Why is engineering marketing different?

One major difference is that technical people end up in marketing because they are technical. They have a very good grasp of why a product or service is potentially valuable to customers. This, in turn, means that their primary qualification is in engineering, not marketing. However marketing can be learnt and, as a result, marketing performance can be improved. While there will be some people who seem to have a natural flair for marketing, anyone can improve on their results with some help from a systematic approach to whatever is being marketed.

In their book 'Secrets of Power Marketing' [1], Peter Bender and George Torok put it this way:

If you have no marketing talent or flair, and no system to work to, you'll achieve minimal results. If you have a flair, but no systematic approach, the results will be erratic. If you have little flair, but a lot of application, you'll achieve consistent and improving results. And, naturally, if you have a flair, and the application, you'll achieve maximum results.

The point is that even if you feel you do not have any talent in this direction, you can certainly improve on what you've got, and be streets ahead of the rest of the competition.

The second difference between what you might call 'Mainstream Marketing' and Engineering Marketing, is that your customers are very likely to be engineering types as well. This makes a huge difference, in that although engineers, etc, are people just like the rest of us, most of the objects which they purchase are engineering-related – it's very seldom that an engineering buyer will make an impulse purchase because he likes the packaging! This means that both of you need specialised knowledge before you even start the process.

Essential factors

So, as we've seen, technical knowledge is an integral part of the marketing process when you're an engineering type who's marketing to other engineering types. So is technical experience – someone straight out of technical college or university, may not understand the problems that customers face, as thoroughly as one who has experienced plant problems first-hand.

Generally speaking, the market is considerably smaller than the mass market for soap, as an example. This means that in most cases, the channel is direct to the end user, rather than a retail outlet as in the case of soap.

' ... rapid change'

Rapid change is another factor, particularly in the higher technologies (for example, anything to do with computers). This means that the marketer needs to

anticipate change, and act on these changes to gain any possible advantage.

Legal issues such as Health and Safety can create opportunities

Very often there will be legal issues, particularly where plant safety is concerned. These can often either destroy a sale, or create an opportunity for the customer to rely on us.

... at least, a phone call is required

Because of the technology involved, engineering marketing tends to be more reliant on salespeople. It's difficult for a customer to place orders based on an advert, unless the product is relatively simple. Even then, at the very least, a telephone conversation is involved.

"... and completion around June 2003"

Particularly where capital equipment is concerned, the buying cycle can be as long as years. Where this is the case, marketing can be frustrating as there is often no measurable result, or at least it seems that way.

Making engineering factors work for you

All of the factors listed above make it seem that marketing by technical people, to other technical people, is difficult, and that none of the traditional marketing tools will work for us. Luckily, that's not the case. Knowing where there are problem areas, and knowing how to cope with these, means that we can gain a substantial advantage over competitors.

One of the most exciting areas of marketing by engineers to other engineers is that, if used correctly, knowledge of the technology can easily create opportunities to move our products onto the customer's premises, and create one more strand in the bond between the customer and ourselves.

Engineering marketing is very often solution-oriented. A customer has a problem, and may rely on us to solve this problem, not just supply a product or service.

The change factor is another area that creates opportunities – customers often battle with the rate of change, and if we can help them in this area, we can create yet another link in the chain that makes us indispensable to them.

This of course places another burden on us – we need to be prepared for the coming changes, in order to smooth the way for our customers.

Exciting stuff, and the way in which we cope with these factors will determine how successful we are. Without detracting from the technical component of what we do, we need to realise that competent marketing is what will distinguish us from the unsuccessful companies. The playing fields of the world are littered with the graveyards of companies that had wonderful technical ideas, but who didn't market them successfully. One only has to look at cars like some of the Citroens, or technical innovations like the Apple Macintosh, and the likes of the Betamax video recording format to realise that technical superiority alone won't guarantee success.