

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, KEEP ON MARKETING

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When you ask Google what's available on the topic "Marketing in tough times", the search engine claims that there are some 3 700 000 results. We know this does not mean there are that many really good articles on the topic. In any case, we will never have the time to read all articles.

But Google is clever enough to select the most-read articles and draw them onto our screens. Thus you can access some rather interesting material on the topic in no time.

My point is that much has been written about marketing in tough times. The concept is widely accepted, if not always practised. Proof of the squeeze on marketing is that newspapers are much thinner than years ago when the worldwide economy was stronger.

The economy of newspapers is simple: less advertising results in fewer pages. Of course internet and social media have also contributed to the decline of newspapers, but it is clear that advertising has not shifted significantly to the internet.

Well, not yet.

At face value, this implies that, generally speaking, businesses have cut down on advertising in the media due to financial pressures. This sweeping statement may or may not apply to each country, city or industry. You will be able to better assess your specific context, wherever you are.

The danger is that we equate advertising with marketing. A decline in advertising does not automatically imply less marketing. You can market without advertising, although I am not propagating this as such. It will all depend on your product and specific situation.

So let us return momentarily to Marketing 101 wisdom: you need the right product, at the right price, available at the right place. That's the first 3 Ps. The fourth P is promotion, which includes advertising, but really refers to marketing in general.

Given the new power of social media, we should think smart and modern. This implies, amongst other things, that promoting your product need not cost an arm and a leg.

You merely have to be sharp. The following tips might be helpful, or at least get you thinking in the right direction. It may just mean the difference between success and failure. You cannot be satisfied with the right product and then not promote it continuously.

My ten tips are:

1. **Be part of a team.** Nguni breeders form part of local, national and even international organizations, "teams" or networks. Marketing cooperation is as necessary as any other cooperation. This journal is a good example. But you can do more at various levels. In so doing you can share ideas and the cost of professional communication advice, which you will need as you need a vet or tax expert.
2. **Work hard at keeping old relationships healthy.** Don't become too comfortable. Remember, it's easier to do maintenance than starting fresh. For an airplane to get to cruising height requires a lot of fuel. The same with developing new relationships.



What can Nguni breeders learn from advertising trends, the daily paper and marketing theory?

Here are a few thoughts from Prof. Johannes Froneman of the North-West University, South Africa, who encourages a renewed focus on marketing.

3. **Identify low-hanging fruit.** There may not be many, but gaps could open in a tough market. Be ready to move.
4. **Use social media, but do not neglect the so-called old media.** People still read magazines. They still listen to the radio. And social media are not free of charge. To utilize it effectively, may require professional inputs (which will cost money), but many “amateurs” are excellent at using social media. (If all else fails, ask your children.)
5. **Work according to a plan.** Yes, it's obvious, but does your organization have a communication or marketing plan? When last was it updated? How does it gel with your organizational strategy and objectives? You don't need expensive, time-consuming strategy sessions. But you have to apply your mind.
6. **You need a marketing budget.** While money is always tight, you need to spend some money on marketing.
7. **Keep on telling you story.** To communicate once in a while is not really adequate. Try and maintain a steady stream of communication. Tell your story to all audiences— and don't forget your internal audience. Information empowers.
8. **Effective communication (which is at the heart of good marketing) requires enthusiasm and legitimacy.** Identify those who are best for the job. You do that in all other dimensions of your business, so do the same when you get to marketing.
9. **Whatever you do, don't do nothing.** Keep on asking how you are promoting the excellent product you are producing at the right price and place. Revisit your strategy and plans. Ask hard questions about the efficiency of old ways.
10. **Always welcome new ideas.** Never be afraid of doing things differently. Encourage innovation and support those that have the guts to actually do something.

By giving relationship building a fair share of your time and money, you can emerge stronger than before the difficult times. It is really worth it. ■

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