



Marketing the right message

The role of proper planning in an effective marketing campaign can make your 'communication' more than just a buzzword.

Doug Mathlin shows you how

At a recent coaching session with a broker, we worked on developing a marketing plan for his business. He hadn't done much marketing in the past and was not achieving the level of business that he was aiming for – despite being a reasonably successful broker. One of the messages that I recalled saying in my previous presentations and training sessions is that clients see home loans and mortgages as 'set and forget' commodities, while brokers try to become their 'lender for life'.

See the disconnect? Borrowers are reminded that they have a home loan with each repayment, loan statement and interest rate rise, but they don't necessarily think of their broker at these times. In fact, another brand name is usually associated with these occasions (the lender's). Therefore, brokers have to work pretty hard to remind their clients that they are still around – and of their value proposition.

Your value proposition is something you need to constantly work on, and ensure is delivered with every client interaction. If you have been a broker for 10 years or more you will have had to change your value proposition over the years. A decade ago most brokers would have said that they could find cheaper rates than the major banks were offering (up to 2% in some cases). A compelling reason for most borrowers to see a broker.

Today, things are different. Brokers can't deliver on this value proposition and are certainly not in control of interest rates, so they need to promote or market something that they can deliver on. That is, their experience, client service excellence, constant contact, value-add services, referral network, and service guarantee. Interestingly, many brokers confess that the majority of client referrals happen within the first few weeks of doing business with them.

This proves that 'set and forget' is true, and also tells me that the brokers' sales presentation and personal interactions with clients are their most effective marketing activity. It also says that future marketing messages should be delivered directly as opposed to in text. Most of the marketing plans that I have seen in broker businesses include a newsletter and sometimes

rewards for referrals. Unfortunately, the newsletters are not very exciting (or relevant to the brokers' business) and are probably discarded by most who receive them without being read.

Implementing a marketing and client communication program is not a task that can simply be outsourced and ticked off the 'to-do' list, if you want it to achieve best-practice results. The problem with this type of marketing is that you rarely hear back from the client. Some brokers manage to get a referral or recommendation from up to 20% of their clients but sadly, the average broker would be lucky to achieve 5%. To work out your ratio, calculate the total number of referring clients and prospects (anyone that has referred you in the past) and divide that number by the total number of clients and prospects in your database and multiply by 100. If you are in the 5% bracket it can only mean one of two things:

- You haven't provided your client with enough value
- Your clients have forgotten about you

Have you noticed that the lenders keep in touch with your clients much more often than you do? They send statements, cross-sell products, telephone your clients, email and advertise on TV, radio, newspapers. The client is unlikely to forget them anyway as they repay their loans regularly!

A smart client marketing plan would look like this:

- Develop a smart suite of marketing materials including an easy-to-follow website, a flyer or brochure that clearly explains what you do and why someone should choose you along with professional stationery.
- Ensure that your sales presentations are first-class. Spend some quality time making sure that you have rehearsed all the key

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messages that you want to deliver to a client when you meet with them. Make sure that you ask some great questions!

- Call your clients at least weekly during the application-to-settlement process to keep them up to date with the progress of their loan (especially new clients). If nothing has happened during the week, call them on Friday to touch base and wish them a good weekend.
- Conduct a post-settlement review (face to face or on the phone). Get some feedback on what they thought of your service. You want to ensure that your client is happy before you embark on marketing to them. This is also a good time to help your client use the products that you arranged for them (credit cards, offset accounts, insurance, etc).
- Send an email, letter, SMS or call your client on a regular basis (monthly or bi-monthly at a minimum). Make sure that the content of your message is relevant to the service that you provide. Keep an eye out for news articles that you can comment on that your clients would be interested in. Shorter messages get read!
- Conduct annual loan reviews with your clients. Try to meet with all your clients at least annually. Face-to-face meetings are much more compelling than written marketing pieces.

This is a really simplistic marketing plan – and when implemented correctly it will ensure that your clients remember and recommend you – for all the right reasons. **MPA**

Bio

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