

REBALANCING MARKETING *through Research*

THOROUGHbred
RESEARCH GROUP

The strategic marketing approach that is being adopted by businesses that are beating their respective industry revenue benchmarks is a tactic called rebalancing. Many companies spend the majority of their budget and human resources targeting end users. The rebalancing approach recognizes that there are three audiences in the decision-making process: decision maker, influencer, and end user.

This rebalancing approach is paying big dividends for companies like VMware, based in Palo Alto, CA. Its sales, for example, have tripled over the past five years, from \$600 million in 2006 to \$2 billion in 2009, and sales are expected to hit \$3 billion in 2011.

Rebalancing budgets, media channels, and messages works. However, success requires research to correctly identify attitudes affecting brand perception, the channels in which to communicate, and the key message drivers.

Challenge

A commercial equipment manufacturer wished to leverage its brand name as a way to penetrate new markets and revitalize older, established markets. The challenge was to correctly evaluate the communication channels and develop relevant messaging for the various audiences that were influential in the decision-making process.

Research Solution

Thoroughbred Research Group first created a brand assessment with the internal marketing and leadership teams within the organization. This process enabled the teams to identify any potential disconnects in mission and scope. The second component of the research project was the development of a research plan to obtain feedback from purchase decision makers and influencers across major industry segments. The research went beyond the traditional measurement of gathering attitudinal factors about the brand and benefits. This study was

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expanded to include non-customers. This enabled the research team to explore any negative attitudes toward the company but also enabled researches to understand competitor messaging that resonated with non-customers.

Outcome

The research yielded significant findings relative to messaging, creative design, communication channels, and trade show sponsorships. Perhaps none were as significant as the discovery of keywords within messaging that connected prospects, influencers, decision makers, and end users with their respective brand choices. The company embarked on the creation of new industry-segmented marketing materials that incorporated the key purchase drivers discovered in the research. The sales team was trained to customize each presentation based upon the finding for each industry. Segmentation and messaging by industry has since resulted in increased sales and revenue.

Conclusion

“Don’t confuse activity for progress” is an adage that is often repeated but in many cases not heeded. Brand managers, marketing directors, and presidents alike have come to the realization that rebalancing their traditional marketing approach is the key not only to survival but to sustainable growth. The objective is not to spend more; it’s to rebalance – to shift the marketing budget to places where the company can have greater returns.

The only way to successfully execute the rebalance is through a comprehensive research initiative that brings together an objective evaluation of attitudinal factors influencing the decision-making process, the segmented messaging, and the right channel to ensure consumption of message.

