

How to Re-Invent and RePosition Your RIM Business

So That Apples To Apples Comparisons with Your Competitors are Difficult or Impossible – Even In A Commodity Market.

By Tom Adams
President
RIMProMarketing

Being a commodity stinks. It really does. The absolute worst thing you can do is to sell your service, one that is readily available from a number of other suppliers in your city, as an “apples to apples” proposition.

In a commodity driven environment, the client controls the game. And it’s a lousy game to play. The reason... it always degenerates into price comparison. And there will always be someone who can do it cheaper than you. Always.

I know, I know... I hear it from people all the time.

“You do not merely want to be considered just the best of the best. You want to be considered the only ones who do what you do.”

“I have no choice. I can only compete on price. That is all my prospects care about.”

It has become apparent to me that fighting this belief with my own consulting prospects and clients is, in most cases, a losing battle. Once you’ve made up your mind about it, and you are selling in a commodity style model, you have no choice but to support your position with every ounce of energy you have.

You’re wrong, but you’re not changing.

Take a brief look at the world around you. In fact, hold up a big mirror in your own life. Stop for a moment and take a look at your car, your house, your watch, your shoes, the food you choose to eat, and so much more... and then expand the view to include all the daily or ongoing purchases you make. You are proof positive that not everyone lives in a commodity buying mentality.

Frequently you make choices on other criteria - criteria that allows you to remove the lowest possible price from your key buying decision. Not that you factor price out completely, but you are willing to purchase a BMW, not for the lowest price, but because it offers you something better than just wheels for pennies. BMW is

about the driving experience and you are willing to pay more for that. So, the feelings, the prestige and the driving exhilaration that accompanies driving that particular car trumps price as the one and only buying decision.

“But, companies aren’t the same. They don’t buy the same as I do,” you protest.

Really? As painful as this might be, pick up the mirror again. Hold it up to your pretty little face and reconsider your argument.

Let’s look at your own business purchases over the last few years.

Was every single one of them based on obtaining the lowest price with no other factors in play? Did you line up every single possible vendor you could get in that product or service category and make your buying decision based on price alone? Did you eliminate anyone who had a value proposition that indeed made price less of a factor?

Be honest.

And if you are, you realize... even your business doesn’t strictly buy on commodity. Behind every buying decision is a person or group of people who understand the difference between buying a Yugo and a BMW. You are one of them and you’ve proven it.

Case in point.

I have just finished a pretty extensive testimonial video project for a large industry vendor. I interviewed a lot of their customers and asked why they chose my client as a vendor instead of all the other options available to them. And as much as the product my client delivers is considered a “commodity,” no one is buying from them based on price alone. It is a factor, but no-one, and I mean no-one in the interviews I conducted said... *“I chose them because they had the best price.”* Not one.

If you have seduced yourself or been seduced into believing that what you do is a commodity and you must play that game... YOU WILL LOSE! The game is stacked against you. By playing a game you are destined to lose, you are devaluing your business, your contribution to your prospects and client’s success and everything else you do within your business to serve them.

Apples To Orange Comparisons

I am an orange to all the apples out there. That is how I want to be compared. I never, ever want you comparing me to anyone else... and when you do, you cannot compare effectively, because I am not the same as anyone else. But the minute I make a move towards a commodity mindset, I become an apple again.

And it's the same way with you and your business. You have to do everything in your power to separate yourself from everyone else. If every one else is selling hard copy in cubes, you sell units. If everyone else is shredding by the console you sell by the weight. If everyone in your market is pricing based on individual service activity, you price based on flat rate. If everyone has brown boxes, sell white.

And that is just the beginning. The goal is to make it almost impossible to do a direct comparison between you and anyone else who might do something even similar to you.

You can look at all aspects of your business and change it in a way that makes you radically different. But to me, the very best way to do that is via positioning.

Positioning is the key to eliminate a commodity mindset and establish your company as a premium service provider.

How?

Become the Niche Vendor

As hesitant as most are to use this simple approach, it has a noticeable ability to help you escape the commodity trap.

Imagine the decision sequence a prospective customer who was in the medical business would be faced with if they were comparing your media storage and management service to another positioned quite differently.

You present your services and how you do things, understand their requirements and tape rotation schedules and you submit your proposal. It has all the important components in it. After all, you are good.

But your competitor sits down with the same prospect and begins to talk to them in the language of a medical office. They position themselves as an exclusive "medical media management services firm." Their sales collateral is all health care oriented. HIPAA issues are part of everything they address, versus a simple line item on your stuff. They know intuitively the language of the medical office. They understand the problems, pain and predicament medical offices face. And they present a proposal supported by testimonials from 10 other medical offices.

If the basic service offering is the same, but theirs is

priced 25% more than yours, who do you think the prospect will be leaning towards as the vendor of choice? Let me be quite clear... it won't be to you. Your competitor is no longer viewed as a commodity. You are.

I hear the argument rising in you again. "*But, but...*".

Looks like I need to get the mirror out again.

Stop and realize that you do this in your buying decisions. Look at the racking system you purchased. Was it more expensive than buying a simple rack system from a local rack supplier? You bet it was. But was it worth it? Talk to any industry veteran or start-up consultant and they will confirm it. Buying from an industry-niched racking vendor will save you so much hassle and headache and will give you long term short-cuts and revenue based on density rich design; it is worth every initial penny of the premium investment you make up front.

Next Step

This week I want you to begin the process of creating a niche specialty within your business. Pick a niche that you already have a strong affinity to or lots of clients in. Then in a small way re-invent yourself as the "niche" vendor. Immerse yourself in the niche. Learn everything you can about it. What are the problems, predicaments and pain they have relating to records and information management? Then reposition yourself to be the only solution. The incomparable one. The orange among apples. The big fish in a very small pond.

You now have one way to re-invent and re-position yourself in order to break out of the apples to apples comparison trap that forces you into commodity based marketing. If that is all you do, you will have accomplished a great deal. Imagine what you could do if you employed a number of approaches that radically separate you from everyone else.

As Gerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead explained his viewpoint on positioning...

"You do not merely want to be considered just the best of the best. You want to be considered the only ones who do what you do."

Make it so in your business. Immediately. You can't afford to stay commoditized any longer.

About The Author: Tom Adams is the world's only marketing guru exclusively serving the RIMservice industry. Tom assists RIMvendors implement innovative, attraction based marketing systems that help grow their businesses like crazy - marketing that works - marketing that comes back with clients attached.

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