

## Orchestrating Marketing



*When Money is Tight and the Economy Slow, YOU need A Maestro with the Right Music Playing a Tune that is Memorable*

Like the music that flows from the orchestra, Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) means all your company's identity, its brand, key product and corporate messages, positioning, visual images and sales are coordinated across all marketing communication (marcom) venues. It means your PR materials say the same thing as your direct mail campaign; your advertising has the same feel as your home page on your web site. Your sales rep's talk matches your message. This consistency builds a strong brand identity by consistently reinforcing all your visual images and messages, and it saves you money. Through IMC, you can leverage the design costs of deploying your web presence, developing an ad or brochure by repeating key images and icons in all your communications pieces. By repeating images and messages - you ensure not only continuity in your communication's campaign, but also your branding.

### **It's an Attitude and it's Customer-centric**



From major companies to small, micro businesses, maintaining this integrated attitude is not easy. It sounds self-evident but, as anyone who has ever tried to shepherd a single ad (much less an entire marcom campaign) through an approval cycle, you find that unless you adopt an integrated customer-centric attitude, you may end up coordinating functional expressions of key messages (your direct mail pieces or even coupons, for example), rather than building a truly integrated campaign.

In the major company, an integrated attitude greases the approval cycle, since product managers and upper management essentially pre-approve the campaign, and it provides a sound foundation for your entire program.

In the small business, that *attitude* must be part of who you are each day *and* the training you provide for each employee.

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## Developing the *attitude* - a simple two-stage process.

**1** As an attitude, integration involves more than the marcom department and the ad agency. IMC begins at the product management level. Whether you are providing tax preparation service, or bringing to market a technology product, this way of thinking starts *at the top*.

**2** It's an internal process where those responsible for product marketing convene with those responsible for sales, marketing and marcom to discern customer dilemmas and the arsenal of resources the customers have to solve these dilemmas.



Out of this meeting should come a positioning statement identifying the target market, the current dilemma, the category of products that meet market needs, what is unique or special about your offering and what is different about your offering from competitive offerings.

By beginning at the fundamental level of understanding the customer's dilemma, you can integrate all the marketing communications elements into a unified, well-orchestrated campaign by developing a relevant umbrella theme that can accommodate all the various marketing communications tactics.

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## An Example of a 4 Step Implementation Process

**First - understand the customer - intimately.** The software engineering division of a Fortune 500 company developing software application development tools took this approach. In creating an integrated marcom campaign, the division began with a product-positioning workshop to define its customers' dilemmas, identify the resources to address those dilemmas and fine-tune the product positioning.



One of the team's executives commented, "We began the IMC process with a workshop aimed at developing a better understanding of our customers' dilemmas. We discovered each group - sales, product marketing, engineering, and customer support - understood a different aspect of our customers' needs. By integrating all perspectives we were able to think constructively about how our product addressed those dilemmas. Out of all this, we developed a creative strategy focused on customer need."

### **Second - express that understanding with a key message.**

This creative strategy centered on the theme that was a simple expression of customer need: customer's felt company's did not really understand what the "minefields" software developers faced - so the key phrase, *we understand* was used as a foundation for all the marketing communication.

The theme emphasized an understanding of the issues, pressures and constraints that software developers and software development managers faced, such as unrealistic deadlines, hidden code errors, simultaneous development of multiple application versions, and transition headaches in moving to object-oriented programming.

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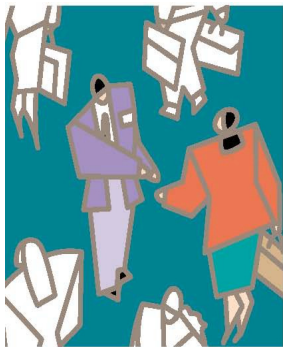
### **Third - integrate that message in *everything*.**

This theme was carried throughout the marcom program. It launched an advertising campaign, was reinforced in three direct mail pieces and a trade show handout, reappeared in its web site, and was then later picked up in another division's Direct Mail campaign promoting a product bundled with the core product. A small business, of course, does not have that same scope of communication tools: but it does generally have business cards, signage, simple handouts, web site and maybe coupons. The same principles apply.

### **Fourth - make it an attitude, not simply words and artwork.**

But true integration goes much farther than coordinating graphical designs and key messages. Entire divisions of companies or a single micro-business can adopt an integrated attitude to implement an effective marketing program.

For our example company, adopting that attitude would mean customers would be greeted at all levels with the idea that the company understood their dilemmas.



When speaking with customers, the employees from customer service reps and sales associates, to product marketing engineers would focus on the same thing: understanding and solving the customer's problem.

The same principles apply with the small businessperson. Integration as a process makes everyone in the company a salesperson - discovering the customer need and offering a value-based solution.

This integration as an attitude allows employees to offer solutions, not answers, to customer needs.

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### A Metaphor to Consider

Companies employing effective communications strategies, like orchestras, speak with one voice. Just as orchestras have particular sections that play music in ways that only they can express, so too do companies strategically use marketing communications.



You don't ask public relations to do the job of direct mail. Nor do you ask your personal sales staff to play the role of advertising.

Each aspect of communications has a role that fits together to make a consonant whole. The score, written by the company, (often in the business plan) is interpreted by the maestro (the person responsible for marketing), who directs the orchestra (the functional communications tools). Consistent communication of key product and corporate messages, combined with visual continuity in art design and direction, are critical factors in generating market awareness and building a strong brand image.

Modern marketers have perceptively noted that too often many companies are more like orchestras warming up. Each section plays its instrument well, but the orchestra as a whole lacks a score and direction, and the resulting sound is often cacophonous. Or worse, it can be annoying for someone trying to soak it all in.

**IMC makes music out of all the customer-centered communications pieces and so stimulates the market (made up of individual customers), which then catches the melody.**

**A melody caught is a melody remembered.**



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## So, what's the ultimate benefit of IMC?

By seeking out input from different sources - YOUR customers to start with and then (in a larger organization) product marketing, sales, engineering, customer service - you can gain a clearer picture of your customers' dilemma and how your product or service solves that dilemma and delivers value your to customers for which your customers are willing to pay.



As a result, your company can offer your **customers solutions, not answers.**

In the end, an integrated attitude integrates input, as well as output (your marcom campaign), to communicate clear, consistent messages, to build a strong presence in the marketplace and, most importantly, to create happy customers.

That should be **music to your ears or the ears of your management.**

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