

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Marketing Lessons from the National Speakers Association

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I just finished attending the 2009 National Speakers Association (NSA) 2009 convention at the JW Marriott Resort in N. Phoenix. The first national convention I attended was in 1980. At that time, the business model was doing keynote presentations for association meetings and select corporations.

Today, NSA members have many business models: keynotes, training, consulting, coaching, webinar hosts, public seminars, and internet marketers. The consensus was that we should no longer think of ourselves principally as speakers. Instead, we are experts in our specific fields that provide solutions in a turbulent economy.

Given the Mortgage Meltdown of 2007, the Wall Street Crash of 2008, and the Economic Crisis of 2009, NSA members are faced with these challenges:

1. Training budgets have been cut, especially by corporate clients.
2. Attendance at trade association meetings is down.
3. The competition for a dwindling pie is ferocious, as corporate layoffs increase those trying to make a living in the speaking world.

The strategies that successfully NSA members are using hold lessons for the business world. NSA members see the problems and solutions used by many industries in the economy. Here are some of the key trends:

1. Decide who you are! You can't please everyone. If a business can really understand their passion and mission, it's much easier to market and produce a product/service that your targeted

customers want.

2. Really specialize and dominate a niche! Instead of marketing oneself as a financial planner, market one as: "I help seniors living in luxury retirement apartments double CD returns without risk of losing money".

3. Meeting planners and the public no longer want to pay for motivation and humor! They need practical solutions that can be used immediately. For all businesses, the customers want meat and not the fluff.

4. Travel is more difficult, as airlines cut flights and raise fees! The solution is to use technology to deliver one's expertise without having to travel. The increase in teleseminars, webinars, video, drop ship on demand, and other delivery mechanisms saves tremendous time and money for those that would formerly travel to meetings or stores.

5. Write articles or ads that have substance! The trend is away from ads with lots of white space and catchy slogans that do not give the reader/viewer real information. The public does not want to be sold. Instead, they want to make informed buying decisions on their own terms and timelines.

6. Controversy can sell! If you are in the retirement planning field, you stand out if you say "How to Insure a Safe Retirement by Avoiding the Crooks on Wall Street" Many will be puzzled, frightened, and perhaps even angry as they've used a Wall Street stockbroker or financial planner for decades. However, by challenging their conventional wisdom, some will call



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you to find out how your plan/model/advice is different.

7. You must market/communicate differently to the 4 generations! Many of the WW2 generation don't use a computer and want face-to-face contact. Baby Boomers buy lots of stuff on the Internet, but still want face-to-face meetings for help with crucial issues such as major medical, legal, and tax decisions. Generation X (kids of Baby Boomers) will research heavily on the Internet, text their friends for advice, and buy it by bidding on EBay. Generation Y heavily use Social Media sites such as posting videos on YouTube, tweeting on Twitter, and even leading fantasy lives on Second Life.

In summary, the public is scared because their assets (real estate and stocks) have crashed and unemployment is high. In this uncertain economy all businesses will have to use innovative methods to market themselves. Can you stand out from a sea of competitors where everyone looks the same?

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