

MARKETING: WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Marketing often seems the most misunderstood of business functions. Many in see it as an elaborate word for advertising and promotion and a task that can easily be left to a junior member of staff.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing's own definition fails to inspire (see box). In a recent round of soul searching it tried to inject it with more inspiration – without obvious success. The American Marketing association has a better stab at it but it is still a mouthful to use in new business pitch.

Fortunately the Quality Movement has come galloping to marketing's rescue. Its philosophy is that if you understand a process it can be captured, if you can capture it you can measure it, and if you can measure it you can improve it. Thus marketing is a process: a series of activities designed to produce certain results. A process takes inputs and turns them into outputs rather like a production line takes inputs of steel, plastic rubber etc. and turns them into cars.

For the Quality Movement marketing is part of a process for producing sales. There are three sub processes involved:

- finding customers
- winning customers
- keeping customers

Few would disagree that these are at the heart of marketing and the quality movement has done marketing a service in clearly spelling out these core responsibilities. In a functional sense, the responsibilities can be seen to be split as follows:

- marketing finds customers
- sales wins customers
- service keeps customers

Over simplistic perhaps – where does new product development, strategy, segmentation, targeting and positioning fit into this framework? – but this is a description which is more readily understandable to the average business owner many of whom may well be reluctant to delegate these functions anyway.

This definition usefully clarifies the role of marketing and clearly differentiates it from that of sell-

ing, advertising and promotion.

It is usually true to say that marketing's role ceases when a lead is handed over to sales (sales would argue that this should be a qualified lead but that is essentially a discussion about where the line is drawn). Many marketers would argue that this is over simplistic but that does deny the attractiveness of a four word definition of the much misunderstood marketing function.

The type of process thinking has its undeniable advantages. It enables you to measure activities and results and analyse them for cause and effect. Note the word measure creeping in here: very Quality and Six Sigma influenced. Each of the sub processes consist of activities, and each activity in turn produces a result which advances the process of finding, winning and keeping customers.

So the next time you are cornered at a networking event and asked the question "what is marketing and what can it do for me?" the answer is now readily to hand:

Marketing is in the business of finding, winning and keeping customers.

Sneak in the word 'profitable' before customer and most marketers would be happy with this definition.

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CIM definition: The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.

CIM proposed changes 2007: Satisfying shareholders and stakeholders from business and the community in order to contribute to positive behavioural change and a sustainable business future'.

American Marketing Association 2007: Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals.