



When It Absolutely, Positively Doesn't Have To ...

FEDEX HAS MADE A NAME FOR ITSELF WITH THE SLOGAN *WHEN IT ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY HAS TO BE THERE OVERNIGHT* BUT NOW THE (LOWLY) US POSTAL SERVICE WANTS TO TURN THAT SLOGAN TO THEIR FAVOR. AND THEY JUST MIGHT DO IT!

You know the US Postal Service. The men and women who bring the (boring) mail to you every day. Although most of us believe that the USPS operates under the slogan “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds,” that’s not the case. The USPS has no official slogan but you can find those words on the James A. Farley Post Office Building in New York City, Zip Code 10001. The building, constructed in 1912 became the James A. Farley Building, as a monument and testament to the political career of the nation’s 53rd Postmaster General.

Every business needs a unique selling proposition (USP) and the USPS has a great USP!

“When it absolutely, positively doesn’t have to be there overnight, the USPS can deliver for a lot less than you’d pay FedEx or UPS.”

Genius! Really.

I recently needed to send a package to Alaska. It contained my judging of entries in the Alaska Professional Communicators annual competition. I needed the package to arrive within several days but not necessarily overnight.

FedEx would have been delighted to deliver the package overnight for \$65.82. The USPS, however, would be equally delighted to deliver the package in 3 to 4 days for less than \$6.

Which do you think I selected? If you think I cheaped out, you’re right. When a package needs to arrive within the next week and my options are \$65 for overnight delivery and \$6 for more than adequate delivery, I’ll take the 90% discount any day of the week.

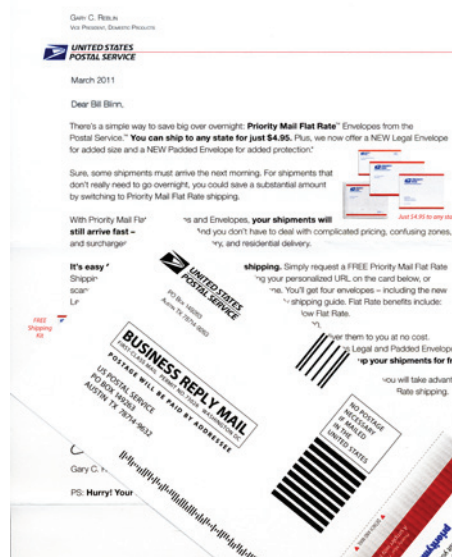
This may not hold true for giant corporations, though. The organizations that spend 2 years to come up with 9-word generic mission statements that any sophomore college business class could write in a day or two will probably still spring for the \$66 option instead of the \$6 option because the person who makes the shipping decision doesn’t care about the cost. That person’s only consideration will be that his (or her) ass is on the line if the package doesn’t arrive in a timely manner.

So the USPS should be making its pitch to smaller organizations where the people who package and ship things are answerable to the people who run the business and who actually care about the cost of doing business. That seems to be exactly who they’re trying to reach.

Good, Fast, Cheap

THE FOLLOWING WORDS ARE ALWAYS “PICK ANY TWO.” THE USPS CAN DELIVER WITH ACCURACY FOR FAR LESS THAN FEDEX BUT NOT AS FAST.

So the agency that came up with the new campaign has genius on its side. Whether it works or not is up to the marketplace. Gigantic corporations ship more packages than small companies but there are more small companies than gigantic



corporations, so there’s a chance that this campaign will work.

It’s a good example of defeating an opponent by using the opponent’s strength.

Jujutsu is Japanese martial art, a method of close combat for defeating an armed and armored opponent with no weapon, or a substandard weapon.

Marketers should employ *jujutsu* whenever possible.

Ju means *gentle, supple, flexible, pliable, or yielding* and *jutsu* translates to *art or technique*.

When you can manipulate an opponent’s force against the opponent rather than confronting it with your own force, victory is more likely.

Jujutsu evolved among the samurai of feudal Japan who found that striking against an armored opponent was ineffective. The most efficient methods for neutralizing an enemy used the attacker’s energy against him instead of directly opposing it.

All this is not to say that I dislike FedEx. I like FedEx because there’s no better choice when I have a package that absolutely, positively must reach the recipient no later than 10 o’clock local time tomorrow.

What I like about the USPS campaign is the clear understanding that most packages don’t need

to be delivered the very next day. The value proposition that the USPS presents is compelling for anyone who has the intelligence to comprehend it.

Us versus Them?

USING A MARTIAL ARTS ANALOGY FOR MARKETING MAY SEEM LIKE IT MAKES PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS THE ENEMY. UNTRUE!

Your prospect's enemies are your enemies, at least in marketing terms. Having a common enemy with your prospects is invaluable, even if that enemy is an abstraction.

This is a polarized world in which people have strong opinions about everything.

Your marketing efforts should allow you to identify with and align with prospects. When you do this, you will alienate others and maybe that's all right. When you become a hero to your followers, you become a heretic to the disbelievers.

Sojutsu is crucial in dealing with prospects, too. The first thing you need to get from your prospects is their trust and trust must be earned.

Communicate a lot and communicate as a real person. I've talked about social media before. You can't just rush up to someone and start selling. LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter play a part here.

Start by introducing yourself and sharing your thoughts, stories from your life, some useful insights. Invite others to share. Get to know each other.

Then you can start to sell. And before you do any of that, you need to figure out what your selling message should be. What you see as your most significant defect might instead be your strongest marketing point.

Back in the 1960s, Pontiac's unique selling proposition was the "wide-track" wheelbase of its cars that provided a smoother ride. But Pontiacs had the same wheelbase as corresponding models of Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, and Cadillac cars. In this case, the selling point wasn't a deficiency but a total fabrication.

The US Post Office isn't the fastest choice but it's reliable. The USPS marketing managers realized that trying to defeat UPS or FedEx on the basis of fast delivery wouldn't fly. Instead, they're competing on the basis of price and *good enough* delivery.

Because sometimes *good enough* is all that's needed. Ω

Driving Traffic to Your Website (Part 3)

MOST WEBSITE OWNERS WANT THEIR SITES TO BE FAVORABLY RANKED BY GOOGLE, YAHOO, AND THE OTHER SEARCH ENGINES. BUT THERE ARE TRAPS THAT CAN HARM YOUR SITE'S VISIBILITY.

Concentrating on Google and Yahoo makes a lot of sense because they are the most-used search engines. Don't forget about the others, though, because they might actually bring you more traffic. But that's a topic for another day; today let's look at things you or your website developer might do that would make your site invisible to Google and Yahoo.

Javascript is the most used scripting tool on websites, particularly for menus and other navigation. As good as Javascript is for this task and as much as you may like what it can do, it's essential to have some non-Javascript navigation.

That's because the search engines don't even see Javascript, which means that they won't see anything more than your website's home page or any pages that are back-linked from some other site that the search engine indexes.

So you could have hundreds of pages of useful information but the search engine would see just the site's main page.

The solution is easy and you don't have to get rid of the Javascript menus that you like so much. Just add some standard HTML menus somewhere on the page. These standard menus can even be at the bottom of the page; the search engines don't care where they are as long as they're present.

Beware the Frame-Up

ALTHOUGH NO LONGER WIDELY USED, FRAMES ARE BAD NEWS FOR SEARCH ENGINES. A "FRAMESET" COMBINES HTML PAGES INSIDE A SINGLE FRAMEWORK AND ALLOWS THE DEVELOPER TO KEEP SOME ELEMENTS (A NAVIGATION MENU, FOR EXAMPLE) ON THE SCREEN WHILE OTHER PARTS OF THE SITE SCROLL.

One of the HTML pages inside the frameset may be referenced by a search engine and a visitor who follows the link will arrive at a page that has

no navigation options and may not have anything that identifies your site.

Dynamic content is another technology that's likely to cause search engines to ignore a site. "Dynamic" refers not to a flamboyant presentation but to the ability to assemble pages "on the fly" based on an action by the user.

This ability is perfectly suited to catalog and other online commerce sites, but the pages exist only when a site visitor performs a search that generates the page, and then only on the visitor's computer. Because of this, the search engines don't see dynamic pages and cannot index the content of your catalog. Obviously this is a bad thing but dynamic pages are so much more usable to humans than are static pages. Seems like a no-win situation, doesn't it?

The solution is easy enough. The site developer simply needs to create a process that essentially dumps the entire contents of the catalog database into a series of static pages and make sure that the search engines see the static pages.

This may seem like a lot of extra work and initially it is. Once the process is in place, though, it can be automated so that the static pages are renewed every month, week, day, or hour. The frequency of the updates would be determined by how quickly the contents of the catalog change.

This process is a good example of designing a site that works well for humans and works well for search engines, too! Ω



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