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To Push Or To Pull? That Is The Marketer's Question

DATE: April 04, 2011

Zurich North America, one of the world's largest commercial insurance groups, is also combining push and pull tactics in creative ways, according to Jonathan Levine, division marketing director.

"It's our responsibility to adapt to today's marketing realities. There is so much clutter in the marketplace that we need to be smart. Pull and push need to work together in order to be successful," he told CMO.com.

That means creating an environment where push and pull the techniques complement each other, and where push leads to pull.

"It's about pushing a message to create awareness, and then knowing your customers well enough to be where they want to pull information," Levine explained. "If we solicit a prospect via direct mail for worker's compensation insurance, they will oftentimes go online and search for worker's comp since we have made it front of mind. It's our responsibility to be there, via a banner ad or pay-per-click, so they will visit us."

While push can easily lead to pull, the opposite is also true: If a prospect is identified through pull marketing, he can be nurtured using push marketing.

"If we do a pay-per-click campaign [pull] and somebody clicks on our ad because I offer them a whitepaper, we will require them to give me some basic information," Levine said. "We have a system that will assign a unique identification number from that lead that allows us to track and nurture them over time. We know they have a June renewal for insurance, and we can design a push campaign specifically for them to try to convert their business."

While some marketing tactics are clearly push, like email, while others, like banner ads, are clearly pull, social media incorporates elements of both.

For example, posting a message on Facebook promoting a product or service is a push tactic, but publishing a blog or posting something on Twitter is a pull tactic because people follow blogs and Twitter feeds that interest them. But Twitter can also be used to push discounts or specials, which is push marketing. Both tactics can actually be used in one package; for example, Facebook can be used to encourage customers to "like" a product, which may, in turn, cause others to research and then buy the product. That's push and pull, in one neat package.

To determine the best mix of push and pull, and when to use each, Lima advised turning to Web analytics, combining a platform for interactive marketing management and another for marketing analytics.

"When you put two platforms like that together, it helps marketers push on all four platforms: video, mobile, social and email, and measure effectiveness across the entire loop," Lima explained. "For example, if someone 'likes' you on Facebook and offers their information to you via email, you can combine those two touchpoints and start an email campaign or Facebook. Speaking to users at the right time, using the right message, and in the right places normally results in improved brand loyalty and improved marketing results."

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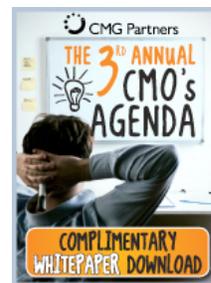
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