



Reaching Senior Decision Makers

Recession, Depression, call it what you will, but to me this is a time of opportunity for marketing professionals, both client and agency-side, to really show their worth. A time to 'Out-Think' rather than 'Out-Spend' and may be this little insight will help.

I've experienced a major shift of purchase responsibility/accountability across all sectors over recent months; what was once the domain of middle management now requires senior management involvement and they're now fixating over the pennies, as well as the pounds!

Senior decision makers (SDMs) are a fickle bunch; notoriously difficult to reach, very time poor and dismissive of anyone they see as a time-waster. Many have a Gatekeeper who will go to extraordinary lengths to keep you at arm's length, and they'll cleanse all unsolicited correspondence. So knowing this, why, why, why do we continue to send a brochure/mailer and personalised letter and naively think we've done enough to engage with this group?

You just know that clients who insist upon this approach, and there are a lot of them, presume a follow-up sales call response that goes something like, 'Yes, thanks for sending that brochure, what a gripping read...couldn't put it down until I'd read from cover to cover... tell you what, send me a PDF of it and I'll pass it around my network of business colleagues, who I don't really know, on Linked-In'.

WAKE-UP! Most senior decision makers are charged out by their company at between £200 - £300 per hour, more in some cases. Let's say for a moment that you've agreed to take the unprecedented step of paying for their time, a lavish 5 minutes. That could cost £25 per contact or more, so a cost per acquisition of £1 or less, like the one I received in a brief the other day, just isn't realistic! By the way, I can't think of a better motivator to ensure you're working with quality data than knowing that each wasted contact will cost you £25+.



QUESTION? As nature's high achievers, many of whom crave recognition from both inside and outside their organisation, do you think SDMs know their worth?

Of course they do, and woe betide the person/company who doesn't respect that.

What you need to do is 'Out-Think' and here's an approach that might help, the 4Ms*:

- 1. Motivation** – Get inside their head and see the world through their eyes. SDMs are judged on how well they solve problems which allows them to command big salaries. Understand what makes them tick, and recognise that what motivates one is often different to what drives others.
- 2. Message** – I'm a great believer that business products/services are bought, not sold in the UK and most International markets – the obvious exceptions being Germany and the USA. Ensure your creative message addresses their buying needs rather than your sales fantasies. Depending upon the number of SDMs in any one organisation, don't overlook a multi-message approach – one message seldom fits all!
Get the Motivation & Message wrong and you're going to burn!
- 3. Media** – No See, No Hear = No Impact! Try to identify the SDMs media channel of choice to receive promotional messages and avoid the easy choice of using unsolicited emails unless proven they work. In my experience email is their chosen operational-business channel of choice and unsolicited advances are normally greeted with venom. To get an idea of the feeling you'll generate when they realise your sales email has tricked its way through all their traps, try this: if you're with an SDM and they're using their Blackberry, ask, if you dare, whether you can borrow it to send a message. I will confidently predict that in two word response that just rushed into their head, the second word is 'OFF!'.
- 4. Maximisation** – Nothing should be done without having a measurement of success and a demonstration of ROI...and for the record, this is driven by the quality of response received, not the number of packs/messages you've got out the door! We know SDMs are online animals and will probably respond online. But be certain of the value that other offline channels such as dimensional DM, PR and advertising play in reaching and motivating your audience before making decisions about rationalising your program.

In a nutshell, just reaching this group is a challenge in itself and it requires a different state of mind than programs aimed at middle management. Try thinking of this group as if they were that annoyingly hard to please Junior School Teacher we've probably all experienced, who insisted on judging our work by awarding a mark for 'Effort' as well as 'Attainment'. Cheats are always found out, but if you can genuinely impress them by getting straight 'A's then there's a good chance you'll graduate to that all important first sales meeting.



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About the Author

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Communications Approach: Business Products are Bought, not Sold!

About Clockwork IMC

A lean and very experienced B2B integrated marcomms team based in West London. Best suited to SME and Corporate clients who recognise the importance of 'brand management' and the effect that impactful strategic/creative ideas can have on 'business development'. Acting as an extension to their marketing team, we are:

- Thinkers - Campaign Strategy/Creative Concepts
- Planners - Integrated Media Mix/Media Selection & Buying/Print Management
- Doers - Advertising (Digital/Press), Copywriting, Design, Direct Marketing, Exhibitions, Promotions, SEO/SEM, Support PR, Web.

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