

18 Marketing Insights from A to Z

worst thing is to be a company that dislikes change. Such a company will attract people who dislike change, and the end is inevitable.

As Reinhold Niebuhr stated: “God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.”



Among the most important skills in marketing are communication and promotion. *Communication* is the broader term, and it happens whether planned or not. A salesperson’s attire communicates, the catalog price communicates, and the company’s offices communicate; all create impressions on the receiving party. This explains the growing interest in *integrated marketing communications (IMC)*. Companies need to orchestrate a consistent set of impressions from its personnel, facilities, and actions that deliver the company’s brand meaning and promise to its various audiences.

Promotion is that part of communication that consists of company messages designed to stimulate awareness of, interest in, and purchase of its various products and services. Companies use adver-

tising, sales promotion, salespeople, and public relations to disseminate messages designed to attract attention and interest.

Promotion cannot be effective unless it catches people's attention. But today we are deluged with print, broadcast, and electronic information. We confront 2 billion Web pages, 18,000 magazines, and 60,000 new books each year. In response, we have developed routines to protect ourselves from information overload. We toss most catalogs and direct mail unopened into the wastebasket; delete unwanted and unread e-mail messages; and refuse to listen to telephone solicitations.

Thomas Davenport and John Beck point out in *The Attention Economy* that the glut of information is leading to attention deficit disorder (ADD), the difficulty of getting anyone's attention.¹¹ The attention deficit is so pronounced that companies have to spend more money marketing than making the product. This is certainly the case with new perfume brands and many new films. Consider that the makers of *The Blair Witch Project* spent \$350,000 making the film and \$11 million to market it.

As a result, marketers need to study how people in their target market allocate their attention time. Marketers want to know the best way to get a larger share of consumers' attention. Marketers apply attention-getting approaches such as high-profile movie stars and athletes; respected intermediaries close to the target audience; shocking stories, statements, or questions; free offers; and countless others.

Even then, there is a question of effectiveness. It is one thing to create awareness, another to draw sustained attention, and still another to trigger action. Attention is to get someone to spend time focusing on something. But whether this leads to buying action is another question.