Modern Marketing of the Timeless Message of Jesus

What is Marketing, and Why is it Necessary?

I never met anyone who got into farming because they enjoyed trying to predict consumer buying preferences or because they got great personal satisfaction from tracking the grain futures market. Most business entrepreneurs aren’t thrilled about spending time researching their competitors’ advantages. Farmers want to farm. Entrepreneurs want to develop businesses around new products or services. Neither prefers to spend a substantial portion of their time or financial resources developing their marketing program, much less implementing it themselves. Not that they’re not capable of doing so - they often don’t find the work enjoyable and they’re just not sure how to go about it. Yet, until a farm or enterprise makes its first profitable sale, it’s a business in name only.

Most pastors want to preach, teach, and attend to the needs of their congregation (weddings, funerals, etc.). We are not interested in spending much time developing marketing programs for our churches. If our highest priority is the leading of souls to salvation through Jesus, then unless souls are being saved our priorities are misplaced and we are a “church” in name only. “For the son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost” –Luke 19:10.

Marketing can be defined simply as a transaction for profit - a sale. While you must make sales for your business to generate profits, making a sale is only part of marketing. A sale is a one time event. This is transactional marketing. The transactional marketing approach seeks to make the largest number of sales possible. Transactional marketers increase profits by increasing sales and lowering costs. While this works as a marketing strategy, it leaves very little room for expanding profits when markets are saturated or costs can’t be lowered any further. An example of this is when dairymen can’t lower their cost of production any further but the market is flooded with excess milk production. Prices paid to dairy farmers drop dramatically.

Transactional marketing in the House of God puts an emphasis on people in the pew with their names on the membership roll. There is nothing wrong with this but it is shallow if it does not lead to a deep abiding relationship with Jesus as a Disciple.

A definition for who is a disciple is Jesus’ self-referential example from the Gospel of John 13:34-35: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” A further definition by Jesus can be found in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 14. Beginning with a testing trap laid out by his adversaries regarding observance of the Jewish Sabbath, Jesus uses the opportunity to lay out the problems with the religiosity of his adversaries against his
own teaching by giving a litany of shocking comparisons between various, apparent socio-political and socio-economic realities versus the meaning of being his disciple. Examples which are expressed definitions of a disciple are:

- Luke 14:26  Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.
- Luke 14:27  Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.
- Luke 14:33  So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

A second marketing approach is relationship marketing. This marketing approach seeks to cultivate loyal, repeat customers. Jay Conrad Levinson, author of “Guerrilla Marketing” and proclaimed business marketing expert states, “Marketing is EVERYTHING you do to promote your business, from the moment you conceive it to the point at which customers buy your product or service and begin to patronize your business on a regular basis. The key words to remember here are everything and regular basis.”

Don’t underestimate the value of the personal touch (the personal invitation and word-of-mouth witness):

Matthew 28:18-20
Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Relationship marketing is appealing because you have more control over your sales initiative - a way to frame sales as part of a bigger picture. It implies that EVERYTHING you do and say from the time you finalize your idea to the time you have repeat customers is marketing. These would include:

- Name and Image of your business
- Location
- What you are selling
- Packaging...Colors, size shapes of your products
- Advertising and Public Relations
- Marketing Strategies
- Sales Presentations
- How you handle telephone calls
- How you present yourself
- Problem solving
• Growth plan and the follow-up

Defining a Market

What is a market or a market share? Simply stated, a market is a group of people who are willing and able to become and to remain your customers. Identifying your customer base is one of the first elements of the marketing process. Figuring out which people have the strongest likelihood of becoming and remaining your customer by identifying common characteristics within the group will help you better define your product. It will also make a difference on how and what you use to reach that market.

Think of your potential market in terms of Decision Making Units. DMU’s describe your potential as all the users and all the non-users that can potentially become users. Take a potential market and further analyze it for subgroups called market segments. These segments can be grouped by one or any combination of the following factors:

• Geographics
• Demographics
• Lifestyle
• Brand Loyalty
• Usage Patterns
• Product Benefits

Once you have determined the segments of a potential market, you need to choose a targeting strategy:

Undifferentiated - treat the segments as not being significant and develop one singularly focused marketing strategy. This one-size-fits-all approach does not usually work in 2011. The cookie cutter approach does not allow us to reach out with diverse strategies for diverse populations.

1 Corinthians 9:19-22

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win the Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

Concentrated - Choose a single segment or niche and develop a singularly focused marketing strategy for that segment.

Differentiated - Addresses the whole market with each segment being recognized as significant and develops many marketing strategies.
Our market is the whole world (every neighborhood, every class of people, and every background. “Go ye to ALL nations”.

Isaiah 53:6
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
   each of us has turned to his own way;
And the LORD had laid on him
   the iniquity of us all.

Market Research

The process of identifying your potential customer Decision Marketing Units (DMUs), determining your market segments, and then developing a targeted strategy is called **market research**. This research involves gathering additional information about customers, competition, and overall market potential. Before you invest any money in your project, you need to determine:

1. The projected volume of sales of your goods or services and the price you might realistically expect to charge for them. You will need this information to analyze profitability and cash flow potential.
2. Who are your potential customers? What are their ages, income levels, and when and where do they shop? Why would they buy your product rather than your competitors’ product?
3. How many competitors are there for this market? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
4. What is the total market size for products like yours and what share of that market might you expect to capture?
5. What are the trends for consumption, competition and pricing in your market?

Answers to these questions will help you better understand what your potential customers, your “target” audience wants. This information about them is called **demographic information**.

Having answers to these questions will help you determine your **market niche** and facilitate writing your **business plan**. Remember that the purpose of your business is to sell products at a profit, not to make products and hope they might sell. Conducting market research is part science, part research and part intuition. While large companies contract with consultants to conduct extensive market research before developing a new product, small businesses with limited capital need to keep the process simple and objective - beyond your family and friends.

Marketing Mix- the 4Ps & the 4Cs

You’ve done your market research. You’ve learned about the history and life-cycle of products like yours and the trends and key drivers that determine where your products or services “fit in the industry” Now it’s time to distill your research findings
into a concentrated effort to generate a product that reflects your business goals and objectives while providing solutions (price, packaging, convenience) for the customer. Under the old marketing model, we sold what we made or produced. Under the new model, we must sell what the customer wants. The old Marketing Mix looked at the 4Ps of marketing - product, price, place and promotion. Whether you are thinking of setting up, starting or expanding your business, or selling any product or service, these four elements should be top-of-mind all the time:

1. THE PRODUCT: Exactly what product or service are you going to sell to this market? Define it in terms of what it does for your customer. How does it help your customer to achieve, avoid or preserve something? You must be clear about the benefit you offer and how the customer’s life or work will be improved if he or she buys what you sell.

What is our product? We point everyone to Jesus!

Jesus was sent, not to do His own will, but the will of His Sender (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). This is what our Lord hungered for more than anything else: not to do what He wanted, but to do what the Father wanted; not what He desired, but only what the Father desired. Even so, we ought to be able to say, “My food is to do the will of Christ my Sender – to do only what Christ wants and desires. Not my will, but Christ’s will be done.”

Jesus was sent, not to please Himself, but to please His Sender (8:29). Even so, may we able to say, “For I do always those things that please Christ” (2 Cor. 5:9-11; Eph. 5:10; 1 Cor. 7:32; Phil 3:7-8). Paul’s only concern was to please Christ (Gal. 1:10). His only fear was the fear of not pleasing the Lord. May we never forget that our primary mission is to please the God who sent us and to one day hear His “WELL DONE!”

Jesus was not sent to seek His own glory, but to seek the glory of His Sender (John 7:18). He did not want recognition, praise or attention to come to Himself. He wanted the Father to receive the attention. He was God the Father’s witness-pointing clearly and consistently to the One who had sent Him. Even so, we should not want recognition and praise to be heaped upon ourselves. We want our lives to draw attention, not to the ugliness of self, but to the beauty of our Lord Jesus who has sent us. We are His witnesses! May our lives point only to Him (Acts 1:8; Isaiah 43:10; John 3:30).

Jesus was sent into the world to represent His invisible Sender (John 5:37). Men could not see the Father, but they could see Christ. Christ represented the invisible God. Even so, we have been sent into the world to represent the invisible Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). The world cannot see the head (John 16:10—“ye see me no more”) but they can see the Body, which is His church (1 Timothy 3:15-16).

Jesus was sent into the world so that people, in seeing Him, would see His Sender (John 12:44-45). “As you see Me, you are really seeing the Father who sent Me”. Even so, as men and women look at our lives they should see our Sender, even our
Lord Jesus (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; 5:22-23 1 Cor. 13:4-7). *May His beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win, and may they forget the channel, seeing only Him!* May we reflect the image and likeness of the One who has sent us into the world.

Jesus was *sent* into the world by His living Father and He lived by His Sender (6:57). *Even so*, the living Christ has sent us and we live by Him. Christ is our life (Col. 3:34; Phil 1:21). Our life is centered in Him (Gal. 2:20) even as His life was centered in the Father. Remember, our primary function as a witness is to make known and manifest the life of Christ (2 Cor. 4:10-11).

Jesus was *sent* into the world, not with His own words and doctrine, but with the words and doctrine of His Sender (John 3:34; 7:16; 12:49-50). The Lord Jesus was unoriginal in His teaching and in His doctrine. Everything He taught came from the Father! A preacher’s task is not to be original but to simply announce the message of the king. We are to be HERALDS of the King of Kings bearing His message (Mark 16:15; 2 Cor. 5:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:1-2). The message comes from God. God said it, we just deliver it.

Jesus could do nothing apart from His *Sender* (John 5:30). He was totally dependent upon His Heavenly Father. *Even so*, we are totally dependent upon our Sender and apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). The One who sent us is the One who must enable us every step of the way!

Jesus was not alone, His *Sender* was with Him (John 8:16,29). *Even so*, we have the promise of the One who has sent us: “Lo I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). The One who sent us is also with us.

Jesus was busy in doing the work of His *Sender* (John 4:34; 9:4) and when His work was done, He went home to be with His Sender (John 7:33; 16:5). *Even so*, we are to be always abounding in the work of our Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 15:58), and when our work is finished we will go home to be with our Sender (John 14:3; 17:24; Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). To *depart* and be with Christ is far better (Phil. 1:21,23; 2 Cor. 5:8).

2. THE PRICE: Exactly how much are you going to charge for your product or service, and on what basis? How are you going to price it to sell at retail? How are you going to price it at wholesale? How are you going to charge for volume discounts? Is your price correct based on your costs and the prices of your competitors? There is a cost AND A PRICE of Discipleship.

Luke 9:23
Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

3. THE PLACE: Where are you going to sell this product at this price? Are you going to sell directly from your own company or through wholesalers, retailers, direct mail, catalogs or the Internet?
4. THE PROMOTION:

1 John 5:12-13
Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

Promotion includes every aspect of advertising, brochures, packaging, salespeople and sales methodology. How are you going to promote, advertise and sell this product at this price at this location? What will be the process from the first contact with a prospect through to the completed sale? Everyone who has studied marketing in the last 50 years has been introduced to the 4Ps. The 4Ps of marketing serve as a neat and memorable classification system of the various elements of marketing. Creative marketing with the 4Ps dictates constantly questioning existing situations and looking for ways to enhance your marketing mix - deleting existing products or services, selling them at a different price, offering them in different places or promoting them differently. However, it does not require abandoning your core marketing concepts. In recent years, there have been attempts to develop a package (mix) that will not only satisfy the needs of the customer, but simultaneously maximize the performance of the organization. This model suggests the expansion of the marketing mix to 5Ps to include People or Personnel.

Flexibility in ministry is key. If we get totally locked into ineffective traditions, we will not reach our objectives.

Many marketing specialists are now seeing the 4Ps as too product-oriented and have adopted the 4Cs marketing mix. This model looks at the marketing from the customer’s point of view.
1. Place becomes Convenience
2. Price becomes Cost to the user
3. Promotion becomes Communication
4. Product becomes Customer needs and wants
These C’s reflect a more client-oriented marketing philosophy. They provide useful reminders - for example that you need to bear in mind the convenience of the client when deciding where to offer a service. To apply the 4Cs approach to marketing you must consider the impact of the “uncontrollable” elements on your marketing mix. The 4Cs explicitly require you to think like a customer.

What’s in a Marketing Plan?
A marketing plan is a written document that describes your business, your customers, your competition, your marketing strategies and a budget for those activities. By acquiring a good understanding of future trends and having a better knowledge (than your competitor) about customer wants and needs, you can develop a new and better way to approach the market. Traditionally, this is called “analyzing the market”. Large companies pay lots of money for market analysis - who’s buying what.
This knowledge is vital to developing your marketing plan and critical in determining your marketing strategies.

The nonchurched are interested in what happens in churches, especially if they have reason to believe that a church might enhance their quality of life. The message has its greatest thrust when delivered by someone they know and trust, when the statements about the church are believable and when the promises are reasonable. The nonchurched are interested in discovering four things about a church they are considering attending. The following are the things they want to know:

**Doctrine and Beliefs**
To the typical nonchurched person, this does not mean an intensive exposition of the theological positions of the church. Matters such as predestination, millennialism, soteriology, eschatology and other unpronounceable teachings of the church are the last things they want to hear about. Focusing on such matters is more likely to repulse rather than to attract the nonchurched. Simply, they want to know if it is a Christian church, a cult or a non-Christian religion. Remember what they are striving to do-to lead a more pleasing, fulfilling and successful life. In essence, they are seeking an understanding of the religious core of the church—little more, nothing less.

**Denominational Affiliation**
This can cut both ways. Some seekers want to know about denominational affiliation because they were reared in particular kinds of churches and are most likely to return to those churches. Others, however, were reared within particular denominations and are open to attending churches of any denominations other than the ones with which they were previously associated. Most nonchurched adults have opinions about each of the major denominations. Discovering the denominational affiliation of a given church may work for or against the church. As the nonchurched adult does his or her homework about a church before deciding whether to attend it, the denominational association of the congregation is treated as a clue to what the nonchurched might expect to experience at the church.

**Location and Schedule**
If the nonchurched were to return to church, they do not want to stick out like sore thumbs upon their visits. They want to blend in and experience the church as it truly is. Consequently, they are interested in the exact locations and times of services so they neither become frustrated by getting lost on the journeys to the churches, nor make spectacles of themselves by entering after the proceedings have begun.

Conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of your church. A SWOT analysis is a fairly simple, low cost way of assessing your church’s position. It presents information that is vital in developing business and marketing plans, as well as setting organizational goals and objectives.

Every person is an evangelistic agent.
Matthew 9:37-38
Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Evangelism is a lifestyle, not a program. Most churches have organized an evangelism committee or perhaps an evangelism ministry or team. These are the people who are passionate about reaching the unreached, and they operate as a unit responsible for engaging in evangelistic activity.

In the leading evangelistic churches, however, evangelism is not an isolated activity separated from other ministry or personal growth endeavors. It is expected that every ministry, event, program, department and service will fully integrate evangelism into its efforts. The foundational perspective is that ministry must be viewed holistically.

Consequently, evangelism cannot be separated from any of the other critical functions of ministry and of the family of faith. Every Christian is called to be a minister. Every Christian is called to incorporate an evangelistic aspect to his or her ministry efforts, regardless of individual gifts and abilities or the primary focus of personal ministry efforts.

Jesus is driven by the Spirit to give himself totally for his brothers and sisters, to be the living Gospel for the poor, and the liberator of the oppressed. By baptism in the Holy Spirit his call to discipleship becomes truth in liberation. Those who are in Jesus Christ, believe in him, and are baptized by the Spirit, are known by their harvest of the Spirit. Those who are baptized by the Spirit and “belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their selfishness with its passions and desire. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course (Gal 5:22-25).

John 20:21
Just as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

John 17:18
Just as You sent Me into the world, even so I sent them into the world.