Creating Buyer Personas Can Help Small Businesses In Their Marketing Efforts

At a recent SCORE mentor debriefing with some of my colleagues, we focused on the topic of “strategies small businesses can use to increase the effectiveness of their marketing efforts”. The idea of constructing a “buyer persona” was introduced.

Compiling demographic information about your buyers will only take you so far in understanding how to reach and what to say to your target customers. By creating a “buyer persona” (a profile of a customer to represent a particular group of buyers) for each group of customers to whom you wish to sell your products and services, you’ll gain greater insight.

Buyer personas help you drill down to the specifics of what motivates individual customers to buy and identify what communications channels will give you an opportunity to connect with more of your prospects and customers.

We fleshed out the value of this exercise and according to the SCORE mentors gathered, we discovered that some of the most powerful benefits of creating buyer personas include:

- Improving your marketing focus because personas bring to light the customers’ worth of your time and marketing dollars.
- Giving you insight to help you more effectively craft your marketing messaging.
- Helping you determine the best marketing channels and advertising venues to reach your ideal customers.
- Enabling you to give your buyers a more personalized experience through the sales process.
- Saving money and improving sales because you’re not developing products and services to try to appeal to too broad an audience. You have the insight you need to focus your development efforts on satisfying the needs of your ideal customers.

So the practical question is how do you create buyer personas for your small business? Here are a few steps to guide you on your way:

1. Consider what you know right now about your current customer base.
   a. What characteristics do they have in common?
   b. What are their demographics (age, gender, income, marital status, educational level, etc.)?
   c. What do they do for a living?
2. Talk with your present and past customers.
   a. What challenges do they face?
   b. What goals and aspirations do they have?
   c. How did they find you?
   d. What made them want to use your products or services?
   e. What do they like about you?
   f. Why have they stayed with you rather than moving to the competition?
   g. Why did they leave you and go to the competition?

3. Write your personas. Present them as fictitious individuals who represent the typical traits and motivations belonging to your specific ideal customer groups. Incorporate the information you know about them and create short stories about who they are, the challenges they face, their buying habits and what motivates their buying decisions. You can find many examples and templates online for structuring your buyer personas.

Various factors (including your industry, type of business and others) will affect the number of buyer personas you should have. For additional guidance and input as you begin developing your customer profiles, consider talking with a SCORE mentor. SCORE volunteers have expertise in all aspects of starting and managing a small business, and they are here to offer free insight to help you through all stages of your company’s growth.

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