

How to segment your market for more effective communication

For most businesses there is more than just one typical customer, and many ways to reach each of them.

All marketing is a substitute for face to face conversation, and it follows that the more you can tailor your advertising messages to the specific needs and concerns of each reader, the more effective it will be. Segmentation is a way to work toward that ideal economically, by looking at your universe of customers and breaking it down into smaller groups, or segments, and delivering messages that appeal to the motivating concerns of each group.

1 Will segmentation help?

Begin by considering the different solutions you offer. What kinds of problems do they solve? Who needs relief from that pain? If there are several different problems, or a variety of motivations to seek a solution, then you could most likely improve your results by segmenting your audience.

2 Will it be cost effective?

Adjusting your messages and the means of delivering them to several distinct groups of people may initially add expense to your marketing budget. Bearing in mind that this is an investment in higher response and conversion, take a look at how much revenue would increase with better marketing results to see if segmentation will be justified with improved profit.

3 Identify divisions

List all the problems your products and services can solve, along with all the different motivations that might drive people to seek your offering. Now find common characteristics of people in each problem/motivation group. Can you see demographic patterns – age, geography, income and so on? Or psychographic differences – those

based on culture, attitude, group affinities, behavior or motivation?

4 Specify group dimensions

Specify and quantify the defining characteristics of each segment. These will be the metrics you use to decide where new prospects will be best reached and served.

5 Create specific messages

The characteristics that helped you define each segment will give you the basis for the messages and emotional hooks that will resonate with each. You will be able to catch their attention and interest more efficiently, which is what successful segmentation hinges on.

6 Choose the right channels

What media channels does each segment use and respond to? The narrower the definition of the segment, the easier it is to find mailing lists, organizations, magazines and websites of specific interest to that group, and the hungrier the audience will be for relevant information.

7 Evaluate your results

Regular, quantified evaluation will give you reliable data on which to base decisions. If a segment does not perform well, consider whether the problem lies in messaging and delivery, or in the definition of the segment. Test and test again to find what works best.

8 Improve your offerings

In addition to the marketing messages and media you use to address each sub-group, consider whether you can reformulate your product or service to specifically meet the needs of different segments of your potential market. The more specialized a service appears to be to its users, the higher up the value scale it will be, and the more profitable it can be for your business.



Improve your prospects to improve your results

The most productive sales professionals know that the real key to success does not involve secret techniques to persuade and close. Rather it is the art and science of identifying people who are ready, willing and able to buy. By filtering prospects early in the sales process, sales achievers are sure that their time and energy is devoted only to those most likely to become customers. Naturally, these prospects can be closed quickly and easily, so with effective time management top performers can achieve a high number of transactions. The result is impressive success, and the good news is that it can be replicated by any competent sales pro.

The first step is to establish clearly who your best prospects are. Try writing a description of your ideal customer – the one who benefits from your solution most, who values it highly, and whom you enjoy doing business with. Consider all your good customers and identify factors they have in common. You might think of industry and business characteristics, or personal attributes such as income, education, group affinities and preferences. The more specific and detailed the description, the easier it will be to target and recognize similar prospects.

When a prospect matches your target you can be confident that the work to engage, establish trust and nurture the relationship will be justified.

Your filtration process continues with regular evaluation of each prospect's readiness to buy, which is largely a matter of maintaining helpful contact and inviting response. By focusing your effort on those most ready to buy you will make the best use of your resources and achieve maximum results.