

----- Unedited Manuscript -----



BRAND

SWITCHING

SECRETS OF THE MARKETING AGENCY

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Foreword

My name is Kireet Sharma, and I own a Marketing Agency called FamousMarketers.com. This book is a work of fiction, where I try to demonstrate how a Brand Switching Marketing Campaign should be executed. It tells the fictitious story of a company called NYkers flooring, and tries to demonstrate how a Brand Switching Marketing Campaign should be executed.

As a Marketing Manager working for several years, I noticed that there are very rare times that a Marketing Manager will be asked to run a Brand Switching Campaign. I used all my years of Marketing experience to write this book. I carefully picked learnings from all the Marketing Campaigns that I had engaged in, and constructed a book out of it. One of the reasons for writing this book, is that I wanted to have a system for executing a Brand Switching campaigns, so I had decided to build a framework.

Before this book, I simply used to execute Brand Switching campaigns without any kinds of frameworks. It was all randomly inside my mind, but there was never ever a framework for it.

This is an unedited Manuscript, as there is Covid 19 everywhere right now, I'm not able to access editors. In the meantime, I just want to release this unedited manuscript, and see the response. If the response is favorable, then I will proceed with the fully published book in the summer.

Introduction

It was the summer of 2008, while I was searching for jobs, I received a call from a medium scale flooring company in New York. They wanted some Product photography, and Social Media Marketing done from our Marketing Agency, and I went into their office. We chatted, and I analyzed their Market. They were a company which was advertising in Newspapers, Radio and had a Facebook page, which was casually maintained. New Yorkers flooring was an 80 year old Brick and mortar company, which was handled by a group of Partners. These partners were actively engaged in Management of the stores.

As I was photographing their merchandise, and managing their social media, I proposed to them an idea about building an Instagram page. Management said to me that they were primarily a Brick, and Mortar retailer, and most of their marketing was done by billboards, and being in the right real estate area. Just the week before this conversation, I was sitting with another hardware company, one of the Fortune 500 companies, which was interviewing people for Instagram. I was really surprised as to why would a hardware company, invest resources into Instagram advertising.

My initial perception of Instagram was that it was more suited for pop culture, than traditional brick, and mortar businesses. But I thought since an established hardware retailer was already using it, maybe I should experiment with it. I negotiated with the management team, and started building an Instagram page for the company. As days went by, our efforts paid off, and surprisingly Instagram become really popular. Anytime we would use our account to invite people to Contractor shows, a lot of crowd would show up for the events. I was truly surprised by the success of Instagram in a traditional hardware business.

I started analyzing the consumer behavior as to why was Instagram such a success at a traditional hardware business. Internet is a very interesting medium for transferring information. Its huge success is in parts because of its ability to share different kinds of information with different types of people. It turns out that different people use Internet in different ways. There are more educated people who use internet to do more complex tasks, such as do coding, and build programs. And in contrast there are people who are not as educated, and they can do simple things like post a photograph on Instagram. The popularity of Instagram comes from its simplicity. All that a contractor has to do is to take a photograph of his work, and post it online. Hence Instagram became really popular with the contractor market.

Things were going very well for New Yorkers flooring, and then they decided to open up a luxury flooring store to cater to the high end market. Decisions were made, suppliers got ready, and a new store called NYkers Flooring was introduced to the market. This store carried all the high end flooring merchandise. The target market for this company was Interior Designers. High end luxury home décor merchandise is usually purchased by Interior Designers for their clients.

So the next task for the Marketing Department was to run a Marketing Campaign for the Interior Designer Market.

Marketing Campaign for NYkers Flooring

When marketing campaign started for NYkers Flooring, management decided to take the lead, and wanted full creative control over advertising, and campaign. I understandably stepped aside from the decision making process, and started focusing on the content building elements.

One of the most interesting things that I had learned during my work experience as a Marketer was that Marketing Strategy is never uniform. It changes from business to business and from target market to target market. Management had over 80 years of experience running their business, so I thought that they might know how to run this new Marketing Campaign best. I thought that it would be a great experience learning from the Management. Management decided to do what had worked for them in the past. They took their same Marketing Campaign style from New Yorkers flooring, and decided to execute it with their new luxury brand. New Yorkers flooring was a discount flooring retail brand, and NYkers Flooring was a new luxury brand. Their target markets were entirely different. New Yorkers Flooring was targeted towards low end retail consumers, and Contractors, while NYkers Flooring was targeted towards Interior Designers.

So Management made a decision to run the same style Marketing Campaign for their new luxury brand. They planned an Opening Ceremony event, called hundreds of Interior Designers in the city. Manager of the store personally visited several Interior Designers, and extended Invitations to the event. Email Marketing was executed and Interior Designers were informed about the event, and the new merchandise. Management was highly confident that their 80 years of brand experience, and their Brand Awareness Campaign would attract prominent Interior Designers from the city, and the store would become an Instant success, just like their Discount Retailer store. At that point in time, I was observing passively, and I thought to myself that Management had been in business for over 80 years, and they would know how to execute this Marketing Campaign successfully.

The day of event arrived, and it turned out to be a failure. Not even a single Interior Designer showed up to the event. Interior Designers had displayed interest in their emails, personal invites, and phone calls, but nobody followed up in person. The event was such a huge failure, that the Management actually became really deflated by the failure of the event.

Now I had a task on my hand. I had to very quickly figure out a way to make the Brand work, and get Interior Designers through the door which was a very hard task to do. I had realized that influencing an Interior Designer would be really complex.

Brand Switching Campaign

My top priority was understanding where we went wrong. I sat down, and heard all the recorded calls, read all the emails, communicated with Interior Designers to comprehend what the problem was. I came to a conclusion that the mistake that we had committed was that Management ran a Brand Awareness campaign, when we should have executed a Brand Switching Campaign. I observed that all the Designers kept telling us that they were saturated with Suppliers, and they had seen everything in the market already. The problem was not making them Brand Aware; the actual problem was that we need them to Switch Brand. Hence, a Brand Switching Campaign was required. We had attacked the wrong problem all way long.

Now that I had identified that a Brand Switching Campaign was required, I had to come out with a Marketing Plan on how to influence the Target Market of Interior Designers. I divided this into several steps:

- 1. Understanding the Target Market Profile.**
- 2. Building Marketing Material for Brand Switching.**
- 3. Strategic Targeting of the Target Market.**
- 4. Constructing a Brand Switching Strategy.**
- 5. Pre Negotiation Strategy**
- 6. Negotiating with the Interior Designers.**

These are the primary 6 steps that are required for a Brand Switching Campaign. First step is understanding Target Market Profile, as to who exactly is the target market, their Demographic information, their lifestyle choices, and other elements. Second step was building marketing material for Brand Switching Campaign. This is the most critical step into Brand Switching. After that comes identifying potential target market, as to who out of the target market, should you target first. There has to be a strategy to attacking the right target market.

Pre Negotiations, which is getting ready to Negotiate is a highly critical step in planning out Negotiations. Negotiating with the Target market is one of the most critical elements into a building a successful Brand Switching campaign. Negotiations should be carried out to build trust between both the parties, so that the client feels comfortable making the Sales. Another step is Identification of the right Brand Switching strategy, and pursuing the objective. This is a critical step, as not always would you have all the parameters of Brand Switching.

Hence these are the six critical stages of a Brand Switching campaign that a Marketing Agency has to plan out for to be able to execute a successful Brand switching campaign.

Understanding the Target Market Profile

One of the most critical elements of a Brand Switching campaign is comprehending the Target Market profile. When New Yorkers flooring planned out the campaign for NYkers flooring, they had generalized their marketing campaign. Same marketing strategy was used for their luxury store whose target market was Interior Designers, that was used for their discount store which had the target market of Contractors.

I decided to properly chart out all the parameters of the Target Market. Basic parameters such as Demographics, Psychographics, and Behavioristics, were all charted out.

During my university degree at Ted Rogers School of Management, I had taken several courses in Psychology, and Negotiations. I had felt that it would be best if I approached the Brand Switching campaign from a Negotiator's perspective. At my Business school I was trained in Harvard Negotiation Project's "Principled Style Negotiation" courses. Since there were only maybe 1000 Interior Designers working in the city, I had felt that personal negotiations would work very well, into trying to induce a Brand switch.

To Negotiate with Interior Designers I had to figure out their Interests. Now their primary Interests were known but I was looking something unique or Interest K. Their primary Interests like profitability, competitive advantages, could be fulfilled by almost everybody in the market, I was looking for that unique Interest K, that others weren't fulfilling. I decided to use my Psychology courses to try to decipher their personalities.

I decided to use Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory to observe the minds of Interior Designers. I decided to observe their unconscious minds to see if I would find something interesting.

A lot of Sales associates had told me that Interior Designers were very tough to deal with. They would come to the store, and had a lot of ego. They knew what they wanted, they didn't like interference, they knew what they wanted, and weren't flexible. I knew that there was something about their personalities that I was missing.

I started chatting with a lot of Interior Designers to decode their unconscious. I sat with them, and would chat with them for hours. After analyzing all my conversations, I was able to find something very interesting about their subconscious minds. I found that when I chatted with Interior Designer Interns, they would tell me as to how they enjoyed the artistic elements of Interior Design. When they were at Interior Design school, they had these desires, dreams, and hopes of Designing Taj Mahal, Musee de Louvre, or Chateau de Versailles. They talked about their Designs as if they were artists like Picasso, or Da Vinci. As they grew older, they talked more about market preferences, and profitability.

However somewhere inside of their unconscious mind, there was a human desire of being an Artist, creating something unique in this world. Leaving their mark in the world, building something that would leave their mark in the history books. And that was the Interest K. Interest K, was the desire of an Interior Designer, to talk about their Art in the world. To tell the world, what they had created, and how was it unique.

Interior Designers don't see themselves as somebody who builds homes, they see themselves as Artists. Therefore they display that creative behavior, and those awkward communication trends.

Hence it is very highly critical to find that unique Interest K, which would act as a Differentiator in your Negotiations. An interest that you would offer uniquely. A good place to look for this unique interest could be in the unconscious mind.

Building Marketing Material for Brand Switching

One of the most critical aspects of building a Brand Switching campaign is building marketing material for the Brand switching campaign. When NYKers flooring had announced their events, and prepared their Marketing material for Brand Awareness campaign, they made the mistake of building regular Marketing material. This led to a low response rate.

I realized the mistake, and decided to build custom content for the brand switching campaign. If you consider the perspective of the Interior Designer, you will learn that they will look for uniqueness in your merchandise. If they don't find any uniqueness in your Marketing material they will consider it to be just like everybody else, and ignore your merchandise.

Your brand switching marketing material should focus, and demonstrate the competitive advantage of your product. Because this is the reason as to why your customer would switch their brand. At NYKers flooring, I had realized that I had to highlight the uniqueness of the merchandise for it to get noticed by the Interior Designers, who every month watch hundreds of products. One of the examples that I can provide is that of the tile manufacturer. There was a Spanish tile manufacturer whose tiles were being exhibited at NYKers flooring. Their tiles had a highly unique texture, which was hard to find. The company purchased special lights, to bring out the texture of the tiles. I entirely learnt texture photography just so I could show the unique texture to the client. I did macro photography to exhibit the unique texture.

The photographs were constructed in a manner that if you look at them even for a split second, they would clearly highlight the texture. Hence product photography became very highly critical into exhibiting the competitive advantages of the respective products. After this photograph was published on Instagram, it had managed to capture the attention of several prominent builders in city.

Experiential videos are also a very highly critical component of building Brand Switching marketing material. If you can demonstrate the experience of a product with the video, then any Designer looking at the product would be impressed by the merchandise. Videos are critical in giving the viewer a proximity look at the product, highlighting the unique elements of the merchandise. It is recommended that the videos should have a wow factor to them. The wow factor videography is critical in impressing the client, and retaining their attention.

In a Brand switching campaign, it is also highly effective to have Industry professionals talking about the product, to enhance the credibility of the product. Professional endorsements are highly critical to influence the customers. Speaker in the video should try to highlight the competitive advantages of the product, and why this product is better than rest of the market.

Hence overall it is very highly critical to build the content which differentiates the product from the rest of the market, and is highly targeted towards Brand switching customers.

Strategic Targeting of the Target Market

One of the most critical aspects of execution of a Brand switching campaign is the strategic approach to targeting the target market.

It is critical to have a strategy in place to target the target market. You should not attempt to build a campaign which would directly target the whole target market. Instead you should try to build a campaign which would target the target market in stages. You should segment the target market into “ease of influence in targeting”. Initially you should attempt to influence the market segments which are relatively more “easier to influence”. As the credibility, of your business builds, you can then target the “harder to influence” segments of the target market.

NYkers flooring’s target market was Interior Designers. So we conducted a deep research into the market to analyze as to which market segments would be easier to influence. Our research indicated that newer Interior Design businesses or Interior Designers which were just getting into the business were relatively easier to influence. Interior Designers, whose businesses were located outside of the city, were also relatively easier to influence, due to less competition. So we decided to initially target these Interior Designers, and then progressively move more towards the more experienced Interior Designers, and the Designers in the core of the city.

Next step is to build the Market Research database of the Interior Designers that you wish to target. Our research team carried out intensive Geo Spatial Analysis to map out the Interior Designers which were located on the outskirts of the city. We were initially looking to target Interior Designers who were located remotely. Then we constructed a database of all the Interior Designers which were new to the business. We researched Social Media platforms, websites, to segment the market in terms of their experience in the field.

After the database is ready, then the next step is to research the business of the client very deeply. There should be a detailed layout of the services offered by the business. There should be a research done on the Interior Designer, so that you are able to negotiate appropriately with them.

Next step is the channel choice, as to which communication channel should be used to communicate with the customer. There are several communication channels which could be utilized. Social Media messaging, phone calls, email marketing, trade shows and event meetups. It is important that the communication channel choice is done well, and appropriately.

Constructing a Brand Switching Strategy

Next step is to construct a Brand Switching strategy for the brand. There are usually several factors which can make a customer switch brand, which can be utilized by the Marketing team. Some of them include Price promotions, superior availability, perceived improvement, changes in quality, better service, and Marketing promotional events.

Unfortunately in the case of NYkers flooring, most of these factors were not differentiating factors. In flooring industry ease of entry into the market is very high, so there are literally thousands of companies worldwide which are producing hardwood. Hence it is very hard to differentiate a brand in terms of price, quality, availability, and most of the other factors. The only factor that NYkers flooring could really utilize was marketing promotional events.

When we started communicating with the Interior Designers, our Marketing team had crafted an email around the elements of price, quality, availability, improvements, and better service. This email was sent to about 500 Interior Designers, after communicating with them on phone. However to our disappointment not even a single Interior Designer had displayed interest in the brand after that email. So I had understood at that very moment, since the market is so saturated with merchandise from all over the world that traditional factors will not work.

The only factor left was the Marketing promotions element. Our Marketing team had to come out with some sort of a Marketing strategy to attract Interior Designers to our store with deals that would appeal to them. As we had learnt during our Target market profile research that Interest K, was the desire of Interior Designers to talk about their art with the world. We decided to build a Marketing campaign around this Interest. We had proposed to our Interior Designers, that they could visit our store, and make Marketing videos about our merchandise, sharing their expertise. This would provide these Interior Designers with the exposure, that they were looking for, and an opportunity to share their artistry, and expertise with the world. Then we would put these videos on our Instagram page, where thousands of viewers will be able to view these videos.

Our Instagram page, with all the brand switching content was already ready. Our Marketing team had already added hundreds of followers, and we were in constant touch with Industry leading Interior designers, and other customers. There were customers who were already visiting our Instagram page, and it was a high exposure page. Hence if a video was put on our Instagram page, it was generating hundreds of likes from regular customers, contractors in the business, other Interior Designers, and leading companies in the business. We had turned the Instagram page into a great hub for all the industry professionals, and customers.

So the idea was to pitch this video making proposal to the client, and attract Interior Designers to the store to review the merchandise, and hope that the Interior Designer likes the merchandise. As a Marketing team, our job was to create a touchpoint between the Interior Designer, and the NYkers flooring store. It was up to the Interior Designer, and the product merits to see if the

Interior Designer would actually proceed with the sale of the product, and make the Brand switch.

Hence a Brand Switching Strategy should be created to target the Target Market. It could include traditional Marketing Mix elements, or something more creative. This strategy should ideally be decided after trial and error, and a lot of research should be conducted to see what actually works.

Pre Negotiation Strategy

So after the Brand Switching strategy is decided, we should focus upon Pre Negotiation strategy. At this stage we need to decide as to which Interior Designers would be targeted. We should first create a database of the Interior Designers. Then we should decide the actually Elevator pitch to pitch our Brand switching strategy proposal, so we can effectively communicate it to the Interior Designer. After that comes the most critical element the choice of the communication channel.

There are several options that could be used to communicate with the target market. Telephone calls, emails, Instagram messages, personal visits, and Facebook messages. It requires trial and error to figure out as to which channel would work best.

At NYkers flooring we had tried Email, and Telephone calling, and the problem was that emails were too big, and people didn't bother to read them. When we called people, it had felt as if we were invading their privacy, and they would politely say yes to us, but then do not turn up for the event.

So we had initially seen these two channels fail. So I decided to try a new channel by writing a brief proposal on Instagram direct message. Instagram was a popular option with Interior Designers, as a lot of Interior Designers were frequent users of Instagram. Secondly Instagram Direct messaging was very quick, very fast, and a user could very quickly respond to it if they liked the proposal. So I prepared a custom Instagram direct message, directed towards the Interior Designers introducing myself, and the proposal.

Short Instagram Direct messages actually turned out to be the right channel choice, as Interior Designers started responding to them. It was an easy, flexible, popular, and convenient choice to communicate with the Interior Designers. Our stats indicate that 28% of the messages that were sent actually generated replies. It means that 1/4th of the Instagram Direct messages that were sent received replies. Most of the messages that weren't replied to, weren't seen by the user. This made the channel very highly effective.

So, most of the people that replied to the messages, had asked to arrange a telephone call to discuss the proposition forward. So at this stage, all that our Marketing team had to do was schedule a time for the meeting.

The most critical pre negotiation steps are finding the right channel which works with your target market, and the composition of the message. Finding the right channel, and the right message, requires trial, and error, and you have to invest time communicating with the clients to understand what works in your target market. After this step, you need to conduct a deep Market research into the business that you will be negotiating with. You have to understand the previous jobs that they have done, their clients, the services they provide. You should have a deep understanding of their business, and services they offer, before you engage in Negotiations.

Negotiating with the Interior Designers

After all the messages, the Negotiations become really easy. It was observed that during our Negotiations about 99% of the clients agreed to work with us. There were only a couple of people who disagreed, but that was primarily due to communication error. Interior Designers were very happy to work with the NYkers flooring. They came they recorded their videos, and they talked about their personal artistry. We played those videos on our Instagram channels, and they became really popular. This encouraged Interior Designers. They also viewed all the product lines. Some of them really fell in love with some of the products, and started bringing in the clients.

Negotiations will go really well, after your target market agrees to your Instagram messages. It's a win - win situation for both the parties. Interior Designers get publicity, and a channel to communicate their artistry, and the retailer gets an opportunity to advertise their product. Interior Designers were also looking to build a positive relationship with a 80 year old company like NYkers flooring. This allowed them to also tap into the Contractor network of the company. Hence overall both the parties were satisfied, and clients started coming in and really fell in love with NYkers flooring. A lot of Interior Designers were also excited about a new store opening up, which would allow them to get lower costs.

What I had observed during Negotiations was that once the Interior Designers started arriving at the store, and started forging that relationship with the retailer, they automatically started realizing the benefits of the relationship. They started feeling that a lot of their other needs were being satisfied as well, like proximity to their office, proximity to their clients, convenience of the location, and other things. So once the target market starts arriving, they will automatically start noticing the benefits of the deal.

One of the most surprising aspects of the deal was that a lot of Interior Designers started forging relationship with the Marketing Agency as well.

Hence overall for our Marketing Agency it was a very highly satisfying Marketing Campaign. We were extremely satisfied that we had executed an incredible Brand Switching campaign.