

Marketing Strategy for your Business

However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.

~Winston Churchill

We are assisting a new business that sells dental treats designed to clean dogs' teeth and freshen their breath. My dogs really love these treats, as well. They love getting something that tastes good, and I love that their dental hygiene is being addressed.

This firm is a small supplier of these dental treats, selling predominantly to the big box pet stores. However, their brand is typically located on the bottom shelf as the larger player, which is over two hundreds times bigger, normally commands all of the retail space above.

Even though they scored a coup by getting their product onto the shelves of these big box stores, the firm is struggling with very flat sales. They just cannot get the momentum up to increase sales.

Although the firm's product is much better than its major competitor, it just does not have the advertising dollars to either create demand or build a wider market for its products. While getting into the big box stores was a major achievement, it is questionable that this will continue as sales are below the minimum amount required by the stores to retain products on their shelves.

To date, the company has used a marketing strategy that had them going head-to-head with their big market competitor. They thought this was the appropriate strategy as independent testing showed their product really is better than its competitor. However, the firm just does not have the financial resources or infrastructure to compete as such.

After much discussion with the company's top staff, several things became apparent. First, the firm's products are superior to its competitor in canine dental care. Second, the firm maintains great relationships with the buyers at the big box stores. Third, its large competitor does not do any business outside of the big box stores. Finally, their treat was not really a treat, but an edible food item that was dentally beneficial to canines.

The firm rightly decided that their current marketing strategy was not appropriate, and it now plans to market it not as a treat, but as a medically

proven way to help dogs deal with plaque buildup and bad breath. In addition, by repositioning the product, the minimum sales requirements of the big box stores will be greatly reduced. Finally, the competition in this niche will be much less, making them the big leader in this field.

The firm also decided to expand into grocery stores and other big box retailers where their competitor had chosen not to compete.

While this revised process is just beginning, and it is still too early to tell how successful it will be, continuing along their former path would have been deadly at best.

Now go out and make sure that your marketing strategy remains the optimal one for your company.

You can do this!

Dr. Osteryoung is the Director of Outreach of the Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship in the College of Business at The Florida State University, the Jim Moran Professor of Entrepreneurship; and Professor of Finance. He was the founding Executive Director of the Jim Moran Institute and served in that position from 1995 through 2008. He can be reached by e-mail at jerry.osteryoung@gmail.com. All of Dr. Osteryoung's articles can be found in a searchable form at <http://cob.fsu.edu/jmi/articles/index.cfm> or through his blog at <http://jerryosteryoung.blogspot.com/>.