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What was going on in your business that first attracted you to Action Plan Marketing's products and programs?

I got exposed to Action Plan Marketing about 7 years ago when bought a franchise called The Alternative Board TAB®. I went through a year using the franchise's marketing plan. It did okay and wasn't bad. It worked fine for the first year, but I realized there wasn't any plan whatsoever for the second year and following to grow the franchise. I started discovering this was a common problem amongst the franchisees so I went on a search to see what I could do to improve our marketing.

I have a marketing background, so we were doing some things that were working, but the one thing I really wanted to do was build a database online. I started looking for ways to do that and ran across Action Plan Marketing's web site. I bought the Infoguru Marketing Manual and really started to systematically apply a lot of things and discovered it was working very nicely. I started applying more principles to our own marketing for ways to build our own database. We did a lot of things. We held informational meetings and always had calls to action which were around getting people's e-mail address in exchange for information – a free newsletter and all that. We set up things on our web site to collect names. We were always focused on setting up that database.

When you start following the Alternative Board's marketing plan, it could get quite expensive. You're talking about purchasing mailing lists, hiring telemarketers, and the cost of aquisition was really quite high. I wanted to reduce that down to next to nothing so we started applying those principles quite regularly. We did things like get sponsors for events and really focused in on that whole "Marketing Ball" concept as to where people were and things you needed to do next to get them moving along.

In the whole course of building the database and by the time I sold the franchise, we had close to 10,000 names [starting from scratch]. Primarily, the last few years of my owning the franchise, all we marketed to was that database. We didn't market to anyone else and the business kept growing. We grew to one of the largest franchisees in the country (#2 or 3 out of about 200) in a very short amount of time, and in a very small market.

There were franchises in places like Chicago and New York City – there were some pretty major markets out there. And little Grand Rapids, Michigan was competing well. Our 10,000 name list was all created within 3 counties in Michigan. We were the envy of a lot of the franchises that had markets we would kill for. If we had been in some of those markets I just listed off, we probably would have had a 50,000 – 100,000 names in our marketing database by applying what we were doing.

What was it about the Action Plan Marketing approach that appealed to you most?

What appealed to me the most was that it really made us think differently about our informational meetings, how we were contacting people, how we were marketing to them in general. One of the things we really lacked was a strong call to action. When we started consistently applying that, our data base really started growing. That was one of the strongest things. Another thing was our cost of acquisition dropped dramatically when applying those principles, which also made it very attractive.

By the time I sold the franchise I had well documented marketing action plans for everything we did and it was very thorough. It would rival anything that a franchise organization would do and we had put it together just based on what we had done with Action Plan Marketing materials.

The Action Plan Marketing principles are very appealing because they are really quite simple to apply. What are your thoughts about that?

It's not complicated. I don't like things being complicated. I'm not terribly technically savvy and it really worked very well. I've applied a lot of this to my current business and my database is growing again. It's the principles that work really well and are very simple to follow. When you want to start targeting a market, you whip out the Action Plan worksheet and start working out the details. You've got a mini recipe to work on to go to the next level.

It's a good plan. When you have marketing explained in terms of baseball which most Americans get, it really becomes an AHA moment when you say, 'Oh, that's why I have people stuck in that area. I have to have another tactic to deal with that'. It just gives you very specific plans.

What kind of results or bottom line impact do you think these principles have produced for you? Any ballpark figure either in percentage of revenue or dollars?

Bottom line – I would attribute 60-70% of building our business was based on applying those principles. That's translated into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Any final thoughts you would like to share?

It's not rocket science. That's the beauty of it. Some people think marketing is complicated. No it's not. The principles have been unchanged for years. We are dealing with human behavior. We're dealing with very simple things. People want outcomes. Many businesses want to focus on benefits and their list of stuff – all those things, quite frankly, people don't care about. What customers care about is helping them reach an ideal goal. An outcome they want to have happen to solve their problems. It sounds so simple, but so many companies don't do it. They just proceed to get into their stuff and processes and people are just going to think, so what? Everybody else out there does that too.

I tell anybody who is working on applying the Action Plan principles, the best thing they can do is to follow it to a tee and you'll be fine. I've worked with several companies and their marketing programs and what's their biggest problem? Execution. This gives you a plan, a means to follow it and a way to execute it. If it is executed, it works really well.

ACTION PLAN MARKETING

For more information on the products and services of Action Plan Marketing, go to www.ActionPlan.com

Our first recommended program is the "Action Plan Marketing Club" and then the "InfoGuru Marketing Manual," followed by the "Web Site ToolKit."