

## Target Marketing: The Secret of a Successful Strategy

Henry Ford made cars. He wanted to make them for the masses, and that meant he had to streamline his assembly line and do things as succinctly as he possibly could. No variations, no deviations, no customizations. “We make cars in colors to suit everyone’s taste – so long as it is basic black,” was one of his sayings. He wasn’t targeting anyone; he was making a product that people wanted regardless of what color and style it was.

Of course, those days are over. No longer do cars come in one style, one color, or even one price point. Choices abound.

We are photographers, and we need to market to those who have lots of choices. Our job is to make them choose us: In fact, we want them to choose us because we are us.

Target marketing or “Niche marketing” is our flag. It isn’t as easy as marketing something to the broad masses; it is much more focused and pointedly created to make only a few be interested in us. Those few are our targets. They are the people and companies that buy what we are selling.

Let’s look at the three types of marketing we have these days:

Interruptive, mass marketing. Think the Super...err... “Big Game” that finalizes the NFL sea Commercials on that highly-watched show run in the millions for a single minute of advertising. Companies like Coke and Ford and GoDaddy spend big bucks to get in front of that huge crowd.

They know that the sheer numbers of people watching will help them reach the tiny sliver that would want to buy a domain or a truck. And because the numbers are so high, their bet usually pays off. Enough people buy their products that they feel they got their money’s worth.

Whether that is true or not is a debate for another time.

Focused advertising is aimed at demographics. A particular magazine is very popular with a specific demographic; say, women between 30 and 40 with a college degree. The advertising is based on focusing on that group: what they like and what they need and what they think is important. This kind of marketing is usually disruptive since the target is still very wide.

This group, while smaller than the mass market, still has widely diverse interests and desires. While they all may be between 30 and 40 and have a college degree, what their specific interests are depend on a million other inputs. From political affiliation to the music they like to their weight and social status, it all is brought to bear on whether the marketing would reach them.

Target marketing: Here we go. This means we have narrowed our potential customers down to a very small universe of people who may be interested in buying what we sell, and we are not about to waste time and dollars on trying to reach people who are not interested and will never buy what we are selling. This is the marketing universe a commercial photographer lives in. We have such a tiny niche of the population that would ever hire a photographer of our type, and within that tight sliver is an even tighter sliver of a genre.

A fashion buyer is not going to be marketed to by an architectural photographer. Nor would a location corporate photographer spend tons of money trying to reach the food editors.

The niches are there, and all around us, and we need to take a hard look at how we can break through the clutter and be seen by those who want to see us.

Target marketing is demographics, geography, genre, and psychographics of those whom we are targeting. These peculiarities give us, the marketing photographer, an opportunity to tailor our message to reach the folks we need to reach. Why? Because they need to shoot with us and have the incredible experience of having worked with us on a couple of projects. Right?

Right.

### **Geographic considerations of a market:**

Location

Region

City size

Population

Median income

Business penetration (Are there businesses, or is it mostly residential?)

Outpost or hub: Is the area a place where most information and product is brought in – an outpost (like a very small town) or is it a hub, where information and product flow out from it (like a very large city)? Or is it somewhere in between the two?

Age of the area: How long has it been in place? Newer communities have different demographics and psychographics than older, long-ago established communities.

### **Demographic considerations of a market:**

Age

Sex

Occupation

Religion

Income range

Social class

Social concerns

Large or small families Psychographics of a market:

Lifestyle

Benefits

Degree of loyalty

Accessibility

Open to change

Classic, modern, or "hip"

Let's look at two photographers: Adam A and Brenda B.

Both have been shooting for about five years, and both are ready to move away from their IT gigs to shooting full time.

**Adam A's** plan includes an email campaign, a direct-mail campaign, and some very awesome (ask him, he'll tell you) ads in local magazines.

Purchasing a list of the downtown residents of the midwestern town he lives in costs about \$1100 from the local paper. The email list is to over 35,000 people, so he must contact an email company to make sure he

doesn't get mistaken for being a spammer. (Constant Contact or MailChimp are my two favorites). Thirty-five thousand names costs him about \$500 to send. He knows he cannot afford to print 35,000 cards, so he prints 20,000 cards at a price of \$14,400. Mailing costs him \$0.34 per piece if he goes bulk, so that works, and the cards are sent the week after the emails went out. That mailing set him back \$6800. And that was to a random sampling of 20,000 of the total 35,000 people.

What happens if 1% of them want to talk to him after getting these marketing pieces? That would be 350 people trying to reach him for a phone followup. Maybe it is only 0.01% that want to talk to him. That is still 35 people contacting him at the same time. And how will he know if the email or the direct mail had triggered the call? Can we use the word "deluged" here?

But not to worry, that won't happen.

You see, a full 15,000 of those names were residents and retired folks living in the downtown area. None of them are ever going to be on the hunt for a brilliant food shooter to do an advertising shoot. In fact, after re-examining his list, he finds that there are only about 650 people who were even in the business of using his services, and fully 60% of them were not in the realm of architecture that he was pursuing.

Unfortunately – this happens all too often.

**Brenda B** worked differently from Adam A.

She got the list made up already targeted to only the design agencies, ad agencies, and corporate communications companies in her area. Since she was mostly interested in portraiture on location, she nixed out possible clients who were actually never going to be interested and settled on a lovely list of 437 names. She had 2000 cards (4 of 500 each) printed for about \$900 and began her targeted campaign. This included email and direct mail as well as very careful follow up with any client who showed interest. Meanwhile she tried to get as many of the AD's as possible to sign up for her mailing list by offering a pack of ten "royalty free" images if they did.

She knew her potential clients liked portraits, were located in the area she was, and she was determined to reach them with the work she knew they needed to see.

Her return would be far greater than the Adam A's, as she has targeted and focused upon the needs of her potential buyer, where Adam A had simply "shotgun blasted" a bunch of very expensive marketing material toward people who were never going to buy his work.

Let's examine your area.

We do not want to be a hit-and-miss, seat-of-the-pants marketing person; it is too damned expensive and wasteful and can kill our fledgling business faster than going into debt to buy that Hasselblad you don't need.

And we will start with you.

Take a few minutes to write down what it is you are marketing with hopes of selling. Are you selling a service or a product? What would you deliver if someone hired you?

Now get specific:

What is an exact product/service that you plan on trading for dollars?

Why are you selling it? (Yes, to make money. I got that. But, really, why are you selling what you are selling?)

Are there any other reasons other than bank account refreshing that compels you to make and sell photography?