

Strategies to Improve Local Area Marketing Efforts

For companies with Franchisees, Dealers, Agents, or Retail Outlets



Effective & Efficient Direct Mail, Print & Integrated Media

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Introduction

If you head up the local area marketing efforts for an enterprise with dealers, agents, retail locations or franchisees, you are likely spending a significant amount of time and money on marketing materials that are either not being used or not producing the results you would expect. Perhaps your franchisees, dealers or agents complain about the materials you provide, which can be very frustrating. Common complaints include things like, they are not customized, take too long to get, or are “too corporate” and/or irrelevant to the local market.

If you accommodate their requests, you are forced to spend additional time and money on creative services to manually tweak and customize those materials, and at the end of the day, you are still unsure whether those materials will just sit in a back room collecting dust.

In the following pages, we will identify the most common problems with local area marketing programs, the implications of those problems and the top reasons cited by these network affiliates as to why they do not participate in the programs. Most importantly, we'll suggest to you the types of programs they are more likely to use and strategies to increase participation in these programs.

Manifestations of the Problem

Here are symptoms of the problems associated with dealer/agent/franchise network marketing:

- Partners complain about what you are sending.
- Not enough partners use your opt-in programs.
- POP/collateral sits in piles, never used.

Implications of Dealers/Agents not Using Your Programs

What happens when your network isn't using the materials you provide? There is a trickle-down effect that could result in the following issues:

- Marketing dollars are being wasted.
- Your staff's time is being wasted.
- Efforts aren't as effective as they could be.
- Sales revenues don't grow like you think they should.
- For organizations where their affiliates are multi-brand, you wonder whether another brand is making the partners happier.

The Top 10 Reasons the Network isn't Using Your Programs or Materials

We have spent a lot of time talking to dealers, franchisees and agents and have monitored historical data. Here are our findings:

1. Some aren't educated on the value of marketing or marketing strategies/tactics.

They are good at what they do (selling, fixing, etc.), but marketing is often not part of their expertise or training. What they don't understand, they don't do.

2. They aren't convinced that using specific programs will result in more sales, which means they won't spend their own money or co-op funds

Some people won't spend money unless it's proven to work. They don't want to buy marketing, they want to buy sales. We have seen situations where programs were eligible for 100% co-op reimbursement, yet they still failed to utilize the program. Why? Because they weren't convinced that it would work better than something else they were already doing.

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3. Some are phobic or uncertain about using new technologies, even those that are easy to use.

Software applications that seem simple to some of us may cause others a great deal of difficulty or seem inconvenient. While online ordering systems have become commonplace, there are many folks who don't like to use them or don't know how to use them.

4. Partners want to brand their company and present their own messaging and content.

Dealers, agents and franchisees want more than the equivalent of a "rubber stamp" on a corporate piece. Corporate often produces direct mail pieces where both sides of a post card are consumed with corporate messaging. At most, there is a small block no larger than the size of a rubber stamp allocated for the dealer or agent's logo or address.

5. They don't like or can't use what corporate sends them.

The norm in some industries is the dealer pays a mandatory fee and gets predetermined POP or collateral. In many cases, these materials end up in a "pile" in the corner of the office.

Sometimes the type or design of the pieces themselves serves as an obstacle. Additionally, there is great diversity in the way offices and dealerships are built or laid out, which means partners can't always use or display what is sent. In other cases, they just don't like the creative theming.

6. Insufficient notice – Aren't given enough time to contemplate or implement programs

Sophisticated partners want to reconcile corporate programs with their own marketing plan and sales efforts. Programs that are hatched on the spur of the moment or are communicated just before a program starts don't allow for this.

7. They don't even know about the programs

Your partners are inundated by communications. Just think of the different departments and individuals in your organization that are sending them info. If the partner carries multiple brands or lines, multiply the communications by the number of brands.

The method corporations typically use to communicate with partners is email. It's easy and cheap. Alternatively, corporate intranet sites are used for the same reasons. The truth is, program communications sent via email aren't opened. Typical open rates on emails are around 25-45%. Partners receive so many emails from the companies they represent that they start to shut them out.

That means if email is the preferred communication channel, 55-75% of the target audience doesn't even get the message. And, in many cases, 30-40% of partner contact data is inaccurate, which means the communication doesn't reach the right person.

8. They have questions that need to be answered.

Those questions are objections until answered.

Here are some of the common questions networks have that serve as obstacles for program participation:

- How does the co-op program work?
- How do I get data out of my system to drive a direct mail project?
- Will the pieces make it there on time?

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- Can I customize the pieces?
- How do I do this?
- How will I know if it works?
- Am I spending my money wisely?

9. They don't have a lot of time to devote to marketing.

They are busy selling or fixing. The tools or programs that are offered must require little or no thought or effort.

10. They are aligned more closely with another brand.

If your network sells other brands, you are competing with those brands for the attention of your dealer or agent. If another brand makes it easier for partners to market or provides enhanced materials, your network could be losing out on opportunities with your brand.

What are Dealers, Agents and Franchisees More Likely to Use?

- Programs that are proven to be effective
- Customizable pieces
- Traffic-builders/lead generators
- Giveaways
- Programs that require little effort

What are They Less Likely to Use?

Your network won't use straight corporate branding pieces with little, if any, customization opportunity.

Strategies to Increase Participation

If you are looking to improve your network marketing programs, there are some simple things you can do to align the network and increase participation, including:

1. Survey dealers and agents – ask them what they want/don't want, like/dislike.
2. Focus on the top producers – get your regional sales managers or regional marketing managers involved.
3. Develop case studies/success stories that prove ROI. Partners don't want to pay for marketing but they will pay for sales.
4. Develop a dealer marketing database.
5. Provide training opportunities for those who need to see how it's done, including:
 - Webinars
 - YouTube
 - Sessions at dealer/agent meetings
6. Give them choices.
7. Provide considerable opportunity for customization, including:
 - a. Logo, address, www. and contact information
 - b. Space to push what they want to push
 - c. Choices on models, pricing, packages, lines, etc.
8. Develop an affiliate marketing program at the beginning of the year.
9. Develop a marketing communications (marcom) plan to “market the marketing” that:
 - a. Has multi-modal approaches
 - b. Is enacted before, at launch, and “last-minute”
 - c. Includes telemarketing
 - d. Answers the most common questions

Next Steps

In this eBook, we've identified the most common problems with dealer/agent/franchise marketing programs, the implications of those problems and the top reasons cited by network affiliates as to why they are less likely to participate in the programs. We also provided examples of the types of programs they are more likely to use and strategies to increase participation in these programs.

PrintComm helps companies with dealer/agent/franchise networks develop programs and systems to help improve their network's marketing efforts. We can help survey your network to find out what types of materials are desired, develop programs to include those materials, train your network on using the program and help you track the results of these efforts – all of which encourages more and more of your network to participate.

If you would like a proposal on any of the services mentioned in this booklet, contact us today.



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