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Marketing is like air, water and food

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Do you want "marketing" to be a department that delivers warm, qualified leads for business development? Sorry, this isn't how the world works! Executives will often call in a marketing company for ideas to help rejuvenate sluggish or declining sales. "We just need help attracting qualified leads for our sales team. We can win them over once we get them talking with us." Does this sound familiar?

Marketing is much more than a department or a function. Marketing is all of this: products and services, brand(s), prices, distribution, promotion and sales. Marketing entails most of your business activity and therefore requires business strategy to succeed.

Small business owners are notorious for mistaking marketing with advertising and promotion and they let junior assistants "handle the marketing." They prioritize marketing about the same as keeping the office supply closet stocked.

Even in larger firms the chief marketing officer (CMO) is almost always subordinate to the CFO and COO. They often report directly to the COO instead of the CEO.

Thoroughness is the watchword.

A good marketing plan must be fully integrated in the overall business plan. A solid marketing strategy is your business foundation. It includes:

- * Market Research;
- * Target Audience Definition;
- * Competitor Analysis;
- * Branding & Positioning (more important than many think!);
- * Tactical Planning; and
- * Implementation.

It helps when you have great people, driven every day to be the very best in the market! That overrides a lot of potential deficiencies in systems and processes.

There's a whole lot more to improving your marketing plan and growing your business than trying to capitalize on a few well executed tactics. Sometimes, established business practices need to be examined along with a deep dive into mission, vision, and positioning.

When you need to infuse new energy into your marketing program for better results, be prepared for the highest level of business strategy discussions to ensue.

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