



Marketing IT's Value: 7 Tips for Success

Let's face it, we in IT love our tools. Yet there is one extremely powerful tool that most CIO's and their teams are under-utilizing today and they are paying a steep price for it. It's called marketing, or to put it another way, "creating an awareness of IT's value," and it needs to be added to the tool box of every senior IT leadership team in 2009.

Savvy IT leaders know that delivering great work is not enough to ensure that IT is positioned strategically as the provider of first choice. They know that perception matters and that they need to constantly market IT's value to earn a seat at the table of strategic decision making. IT organizations that develop IT Marketing Plans and leverage marketing techniques enjoy increased credibility, improved customer loyalty and a widely held belief in IT's value, not to mention increased project awareness, momentum and buy-in. Here are seven things to know before developing a marketing plan for IT.

1. Redefine the "M" Word.

Prevailing wisdom in IT is that marketing is about hype and empty promises, not about presenting a clear, consistent message about the value of

Avoid Being the "Best Kept Secret": How to Jump Start Your IT Brand

Long gone are the days when CIO's were cloistered in back-room operations. You are now on the front lines with customers and in the boardrooms talking strategy. Fierce competition, increased innovation demands, complex compliance and regulatory requirements, and cost efficiency and performance pressures from customers have pushed the role of CIO into an external-facing leadership position.

Now, CIO's find themselves in a new, public spotlight. Customers look to partner with proven innovators; employees want to be part of a technology leader, and new talent tracks search engines and blogs to research the who's who in IT. If your IT organization is your company's best-kept secret, you may want to include some publicity in your 2009 strategy.

One place to start is increasing your IT organization's presence in industry publications. Here are some ideas to get started.

Join the conversation

Participating in articles start with participating in the conversation. Editors always look for new sources and perspectives to include in their features. Reach out to a writer about an article and tell them you enjoy it and provide your own perspective on the topic. Introduce yourself to journalists through e-mail, by

IT. Many people think that marketing is about getting more business (which it can if that's your objective) rather than getting the "right" business (which has to be our objective in this 'do more with less' economy). If the "M" word still makes your IT folks squirm in their seats, use others like "communication" or "education".

2. Marketing is Everybody's Job!

Everyone in the IT organization, from the CIO to the individual contributor, markets IT every day! Therefore, the entire IT team needs to embrace the importance of marketing and their role in communicating the value of IT. Develop a Marketing Plan targeting IT so that every IT team member has a clear understanding of the party line, the role each person plays, and what they are marketing.

3. Teach "Hallway Marketing".

Marketing is not an event; it's an everyday job. Every time IT speaks with a client, they create a perception - negative or positive - in the client's mind. Establishing a positive perception means learning to speak positively about IT at every opportunity they get, from the hallway to the meeting room.

4. Leverage Proven Marketing

Techniques. Make sure the marketing techniques you utilize are focused and appropriate given your objective, target audience, etc. We have identified 18 proven techniques that are being leveraged by successful IT organizations.

5. Talk Benefits, Not Features.

Focus your efforts on promoting the business problem-solving capabilities

phone, or at a conference, and offer yourself as a potential resource on a few key topics. It takes time to cultivate relationships with journalists, but it can deliver value through the eyes of your employees, potential new talent, customers, and your industry. It also provides great material for your sales team!

Check out editorial calendars

Every publication has a yearly editorial calendar outlining topics for each issue. It is primarily used for advertising purposes, but it is a valuable tool to see what editors are researching. Case studies that support the topics are always a valuable "in". Just pitch wisely, and provide a concise and valuable summary on the topic to the editor, preferably through email. Providing first-hand perspectives and results you achieved are helpful. Most editors assign stories at least two months prior to the issue date, so plan ahead. And be ready to interview when they respond.

Quality, not quantity

Editors receive hundreds of emails, phone calls, press releases, and product announcements each day. To cut through the noise, focus on the quality of your pitch. Offer yourself as a resource, someone who is willing to help the journalist with the topic. Stay on topic and provide examples, like detailed case studies, lessons learned, significant business results, or business and technology challenges you face as an executive.

A good idea or source will not go unnoticed by a journalist. Depending on the story of the day, your pitch may get filed away for future opportunities. It is good to follow-up, but be cautious to not overdo it with multiple follow-ups. Don't get discouraged; it takes time to develop the relationships.

Participate in industry awards

of IT, not the great technology you've implemented. Demonstrate how IT aligns with the strategic initiatives of your company. You need to appeal to the core values and intrinsic motivators of clients, not the features of your systems and services.

6. Develop Targeted Marketing Plans. Marketing Plans need to be developed and executed at all levels of IT. Customized marketing plans targeting various business/client groups are critical to ensuring that your message is relevant and embraced by all of your clients.

7. Frequency is Critical. Each day, every one of us is besieged with over 3,000 marketing messages. On average, it takes 8-13 times before you engage the attention of your audience, therefore, it is vital to repeat and be consistent. Remember, about the time you become tired of YOUR marketing message, is just about the time your audience is starting to become aware of it.

By combining a marketing mindset focused on the client, you'll get a successful, well positioned, marketing-savvy IT organization whose value is understood and appreciated enterprise-wide.

This is based on Ouellette & Associates "[Marketing the IT Organization Internally](#)" workshop, which includes the 18 proven techniques that are being leveraged by successful IT organizations and the 13 step process for developing IT Marketing Plans. It is also excerpted from a chapter from our newest book released October 1, 2008 - [Leading IT Transformation: The](#)

Many technology publications have established award programs. Awards such as the CIO Magazine's CIO 100, InformationWeek 500, ComputerWorld's Best Places to Work, and InfoWorld 100, provide credible, and powerful ways to showcase your organization's successes. These awards not only provide positive publicity for your company, but can be a great motivator for your IT organization, and beneficial in recruiting new talent.

Get on social networks

As a CIO, you need to look at social networks as part of your strategy, or at a minimum, try them out. They have become new dynamic networking tools to connect with business thought leaders, editors, and technologists. Journalists are very active in the social networking world.

They post topics they are researching, provide commentary on what they are hearing in the industry, and interact with their sources. It is an easy, and dynamic way to get involved in the conversation.

Bottom line, increasing your presence in industry publications, award programs, and speaking venues, will deliver value to your IT organization. The third party validation and credibility are assets that can be hard to match in this competitive marketplace.

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