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The Key To Relationship Marketing

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In any relationship marketing situation, the more you know about the people you're trying to reach, the more successful you should be. Sounds logical, doesn't it? Unfortunately, when most people consider relationship marketing, they look at demographic information such as Zip codes, income and age. Is it any wonder that marketing using only quantifiable demographic facts fails?

One of the absolute rules of communication is to focus on the person receiving your communication. If you don't know anything about him or her, you can't focus on anything but yourself. Thus, your communication is doomed before it begins.

Using Meta Models

There is a way to visualize prospect information called the meta model. At the top of the model are large chunks of general information. As you work your way down the model, you find steadily more specific information until you ultimately get into details that aren't important.

Relying on Zip codes for your marketing means you have gone too specific in the meta model. Relying on age means you don't know enough about the people you want to reach. In other words, you're working with insufficient information.

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Take heart; the solution is simple: Just rethink your target.

Instead of approaching all the people who either live in a given neighborhood or have attained a certain age, think about finding all the people who use their brains in a specific way. Then, it'll be easier for you to appeal to them.

For instance, elementary school teachers use their brains differently from high school teachers. Entrepreneurs use theirs differently from corporate managers. Primary care physicians use theirs differently from surgeons.

Developing a meta profile for a group

Let's look at physicians and develop a meta profile that gives you more specific information than just their Zip codes. Well, right away we're in trouble. All doctors are not the same.

Recently, I developed a set of meta profiles for a client who sells financial products to doctors. His new meta profiles gave him loads of great information about doctors. Let's look at how they helped him.

The large category we called "doctors" is actually divided into several smaller categories, or subsets, of doctors. The good news is that the subsets are separated by specialty. You could actually go to the Yellow Pages and create an up-to-date, highly targeted mailing list of doctors by noting their specialties. You *could*, but I doubt that such an effort would be worth your time.

First, visualize doctors as a general category on the meta model. Now, look down into more specific categories. There, you'll find surgeons, oncologists, primary care physicians, plastic surgeons and fertility specialists all separated from one another.

Find the category of primary care physicians and picture a set of specifics under it. You might picture qualities like attitudes, values and mental processes.

Knowing, or at least being able to project, what those

qualities are will automatically make your relationship marketing and your sales efforts more successful. Essentially, you'll be saying, "I understand who you are, what your values are and how you want to receive information."

How do you find out what someone's values are? Just watch them work. Watch what they do. Ask them questions like:

- What do you want?
- Why do you do that?
- What's important to you?
- What words and phrases do you relate to?
- What words and phrases do you resent?
- What does your desk look like?
- How do you prefer to receive information?
- Are you structured or creative?

Going back to our doctor example, we could find that primary care physicians touch people all day long. They are the nurturers of the doctor world. They would value relationships, family, love and caring. They are the poster people for "warm and fuzzy" doctors. Thus, they're similar to physical therapists, nurses, midwives and chiropractors. But, in this way, they're the opposite of surgeons and oncologists, who don't typically develop long-term relationships with patients.

You can use this meta profiling technique to find the values of your target market.

Using Meta Profiling To Establish Rapport

What's the ultimate value of meta profile marketing? Meta profile information helps you establish rapport with people you are not yet speaking with directly. It allows you to mirror the other person's mentality -- to match his or her attitudes, values and mental processes in your relationship marketing.

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