

How To Apply Nike's Secret Marketing Strategy: A Guide To Selling Benefits, Not Products



The Nike marketing strategy that most of us recognize isn't the one that made them get famous, at least not in the early days. Discovering the Nike marketing strategy that put them on the map is where the gold is. And, just like any true content marketing, it isn't much of a "strategy" at all. Like many similar success stories, it was as simple as providing real customer value.

Nike stumbled upon a successful approach to content marketing by accident. However, you can benefit by being intentional about applying their strategy to your own marketing. Start by following these steps.

What Do You Believe In?

Your product needs a purpose; a higher goal that it helps customers achieve. Before your customers can believe in you, you have to believe in yourself. Understanding your motivations for being in business can help you clarify your mission for your audience.

For example, Nike cofounder Bill Bowerman didn't just make shoes. He believed in the benefits of jogging and created content to promote that belief (without realizing he was doing marketing at all). Once his audience had the idea to go jogging, they then turned to Nike shoes to run faster and achieve their athletic goals.

To follow this approach, clarify your vision by answering these two questions:

What do you believe in?

How does your product support your beliefs?

What Felt Need Does Your Product Fill?

What does your audience need that no other product or service can provide? Or, in other words, what problem do you help your customers solve? Looking at your product's value from a customer's perspective in this way can help give you a better idea of what content you should create to promote it. To help figure this out for your brand, fill in the blanks (*remember, there are no wrong responses*):

What is my audience trying to accomplish?

How does my product or service help accomplish this goal?

Once you've got that figured it, it's time to determine how your product or service helps people achieve their goals. Fill in the blanks to form your own mission statement:

My product/service helps _____ to _____ by _____.

It's as simple as that.

Identify Your Product's Benefits

Your content should sell the benefits of your product, rather than the product itself. Start by identifying the top five benefits your product or service offers.

My Product's Top 5 Benefits Are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What Value Does Your Content Marketing Provide?

You know your audience. You know the benefits your product provides your customers. However, do you know what value your content marketing itself provides? Not the value it provides for your business. We mean the value it provides for your customers. Give it some thought and answer these questions:

What are the biggest problems or concerns facing my audience?

How can my content better help my audience solve those problems?

How can I make sure I have the best content to address my customer's needs?

Where Is Your Audience & What Content Do They Want?

To be successful in this approach to content marketing, you'll need to figure out the channels and tactics that will best connect you with customers and most empower your audience. That means determining which types of content they're most interested in consuming, and where they hang out on the Web to spread that content.

Once you know what to say, the next step is to figure out where to say it. Start by answering these questions:

Which social media networks is my audience most active on?

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Tumblr
- Vine
- Snapchat
- Live-streaming video platforms (Periscope/Meerkat/etc.)
- Other: _____

Which types of content will be best to communicate my product's benefits my customers?

- Website copy
- Blog posts
- Infographics
- Social media posts
- Photos
- Video
- Email newsletters
- PPC/Paid online ads
- Print publications
- Other: _____

What Ideas Does Your Content Spread?

Content marketing is growing, and that usually brings fuzzy definitions that blur the lines between what something actually is and what it is becoming. Content marketing is often pegged as a process rather than a technique, but content marketing doesn't depend on a specific set of tools or a common workflow. It is about providing value and building trust with customers.

In other words, your marketing needs to be about spreading ideas, not products.

This is easier said than done, but it helps to think beyond the scope of your product and think deeper about what your customer needs. In Nike's case, they sold the benefits not only of their product, but of the hobby and sport their product served. This means that rather than just selling shoes, they sold the public on the idea of jogging as a popular exercise method (which naturally created a need for shoes).

Want to apply a similar approach to your own marketing? Ask yourself this question:

"What ideas or values does my content marketing promote?"

You know your product's purpose. You have your message to communicate that purpose. You have your tactics to deliver that message. Ready to rock your marketing? Get out there and just do it.

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