



PROMOTIONAL MARKETING LESSONS MOM PACKED IN MY LUNCH

BY: MICHAEL MERRICK CROOKS

REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE A KID? Lunchtime held a certain magic. What did mom pack? The anticipation ... the apprehension ... the delight — and sometimes the disappointment at finding your stupid apple had crushed your snack cake.

If you've been using the same approach with your customers and clients for very long ... it's sorta like getting peanut butter and jelly in your lunch for 37 days in a row. It's boring, predictable and memorable ... for all the wrong reasons.

LESSON LEARNED: KEEP YOUR MAIN OFFER FRESH.

In today's market, a fresh new approach can mean the difference between clients eating up what you have to offer ... and getting your snack cakes crushed.

For example, I remember the day I opened my insulated bottle to pour my milk and out came CHOCOLATE milk!

Mom had my attention. Yeah, making sure I had milk to drink showed she cared.

And for a 9 year old that's all well and good... but chocolate milk?

Well that just moves mom up on the list of "stuff that's swell". And from that day on, there was a



little twinge of excitement when I opened my lunch drink. Problem was ... it never happened again. After a while, the slight twinge of excitement that came with opening my drink ... disappeared.

LESSON LEARNED: EVERY NOW AND THEN, YOU HAVE TO CHANGE IT UP TO KEEP THE EXCITEMENT ALIVE.

Putting a different type of juice or chocolate milk in my lunch one day every three weeks would have done it.

By the same token, if you've been sending the same old postcard announcing the "Sale of the Month" ... next month try sending the card in an envelope instead.

Better yet, send it along in an envelope with a 25 sheet sticky notepad with your logo, name and number imprinted on it.

Think about that for a minute from the receiver's standpoint. You've been getting a postcard from LMNOP for



2 years. SUDDENLY, you get an envelope from LMNOP. You'll open it with renewed interest. Why? Because you don't know what's inside. Something unexpected and out of the ordinary happened. But because the same old postcard in an envelope could be anti-climactic, you want to include a little "excitement enhancer" with an inexpensive sticky notepad.

Mom's lunches weren't all bad, though. Part of effectively changing your approach is understanding that while an apple, an orange and a banana are all fruits ... they are different fruits. Mom added variety to my lunchbox fruit course by constantly changing the fruit. She did the same with the veggies, alternating carrots, celery, sweet peppers, radishes and pickles. Similarly, a postcard, an envelope and a package are all direct mail, but they're different. The same way a pen, a note pad and a refrigerator magnet are all promotional products — yet different. Even with postcards, you can change the design while maintaining the integrity of your corporate identification.



And now the main course — the offer! Mom knew I would be ok with ketchup on bologna even though I preferred mayo. Mustard is fine on pork/ham. PB&J was fine. Egg salad would fly like a lead balloon, sandwich spread was great and I'd eat anything with cheese on it ...except PB&J, hold the cheese, please.

LESSON LEARNED: WANT TO KEEP YOUR TARGET RELATIVELY HAPPY AND INTERESTED? GET TO KNOW THEM, KEEP CHANGING THE MAIN OFFER AND GIVE THEM WHAT THEY LIKE.

What do you know about your clients and prospects? Do you know what they like, how much they buy or how often they buy? For small retailers it can be as easy as utilizing a punch card program. Swipe type cards coupled with the right computer program can allow you to capture a lot of useful data. But even the smallest retailer can send/give a survey and reward respondents with a low-cost, high-perceived value promotional item. This is an excellent way to start or expand a database.

For national brands, using mass media to effectively drive traffic to a website with the promise of logo'd merchandise for filling out a survey can work wonders. Another tactic is an on-package or in-package directional to the website.

Change the main offer. Even if all you sell are chairs. Change the featured chair...tell why it's a great chair – features and benefits. Tell them something they don't know. Give them something they can sink their teeth into.

Finally, the treat! Whether it was a piece of candy, a snack cake or a fruit pie, I always looked forward to the treat!

Lesson Learned: Treat your clients, customers and prospects. Treat them to a mint (regular and sugar free) at the cash register, have fresh coffee and hot water for tea available, have stickers or waterless tattoos available for the kids. Train your staff to treat customers and prospects like they are welcome. Treat them ... like your business depends on them. •

Michael Merrick Crooks owns Crooks Advertising Alliance, a creative strike-force specializing in creative problem solving as it relates to advertising and promotional marketing. For more of the Crooks brand of thinking visit www.CrooksAdvertising.com and request the CrooksView Creative Digest Newsletter.

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