

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

September 16, 2007

OVERCOME “CPA”

It’s amazing the way seemingly previously unknown or talked about conditions are cropping-up in the news and advertisements these days. First there was “E.D.” for erectile dysfunction. Now there’s “RLS” for restless leg syndrome. And today we’re discovering that many people are suffering from “CPA,” and don’t even know it!

Take this quiz to determine if you are one of a growing legion of sufferers of CPA:

QUIZ for “CPA”	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. You own a Blackberry or other PDA device.		
2. You have been heard to say, or have had the thought that, “I can’t live without it.”		
3. You check it several times a day.		
4. You text message more than 5-times per day.		
5. Your cell phone is nearly always on-hand.		
6. You keep your cell phone on ring or vibrate during meetings.		
7. You check your Blackberry type device or cell phone for messages during meetings.		
8. You check one or both between meetings.		
9. You respond to messages frequently and quickly.		
10. Your computer signals when you have a new email.		
11. You typically stop what you are doing to respond to new emails, cell phone calls or text messages.		
12. You find your attention span getting shorter.		
13. You “multi-task” virtually every day.		
14. You use the remote to click between stations when viewing TV programs or commercials.		
15. You wish you had more time for yourself or the immediate task at hand.		

If you answered, “yes” to 5 or more questions you may be a victim of CPA or Continuous Partial Attention. Don’t fret. You are not alone. Nearly everyone you know at work suffers from the same affliction. So do many of your customers. That’s one of the reasons they are so difficult to attract and hold.

Now we didn't coin this malady. But we wish we had. It was a theme at the 2006 San Diego Emerging Technologies Conference. It is important for all of us to address it since it adversely affects the quality of our work and lives. It prevents us from getting the right things done, those critically important but non-urgent tasks that add value to the business. And, it prevents us from living life fully, in the present, with family and friends. It is a disease borne of this century thanks to growing penetration of Blackberry type devices, personal computers, cell phones, the internet, text messaging, emails, voicemail, cable/satellite TV, Tivo type devices and, yes, the TV remote control among others.

CPA is pandemic in scope. It can strike virtually anyone, at any age, who has access to and can operate or take advantage of any of the aforementioned devices or services. We're not just talking about you or me or business people. We're talking about your customers too. It's getting more difficult to get through to them. This is not just an issue with so-called new versus traditional media. It's getting through to customers in any medium period. Getting through to them in a way as to elicit a positive response (as in the achievement of a specific behavior, your Marketing Objective).

This condition is only going to get worse. We can't imagine it any other way given the explosion in electronic devices, programs and services coupled with growing levels of our personal and collective impatience and/or desire.

If we don't treat CPA we will find ourselves becoming less, versus more, effective on a business and personal level, with ourselves in our organizations and externally with customers.

BOATS & HELICOPTERS:

This will not be easy medicine to swallow. But give it careful consideration if you want to heal yourself, connect with customers and develop a healthy brand.

On a personal level:

- 1. Get your priorities straight** – What are those essential, non-urgent things that will add value to the business and development of the brand? Do you have a brand positioning strategy statement to serve as a blueprint for the development of a brand? If not, what are you waiting for? Make a list of those actions that will add value to the business, and to your life. Then prioritize. Don't neglect the really meaningful things (such as strategic planning) because you feel you can put it off tomorrow. Tomorrow never comes. It will always be a day away. Prioritizing includes family and friends. If they're not made a priority it may very well mean we have to get our heads and hearts straight too.
- 2. Give everything 100% of your attention** – Be present to what is before you. Give yourself the opportunity to get in the "flow" where time feels as though it is standing still. Where you give the best of yourself and bring out the best in others. For example, when conducting or participating in a planning workshop or meeting pledge to devote your full attention to it. Let people know you will not be available for anything else. If there are too many distractions at the office consider conducting planning sessions off-site. Diverting your attention creates an energy leak we can ill afford in today's competitive environment. If something is worth doing it is worth giving all of yourself.

- 3. Resist the pull to those seemingly urgent, non-essential extraneous activities.** Turn-off your cell phone. Don't jump to your Blackberry. Switch-off the signal that alerts you to new email on your electronic devices. Don't be so, well, available. When we are always available we are more often not really available. Our minds and activities are fragmented. Instead, set-up specific times in your day when you will allow yourself to check for your messages. Prioritize those messages and give yourself a time limit in which to address them.

On attracting and holding customers:

- 4. Lead your customers** – Know where they go and what they do. Learn how they interact with, and process, commercial media and messages. Does it really make sense to text commercial messages to their cell phones or will you just irritate them? (We personally find it most irritating!) Be available and waiting where they are and would want to interact with you and your brand message. Think beyond one medium. Think of a network of mediums that intercept customers at the most appropriate places and times. Be in their line of sight. Do it in a way that the customer discovers you and each engagement builds upon another.
- 5. Think impact** – It is not merely enough to be in your customers' line of sight with a hackneyed slogan found in a static TVC, print or text message. We need to have impact. Not the kind that pops like a piece of kindling. It is momentary soon to be forgotten. Instead, create the type of impact that burns like a piece of hardwood. One that engages your customers to create genuine desire for your brand. We have to get beyond the old objectives of reach and frequency and strive to encourage an action on the part of our customers. That's the way to measure success. This will necessitate doing things that elicit active participation from current and prospective customers. It means we will need to create ideas, BIG ideas with BIG impact. Make it impossible for your customers to give you anything less than their full participation. Light their fire!
- 6. Create a positive experience to build a relationship with customers** – This is about more than the product and its messaging. It's about developing the kind of experience with your brand that leads to a mutually beneficial relationship. In other words, we can't settle for stimulating a transaction. While it rings the cash register today it is not enough to build lasting brand equity and loyalty. Transform the way you interact with customers to build a relationship. In this way customers will be interested and attentive to the brand.

CPA, or Continuing Partial Attention, is a chronic disease. Environmental (e.g., proliferation of electronic devices, etc.), personal (e.g., the desire to be available for everyone, at all times), organizational (e.g., the quest for increased productivity, lack of prioritization, lack of discrimination between essential, non urgent activities and non-essential, urgent activities) and societal (e.g., hyper-tasking) factors can be expected to contribute to its recurrence. Don't take it lightly.

Use this prescription. Be both compliant and persistent in following it. If the condition persists call us at BDNI.

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