PART II

Enhance Your Marketing Productivity: Hire an IIP

by Marjorie Desgrosseilliers

Adding Value: Independent Information Professionals

Independent information professionals (IIPs) help businesses make money.

Bold statement, yes. But it’s true.

We IIPs have always provided services that enhance the marketing productivity of our clients. Using our varied research expertise (knowing how and where to find information), professional insight and experience, we help our clients solve specific problems, make informed decisions, provide direction and guidance to their own clients and, in many cases, ultimately add to their bottom line – which, if you think about it, is what marketing is all about.

So how do we do it? The proof, as they say, is in the pudding.

Providing Specific Marketing Services:
SmartyPants Research & Marketing

Some IIPs, like my agency SmartyPants Research & Marketing (www.smartypantsresearch.com), provide marketing services to our clients; we make sure they get found by the search engines (enabling potential clients to find them), we tighten up website content to improve stickiness and (unlike traditional Yellow Page, newspaper, television and radio advertising) we market our clients to their targets more directly and inexpensively, pinpointing exactly which marketing tactic elicits what response.

Recently, SmartyPants worked with a city council incumbent in her bid for re-election. Four years before, she’d won her race by a narrow margin of 157 votes, winning two of her city’s 25 precincts. This time around, she was faced with some tough opposition and needed to win a preliminary election before the primary or main election.

We added analytics to and optimized her website; monitored her opponents via news alerts on Google and on social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook and researched issues. We also wrote, created and delivered her e-mail marketing campaigns.

She breezed through the preliminary election, and three months later, she won 25 out 27 precincts (the city had added two since the previous election) and landed an impressive 63% of the vote in the primary election. Though our client had built up her own credibility during the four years she’d been on the council, she acknowledges that SmartyPants played a big role in her win. Influential groups and people are now watching her very closely. As a side note: candidates in neighboring cities liked her email campaigns so much, that they “borrowed” them and used them for their own campaigns. Didn’t someone say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery?

Leveraging Contact Networks: Red House Consulting

Many IIPs, like Jocelyn Sheppard of Washington, Pennsylvania’s Red House Consulting (www.redhouseconsulting.com), have created vast networks of valuable contacts, which they are able to market in helping their clients. Recently, a teen health and wellness educator wanted to market herself more aggressively as a speaker and author of educational materials for children and adults. She’d also authored a book she wanted to target at a general audience.

Marjorie Desgrosseilliers is the smartypants behind SmartyPants Research & Marketing and is its CEO and owner. An IIP for 15 years, Marjorie helps businesses market themselves effectively utilizing targeted, inexpensive ways to market their services, search engine optimization and Internet marketing. You can reach her at marjorie<at>smartypantsresearch.com or 425-408-0368.
Jocelyn and her team engaged in research of the client’s specific target segments, providing essential market information. Combining that research with interviews conducted with their own network contacts, Red House assembled specific strategies for promoting the educator’s books and educational materials. Jocelyn arranged for a graphic designer to create a new logo and made recommendations on the print collateral design. She introduced the educator to an agent and created a road map for her to begin qualifying for speaking engagements on the college speaking circuit.

The client said that Red House’s services were “worth every penny” she paid.

Enabling Confident M&A Decisions: Carine Research

Carine Research (www.carineresearch.com) is an Australian IIP firm that specializes in merger & acquisition research. Principal Heather Carine has been preparing business proposals, looking at new business opportunities and formulating strategic ideas for businesses in the UK, the United States and Australia for over 10 years.

She was approached by a foreign private equity firm looking to invest over A$400M in a significant Australian business – it was to be a new portfolio asset for the equity firm. Heather researched the Australian business people who would play a continuing role in the Australian businesses that were being evaluated, and she prepared detailed business profiles going back almost 25 years into the Australian executives’ experience. The report included the executives’ business and board experience, associated companies and their key business. These profiles helped to provide the foreign client with the reassurance it needed to proceed with the high profile transaction.

Without the timely and detailed information and analysis that Heather provided, her client would not have been able to confidently move ahead with the decision that quite lucratively expanded its portfolio and bottom line.

Supporting Sales and Marketing Personnel: Research-Ability LLC

Many IIPs work directly with sales personnel and marketers – uncovering information vital to understanding a market, creating strategies to approach that market or even just simply providing lists and generating leads. By providing this crucial service, IIPs enable marketers and sales people to drill down to their target markets faster and spend more time doing what they do best…getting on the phone and making sales.

Susan Wald Berkman has provided business information and strategic company overviews to sales and marketing personnel for over 20 years – the last two as CEO of her own firm, Research-Ability (www.research-ability.com) in Coral Springs, Florida.

She recently worked on a project for a firm who develops marketing strategies and programs for associations. In order to market himself and his client appropriately and productively, her client needed research on a specific industry such as where it was, where it was going and major company players. The better her client could understand the market, the more relevant and practical his strategy would be to market his client association to potential members.

Susan compared the end client’s membership tiers and their value proposition to those of other associations in the same industry. The final report to her client included an overview of the industry, challenges in the industry, the trends and opportunities, key players, demographics and a competitive analysis. Based on the information and input Susan provided, her client was able to construct a successful marketing strategy and plan for his client.

Expanding a Publication’s Reach: DLS Information Services

Wishing to increase his circulation/readership, a co-owner of a small local business periodical contacted Diane Stubbs’ Scottsdale, Arizona-based DLS Information Services (www.dlsinfo.com). He needed to identify the most beneficial geographic areas in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Diane identified circulation areas having a large percentage of business/professional people, a large lunch-time population, employment density by category, potential for employment growth, wealthiest zip codes and the highest number of daytime diners – specifically, those who partake of mid-scale to fine-dining lunch.

As a direct result of the information DLS provided, the periodical was able to increase circulation from 18,000 to 111,000 copies, and attract higher caliber advertisers and award-winning writers. The success of this publication and the increased circulation is evidenced on newsstands, on street corners
and in libraries and restaurants/cafes and by the number of awards they have won since the completion of that project.

**Giving Strength in Numbers: Earthsense LLC**

Some IIPs, like consultant Wendy Cobrda of Syracuse, New York’s Earthsense (www.earthsense.com), develop databases and other informational tools. Earthsense’s syndicated data helps manufacturers of products with green characteristics to understand trends in the market and to justify expansion, marketing and other plans. Wendy was asked to help determine which factors correlated with high sales for a destination retailer (a destination retailer sells specialty goods and draws from a larger pool of consumers relative to locations that are more convenience-oriented, such as grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations). She spent a month analyzing the current 30+ locations and determined markets that had similar characteristics.

The numbers led Wendy into a side analysis, which revealed an unexpected and very interesting finding: she discovered that, in some markets, her client’s current locations were too close together. As a result, they were cannibalizing each other’s business.

Based on that finding, the client closed several locations. The remaining stores quickly took up the sales slack and rose higher in sales rank for the chain. Because of Wendy’s keen understanding of the numbers, she was able to provide her client with crucial input that ended up saving them millions of dollars.

**IIPs Enhance Marketing Productivity**

As you can see, IIPs can differ greatly in the form our services take – some (like me) offer actual marketing services, some offer statistical analysis, some offer telephone interviewing, some create databases or similar information tools and so on. The variations are infinite.

However, the common thread that runs through most IIP businesses is that the basis or the how of what we do to enhance our clients’ marketing productivity lies in unearthing, analyzing, synthesizing and even creating information – providing clients with tools to make informed decisions and/or to help their clients make informed decisions about them.

In the end, what we do tends either to save or make our clients money. And in this economy, that makes us, and them, very happy indeed.