



Is your Success written in the Stars?

Do you ever look at your stars? You know, Libra, Virgo, Scorpio etc.

Astrologers place great store in how our destiny is linked to the changing months and the effect on our lives, loves and fortunes. If this were accurate it'd be quite handy for plotting the progress of our business through the year but as always, after a quick peek, we pooh pooh these musings and return to comfort of the real world.

And yet, it has been shown over and over that when SMES have a vision of their marketing activity over the whole year, which is built into a plan and then acted upon (tying into particular business events or seasonal changes), customer awareness, lead generation and sales deliver far better than the usual ad hoc approach.

A clear marketing plan gives discipline because timing, operation and cost are pretty much known quantities.

In most SMEs, marketing activity usually stems from someone saying "don't you think we should be doing this" rather than a coherent, year round plan of activities. With so much (active) competition about, SMEs need to be doing at least one marketing activity every month (4 is better) which builds on the results of the previous months'. Whether this encompasses the core or niche product or service, the importance is to generate new income streams where possible.

Your success is not written in the stars. The big danger is to do nothing as even your friends will forget you if you don't make the effort.

It is a fact that those companies willing to market themselves in the down as well as the up times, thrive but also the owners of companies aren't always the best people to determine the marketing calendar. They're often being too close to the action; too wrapped up in day to day stuff when they need to take a step back and view the strength of their marketing across the year. Only then can marketing's true value be appreciated. Rely on your team - not on Mystic Meg.

Marketing to key events depends on your type of business. While everyone prepares for Christmas, customer activity may also more intense at other times – school holidays, exhibitions and events, summer fashions, etc. Planning forces companies to think about new opportunities for creating sales.

When will our sales peak? Why do they peak then? Can these sales be accessorised? i.e does the customer want more? Can we supply this? This is where the importance of good statistical support pays dividends in identifying trends.

What is everyone else doing? What does their advertising say? Have they refreshed their website recently? Do you feel you're on the pace? Are you behind? If you're ahead, maximise this advantage and don't sit on your laurels with a smug expression on your face because it won't last and there's no star sign for being an idiot.

If there is a core product or service, strategic to the business, review its performance and plan to revamp it, improving its awareness and set out a plan to market it better every month, showing off the freshness and value it delivers to potential buyers. This is how brands develop, keeping the focus because people do notice those companies that are pro-active and will gravitate to them when they begin their buying decision (but they'll always check your website out first).

Communication is essential for the main sale and peripheral ones, driving interest to various sectors of your business which all direct them to "pick up the phone" or place an online order. Just because they don't reply to every email you send, doesn't mean they're not interested - perhaps they're busy or cherry pick emails with barnstorming headlines. Perseverance pays.

Without a definite course of action, marketing will continue to drift, ineffective and wasteful in time and resources. Marketing to a set budget with specific goals and measurable objectives working in conjunction with key events during the calendar year is the required model.

Realistic marketing planning works and money in the bank from increased sales feels much better than peering hopefully up to the heavens for some sort of spiritual guidance.

To learn more about planning marketing activities and make it happen:
call: **01925 262 800** or simply email: gerryw@flyingveemgt.co.uk