

FUTURE MARKETING STRATEGY FOR

THE ADVISOR
GROUP INC.

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GOAL

Improve the efficiency of prospect acquisition and improve the speed and efficiency of closing efforts for **The Advisor Group** (“TAG”).

STRATEGY

Market strategy consists of three elements:

- Create and refine the TAG message.
- Build brand equity.
- Improve closing efficiency.

The strategy is a customer focused benefit-oriented approach for a financial services provider.

Create and Refine the TAG Message

The Advisor Group offers a number of financial services to the Mechanical Services provider. These value added services have to be defined in a clear and concise message. And, even more important, the “*what’s in it for me*” component of that message has to be immediately obvious. Two ideas will serve as a starting point:

- The current concept of “***Listen, Learn, and Lead***” could serve as the foundation for the message and every component of the advertising and marketing strategy would reinforce one of the three “L’s”.
- The “***APEC***” anagram is a great tactical “buzzword” and can reinforce the overall message.
- The five core service categories will serve as a menu of your expertise.

A potential customer must immediately understand the value of TAG’s services or better yet, they need to understand the consequences of **NOT** utilizing your expertise. A succinct message conveyed in seconds is vital for this understanding.

Building Brand Equity

Once the message is honed, The Advisor Group should begin by building equity in their brand. Building equity means delivering the message to every segment of the target market. An effective model used to convey this message is summarized in a framework I call, ***The Communication Triad***. The Triad consists of three key segments of communication. Within these segments are tactical delivery methods. Not all delivery methods are suitable for every purpose, but at least one tactical aspect of each segment should be exploited to provide adequate saturation of key decision makers.

The segments are represented by the three points of a triangle and titled:

- PEOPLE
- PAPER
- POWER

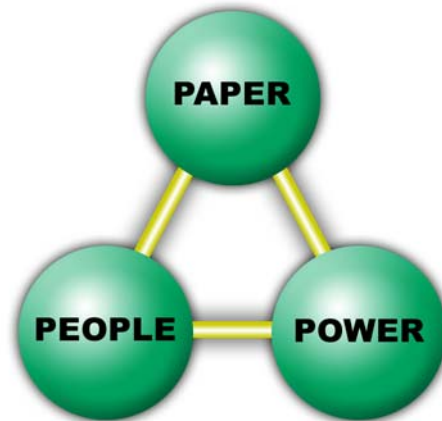


Figure 1. The Communication Triad

The **POWER** category involves methods requiring electric power to transmit the message. This includes television, radio, websites, email, interactive kiosks, CD's, etc.

The **PAPER** category uses paper based media to transmit the message. This includes magazines, brochures, pamphlets, flyers, newspapers, direct mail, etc.

The **PEOPLE** category covers direct communication between two humans. This includes trade shows, seminars, meetings, conferences, sales calls, telephony, etc.

Balancing the weight of each of the three points will give the potential client a constant and unified company message across all information sources.

POWER

The **POWER** category needs to focus solely on TAG's website. Though professional looking, the website lacks components vital to promoting the value of TAG. Again, the message must be clear and concise for even the simplest minds to understand. Details should be provided and long dissertations of TAG's philosophy included, but initial contact to the site should be analogous to meeting a person for the first time. You start with a handshake. Updating the website will require attention to the following issues:

- Build in "interactive" components and/or motion.
- Bolster the message from the lines of plain text.
- Link to external industry trade associations or customer sites.
- Build links from industry trade association or customer sites.

- Add meta-tags or search words so people can find the site online.
- Build and obtain listings on all major search engines.
- Add a contact form or self evaluation form for customer screening.

The home page is the front door to the website. Here is where you say to the customer, “I speak your language”, “I know your problems”, and “I have your specific solution.” To provide customer oriented content, the home page needs retooling to allow a user entrance through five separate portals. Each one is tailor made to the specific values TAG adds to that business segment. An individual investor can click on Wealth Management to understand the benefits TAG offers in securing future retirement needs. A Specialty Contractor clicks on their link to see what specific services TAG can bring to their business. This is an ideal way for TAG to show its prospects that it understands its customers.



Figure 2. Sample Home Page

PAPER

The PAPER category needs to incorporate TAG’s message in unity with its website. The PAPER category for TAG should include:

- Editorial articles in trade specific magazines.
- Custom direct mailers to specified list targets.
- Advertising in specified trade magazines. Examples:
 - Contracting Business
 - Contractor
 - Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration News
 - Consulting-Specifying Engineers
 - HPAC Engineering

Advertising, news articles, and editorials placed in many of the trade magazines will add other additional privileges for TAG. Most of the magazines have an online presence and are more than willing to provide a link to your site with banner advertising and industry specific editorial content. Editorials and news worthy articles are a great way to get the TAG message to the industry. There are few if any “Advisor Group” companies present in any of these arenas.

PEOPLE

The PEOPLE category is TAG’s main marketing tool. Both outgoing and incoming leads are generated through a series of PEOPLE communications, referrals, and cold calls. Granted, research is performed prior to the PEOPLE interaction, but the ultimate representation with the client is the PEOPLE. There are many avenues available to improve the PEOPLE category.

Magazines and trade associations hold trade shows and educational seminars that can show case your services. And, manufacturers, who continue to find ways to partner with their customers, usually hold customer conferences and outings for their largest clients. In an effort to show their support of the customer, they may allow your expertise to become part of their offering. Retooling the PEOPLE category involves the following actions:

- Develop a seminar program and presentation.
- Involve TAG in educational industry support seminars.
 - ACCA Commercial Contracting Roundtable
 - MCAA Association Executives Conference
 - MCAA Advanced Leadership Institute
- Participating in association trade show activities.
 - Design/Build
 - SMACNA Annual Convention
- Partnering with suppliers in support of their CRM activities.

Improve Closing Efficiency

The closing efficiency of TAG’s current marketing efforts will improve by the actions taken in the prior two components (Concise Message and Brand Equity).

Current marketing efforts involve a push toward the market. To improve this efficiency, we will create a push from the market toward TAG. The two forces, acting together, will give TAG more qualified and educated prospects and improved efficiency in the closing process.

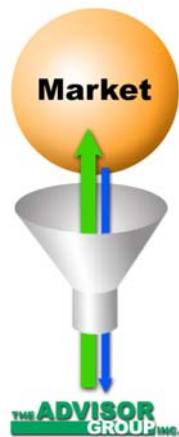


Figure 3. Current Marketing Pressure



Figure 4. Future Marketing Pressure.

Currently TAG has only two methods of developing future business

1. Generate prospects from a list, research, and contact them directly.
2. Allow referrals from past customers, vendors, and contacts to initiate dialog.

Referrals are the most cost effective business generator. But, *List-Research-Contact* methods are labor intensive, time-consuming, and costly. These methods also occupy the highly skilled talents of many key executives. Even after finding the *ideal* prospect, the value of TAG services may not be apparent because of the prospect's limited exposure to the brand and message. Spreading the message and building the brand will create a connection between the prospect and the voice at the other end of the telephone.

Data Mining

Prior to committing any funds to future marketing plans, TAG will create a current customer profile. A tremendous amount of information can be gathered from past and existing customers. This information can include satisfaction levels, improvement suggestions, and common business and personal habits. The aim is to develop a customer profile detailed enough to identify unique advertising channels frequented by your potential customers but not obvious to your competitors. Your face in a familiar place provides a unique connection to executives with similar interests, backgrounds, and tastes. A simple questionnaire created to drill down through the customer base and create a profile of future prospects and clients is a cost effective means of obtaining this valuable information. Results from this feedback allows for effective management of targeted marketing funds.

Targeted lists

To maximize the efficiency of direct marketing dollars, a targeted list of HVAC Mechanical companies can be generated. A brief three step process is required to filter the list to highly qualified candidates.

1. Generate a general list using SIC codes.
2. Utilize business databases to generate as much background research that reflects on the company's history and current status.
3. Call key supplier and customer contacts to filter database further.
4. Screen customer by initial and follow up conversations with key players.

A list of 216 prospects was generated recently by querying a Dun & Bradstreet database with specific SIC codes. This list was overlaid on two other business databases and cross referenced for the accuracy of vital information. Then, targeting the customers that fit the TAG profile derived from data mining operations, other background information is generated and sorted. This information will provide a clear picture of past, current, and future aspects of a particular company and their executive management.

An example of this type of research is included with this document for **John W. Danforth ("JWD")**. Whether JWD is a current customer or future prospect, this example demonstrates the amount of information that can be obtained in less than twenty minutes before committing man hours to the tedious task of telephone screening.

TAG marketing should not abandon the current marketing efforts, but should focus efforts on developing the message and company brand to improve the effectiveness of these efforts. The force of the marketing effort should not come primarily from TAG, but should flow equally from and to the market. Currently, TAG pushes its influence into vital niches while the market pulls prospects merely from referrals. By creating a better marketing mechanism within the industry, TAG will not only increase its unsolicited prospect stream, but will improve the ability to turn solicited prospects into customers.