Softlink Global

How can freight forwarders grow sales?

A sound marketing plan can help you run your company smoothly and guarantee success in the form of qualified leads, higher ROI, and more sales, says **Amit Maheshwari**, CEO & Managing Director, Softlink Global.

Until recent times, freight forwarding business growth and customer acquisition has been dependent on customer satisfaction index, deliverance efficiency, customer referrals and relationship. Although such practices remained the foundation of the business, freight forwarders have failed to assess the impact of implementing strategic marketing.

With the growth of the internet, advertising, and digital marketing, it has become imperative for freight forwarders to get to the level-playing field. I agree the industry is struggling with various disruptive forces ranging from shifting demand patterns, more complex and global supply chains, and an evolving customer base and latest technology.

There is no denying the fact that you have your way of differentiating yourself from the competition. But how do your prospects or even your customers would know that until and unless you market them? Being a technology provider to freight forwarders and customs brokers for more than two decades, I found this industry is way behind the rest, in terms of marketing. A sound marketing plan can help you run your company smoothly and guarantee success in the form of qualified leads, higher ROI, and more sales.

POSITIONING IS IMPORTANT

Specify your service offer. What kind of products do you deal with? What type of technology do you use? Do you provide a tracking facility to your customers? Country-specific regulations that you deal with etc. Defining the brand strategy with proper positioning and the messaging platform is the first step of marketing.

Amit Maheshwari
CEO & Managing Director
Softlink Global

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MARKETING STRATEGY

Do not forget to evaluate your marketing strategy time and again. Keep comparing your branding, lead generation, market expansion with your competition and from where you started.

DEFINE YOUR USP

Let your customers and prospects know your USPs. Articulate your value proposition through marketing so that your customers understand and feel confident about the services you provide over your competition.

KNOW YOUR MARKET WELL

It is important to establish your primary and secondary market focuses and dedicate your capability and capacity for material handling, customs, transportation, carriers, shippers, warehousing, and security accordingly. By determining your target market, you can prepare your marketing strategy and utilise the budget efficiently, thus increasing your ROI.

EVALUATE YOUR COMPETITION

Determine what is that you offer that your competitors don't? Is it lower prices, the latest technology, operational efficiencies, customer support, or something else? Marketing helps stand out in an industry flooded with companies offering similar services, establishing your value proposition to serve your customers.

ALLOCATE A MARKETING BUDGET

Once you finalise your marketing strategy and goals, determine how much money you want to spend on marketing. Now prepare a marketing plan based on the micro and macro targets you wish to achieve, whether it is more customers, expanded market, etc.

Last but not least, do not forget to evaluate your marketing strategy time and again. Keep comparing your branding, lead generation, market expansion with your competition and from where you started. There is always scope for improvement through A/B testing in marketing.

Every freight forwarder knows what they are offering better than their competition, but their potential customers don't. So it's time you start implementing a solid marketing strategy along with your unique service. A well-articulated marketing plan is a foundation to boost branding and generating quality leads in a business environment that is already on the digital platform.