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Marketing Matters

Marketing hot buttons

We all know that price is not the sole determiner of whether or not a person will buy a product or service. The decision to buy is influenced largely by emotions that reflect basic human needs. Those needs are outlined in the book *Hot Button Marketing* by Barry Feig who discusses emotional triggers that influence people to buy.

Marketers should sell the dream according to Feig. We live in a society where most people's physical needs are met but that is not the case with psychological needs. Even if you do not agree with these needs, you should recognize that they are part of the complex emotional landscape that affects all human beings to some degree.

Following are some hot buttons Feig says that business people must understand in order to effectively market their products and services.

- **The desire for control** - people want control over their finances, safety and health. Marketers can meet this need by offering long-term warranties, identifying customers expectations and linking quality to specific items.
- **The excitement of discovery** - people are always looking for new products and enjoy thinking they have discovered these by themselves. Watch an infomercial and notice how the host is always citing some new discovery or a design change. Marketers can use words like new or improved as a code word for discovery. Surprise the consumer and help break the monotony of what is ordinary and expected.
- **Family values** - this may be the hottest of all marketing hot buttons according to Feig. Family life is changing but marketers can sell to family values as people remember them or would like them to be. People want to be part of a larger group and marketers can tap into this need by creating sales that meet the needs of a particular age group or finding celebrities who serve as role models for a group you are trying to target.

Highlights

- **Nuts & bolts**
- **Working smarter**
- **Hints to make you more efficient**

Management Issues

Pitfalls of the job interview

With all the rules about what you can and cannot ask a prospective employee, here are some Dos and Don'ts from the Vermont *Employment Law Letter* that will help you stay out of legal hot water.

Actions you should take:

- **Train employees** who will be conducting interviews. Be sure they know appropriate subjects for inquiry. Warn interviewers of the danger of idle chitchat.
- **Ask the same questions** of all applicants. Consistency is vital to avoid any claims that a person was singled out because of a protected characteristic. The best approach is to have a predetermined list of questions that will keep interviews on track and give you a standard for making comparisons among applicants.
- **Limit questions to job-related areas.** Focus on education, experience and abilities, and how a person would handle essential functions of the job.
- **Maintain careful, detailed notes.** Keep those notes factual, objective and concise because notes created during the interview process can be provided to the applicant in the event of a lawsuit.

Actions to avoid:

- **Do not make promises.** Leave that to the person responsible for hiring.
- **Do not comment about an applicant's race, national origin, etc.** Avoid conversations about an applicant's birthplace or that of his parents. Don't ask about membership in social clubs or organizations.
- **Do not ask disability questions** including anything about medical conditions or medical, psychiatric or psychological treatment. While you may legitimately inquire about an applicant's general history of work attendance, you cannot ask how many days of absence an applicant had at the previous job. You may ask if the applicant needs a reasonable accommodation to do the job so long as you ask the same question of all applicants.

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Working Smarter

Planning helps you work efficiently

Nearly everyone in any kind of office situation is constantly pummeled by emails, phone calls, interruptions, paperwork or demands from impatient customers. Time management experts say that a little planning and perspective can go a long way toward giving you back control of your day and helping you work more efficiently.

Here are some tips collected from the Pace Productivity website and the University of Southern California Writing Center that will help keep you focused and moving ahead.

- **Don't waste time feeling guilty** about what you did not accomplish. The past is gone so forget move on.
- Try to **find a new technique** each day that can save you time or carve out more time for important projects.
- **Eat a light lunch** so that you will not get sleepy in the afternoon.
- **Carry a small notebook** so that you can jot down notes or ideas when they occur. How many times have you had that burst of inspiration or clarity about solving a problem when you are not sitting at your desk? Having a notebook will help you capture those insights before they evaporate.
- **List items to be accomplished each day** and arrange them in priority order. Then move quickly to get the most important tasks done first.
- **Create a block of time to handle paperwork.** Schedule this time during non-prime hours and stick to it.
- **Handle paper once.** Avoid the habit of setting a piece of paper aside. Record important information and then pass it on, file it or throw it away.
- **Ask for recommendations** to be part of reports people give to you. Limit the length of letters, recommendations, responses and other correspondence to one page.
- **Use the phone** instead of writing a memo unless a paper trail is really necessary.
- **Reduce your credit cards** to one per adult or two if you use one for home and one for work. This reduces statements and bill-paying time. Start paying your bills by automatic deduction. Most utility bills can be handled this way.
- **Put all your receipts in a small envelope** and sort through them every month or quarter.

Nuts and Bolts

Drug use prevalent among workers

One in 12 full-time workers in the U.S. admits to using illegal drugs during the past 30 days according to a study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. The data drawn from surveys in 2002, 2003 and 2004 including more than 40,000 people gives a disturbing picture of the lifestyles of America's workforce.

The highest rates of illicit drug use occurred among restaurant workers (17.4%) and construction workers (15.1%). About four percent of teachers and social service workers admitted to using illegal drugs which put those groups at the bottom of the list in terms of the percentage of drug users.

A spokesman for the agency which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said most of the illicit drug use involved marijuana.

Minimum wage bill includes tax breaks

Tax deductions for small businesses should soften the impact of higher wages according to a report in *Business Week*. Federal minimum wage rose from \$5.15 to \$5.85 an hour in July.

Congress also passed a \$4.8 billion package of tax breaks for small businesses including an expanded deduction for new purchases and a tax credit for Social Security contributions for workers who receive a portion of their income in tips. The tax package also offers incentives for hiring veterans, those on public assistance or those released from prison.

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