

How We Became A Marketing Agency



Ace Marketing & Promotions (asi/103085) has taken the leap from being just a seller of promotional products to being a marketing agency that prides itself on its ability to provide marketing

solutions to clients. "We like to say that we fit neatly between the ad specialty distributor and the ad agency," says Michael Trepeta, president of Ace Marketing.

He says company executives decided to take the plunge when they realized how difficult it would be to grow the business. "As a pure promotional products distributorship it is a constant battle to look for new salespeople and new customers," says Trepeta. He says the company saw it was vital to differentiate itself from other distributors in order to grow and attract quality salespeople.

The transformation didn't occur overnight: It took Ace Marketing about a year to determine and then achieve the right solutions. The company evaluated the needs of clients and the initiatives of buyers. Trepeta says what they determined was that

the buyers they were dealing with were also the decision-makers that directed many of the business decisions in other areas. "Our clients have always bought from Ace Marketing because of the value we put in the relationship," says Trepeta. "We have earned their confidence over time. We felt it would be natural that the clients would rather work with a single vendor that can effectively provide the majority of their marketing solutions, as opposed to five or six vendors separately."

An example is how the company recently began working with a new client in the commercial refrigeration field. Ace Marketing sat down with the company, discussed where the client saw themselves in the future and developed a corroborative road map for how to get there. "They obviously had a formula for how to operate and expand the business itself, but no idea on how to brand the business and market it," says Trepeta.

So Ace Marketing created a new corporate logo for their future branding and marketing. This then evolved into the implementation and development of marketing ads, collateral material, a corporate Web site, promotional products and a database management solution. "A

year ago, we would have only been providing them with a leave-behind for sales calls, and maybe an end-of-year gift for their employees," says Trepeta.

Ace Marketing provides several primary services to clients, including direct importing, incentive solutions and rewards, printing and forms management, fulfillment and warehouse, e-commerce and Web design, database management and integrated marketing solutions. "We were careful to choose a logical set of solutions that all have the ability to complement each other," says Trepeta. Year over year, Trepeta says Ace Marketing has seen a sales increase of about 20%. Great results are expected now when salespeople present to their client database, as the ability to promote and provide other services has enabled them to become "trusted advisors that provide promotional marketing solutions," says Trepeta.

For other distributors looking to turn their companies into more marketing-type agencies, Trepeta's advice is to have the ability to "provide true solutions. It is better to focus on services you can actually provide and are good at than to offer a solution you are not sure if you can handle. — Meghan Hurst