

(Profile for regional business publication)

Four Steps for Effective Marketing Communications.

Analyze any effective marketing communications campaign and you'll find four common elements: (1) clear objectives, (2) a coherent plan, (3) careful execution, and (4) measurement of results. According to George Pizzo, project director at the MEGA Group, a marketing communications firm in Robbinsville, N.J., too many campaigns ignore one or more of these essentials, which is why they either fail or fall short of their objectives. "These are the nuts and bolts," Pizzo said; "if you forget them, don't be surprised when the wheels come off."

The MEGA Group uses a vertically integrated team of marketing strategists, graphic artists, copywriters and printing professionals to cover all the required steps in a successful campaign. President Mark Iorio stresses that MEGA's print-buying capabilities provide added value for the client. "The proof is in the printing," he said. "Our expertise in that area can make the difference between a job being merely acceptable and truly exceptional."

Many of MEGA's clients are small- to medium-sized businesses. Campaign planning is particularly important for them. According to Pizzo, the scope of the campaign must be geared to their ability to respond, either in the fulfillment stage or when actually shipping product. For example, a client may want to implement a campaign for the purpose of generating sales leads, but without a mechanism in place to follow up on the leads received. MEGA addresses these issues in the planning stage. "If the projected response is greater than a client is staffed to handle," Pizzo explained, "then an adjustment has to be made — either to scale up capacity or scale down demand. It's a problem we'd all love to have. But as obvious as it sounds, many companies set themselves up to fail by overlooking it."

Another potential problem with many communication efforts is the proverbial failure to communicate. Account executive John Parker singles out award-winning campaigns that get an A+ for appearance but fail to hit the prospect where he or she lives. "Effectiveness is judged at the client's cash register," he says. "Many efforts fall short because they simply do not deliver the intended message. That's why we evaluate concepts primarily for being on target, and second for how they look."

At MEGA, graphic design is usually the last stage in campaign development. “We say that we save the best part for last, but there's a good reason why,” explains Iorio. “First we have to clearly define the objectives, and then define the appropriately scaled strategy to achieve them. Only when we've done that, can we begin to develop the message — and that's when our designers can begin to develop the visual content.”

Finally, MEGA advocates that every marketing effort be measurable, whether it involves developing a brochure, mail campaign or public relations effort. Whenever possible, part of the initial planning is to establish benchmarks so that effectiveness can be monitored and measured.

MEGA employees view themselves as being “on staff” with each of their clients. “Our job,” concludes Iorio, “is to help our clients communicate more, have a greater market presence and sell more of their products or services. That's the bottom line and if it doesn't happen, there's no need for us to be there. The burden is on each one of us to make sure it does.”