

The Jewish marketing discipline differs vastly from marketing Coca Cola, Apple Computers or *The Matrix*. It also differs in many ways from the marketing of other non-profit causes — because it's about Jewish life. In their unique way, the

Marketing the Jewish Future

by GARY WEXLER

Jewish people push overstuffed baskets of marketing challenges, with issues and sensitivities spilling over the sides.

Today, millions of dollars are spent on marketing Jewish issues, causes and programs. Much of that money is being wasted. Few know how to use marketing in the Jewish world to produce results.

Jewish marketing is both an intellectual and a spiritual challenge. Our future depends upon us doing it right. As committed Jews, we must become sophisticated, savvy marketers, building a body of marketing thought, practice and knowledge specific for our community.

There are multiple nuances to understand when applying marketing to the Jewish world.

Jewish marketing has very specific goals.

A brochure is not a goal. Neither is an ad, a video, a direct mail piece or a public relations story that reaches all the wrong audiences. Marketing to *help* produce fundraising results is a goal. Marketing to *help* find either students, participants in events, or members for a Jewish institution is a goal. Marketing to *help* advocate a position in order to change community opinion is a goal. How you reach these goals through marketing becomes your marketing plan. Unfortunately, most Jewish organizations become so consumed by the strategies and tactics that they lose sight of their goals — if they ever recognized them in the first place.

Jewish marketing must involve collaboration and community organizing.

For marketing expenditures to produce results in Jewish life, the plans must call for

strategies that product marketing does not — an intense amount of community collaboration and community organizing. Collaboration means that fundraising, programming and advocacy plans must be wrapped around marketing plans like two strands of DNA.

Community professional and lay leaders should no longer be working without marketers and a professional marketing strategy.

Community organizing must also become a strategy of marketing. Marketers must work with professionals and lay activists to identify thought-leaders within either professional, social or interest groups. These leaders — be they rabbis, business leaders, authors, rock stars, or simply the most popular mother among the parents in

the day school — must be cultivated. Their involvement is more important than any brochure or ad we can produce.

Jewish marketing must speak to the Jewish soul.

Marketing for Jewish life has to speak soul to soul, from the soul of the Jewish community to the Jewish soul of the individual.

This means that the marketing messages cannot dance on the surface. Jews make decisions in Jewish life from the depth of their souls, more than from their intellect. Marketing from the soul does not mean *haimish* marketing images. Synagogues and many other Jewish institutions believe that if they project *haimish*, they have accomplished their mission. *Haimish* images and Yiddish phrases in marketing are killing us as a community. They prevent us from creating images that speak broadly, powerfully, with diversity and professionalism, cultivating the perception of a dynamic, sophisticated, relevant Jewish world. *Haimish* does not speak to a new generation. In fact, it turns them off.

Jewish marketing must involve process.

The Jewish world is built on organizational process, involving the interaction and decision-making of professionals and lay people. There must be a process to educate the organization as to what Jewish marketing is and what their marketing issues are. There must be a workable approval process while the marketing is in creation. And there must be an ongoing training and evaluation process when the marketing finally begins to be implemented. Marketing, when done well, will create a process of organizational change, which occurs over several years.

The Macro Issue of Marketing

We dabble in marketing. We keep testing the waters with one toe, fearful of total immersion. We engage marketing on a temporary project basis, rather than on a consistent basis with a serious budget from year to year. As a result of dabbling, we have, at best, dabbling results.

Why are we not allocating the appropriate budgets? Why are we not making marketing the central topic of conferences and General Assemblies? Why are we not training our professionals in a serious, ongoing manner? Why are we not funding serious marketing research and evaluation?

It is time to un-dabble and get serious.

Our society is changing. Without powerful, intelligent and creative marketing, our community will have little hope of flourishing.

How do we un-dabble and begin to pursue this necessity in earnest? By moving beyond the small ideas and investigating the big idea.

We need to challenge the status quo by considering the creation of a worldwide Jewish marketing institute. Such an institute would manifest a new era in Jewish life. It would be a creative center generating ideas,

strategies and images. It would be the center for the creation of Jewish marketing, marketing research and marketing training. It would have an Israeli component for the marketing of Israel to both the Jewish world and the world at large. The marketing institute would signal to everyone a new phase in Jewish life.

This institute would be responsible for exploring a massive, trans-organizational Jewish awareness campaign. It would not be easy. But we have to move beyond the communal paralysis we suffer at the hands of our own crippling criticism. By creating a Jewish awareness campaign, in very public spaces, we would reach Jews who are not affiliated with our synagogues and communal organizations. If it is carried out expertly, consistently and with ongoing

commitment, such a campaign would create a framework of awareness that would help all Jewish organizations.

Marketing for the Jewish world will produce an additional outcome, perhaps the most important one. It will force us to look at our Jewish offerings and determine if they are really good enough for us to spend the money on marketing. Marketing will push us to be better, to be excellent. After all, if our offerings are not superlative, then no matter how much money we spend on marketing, we will have very few takers. ✿

As committed Jews, we must become sophisticated, savvy marketers, building a body of marketing thought, practice and knowledge specific for our community.

Gary Wexler is the owner of Passion Marketing for Issues and Causes, which works with some of the largest Jewish foundations and organizations in the U.S., Canada and Israel. He is currently completing a book on Passion Marketing.