

## **Facing the Marketplace**

**JoAnn Lombardi, VR Business Brokers/Mergers & Acquisitions, President**

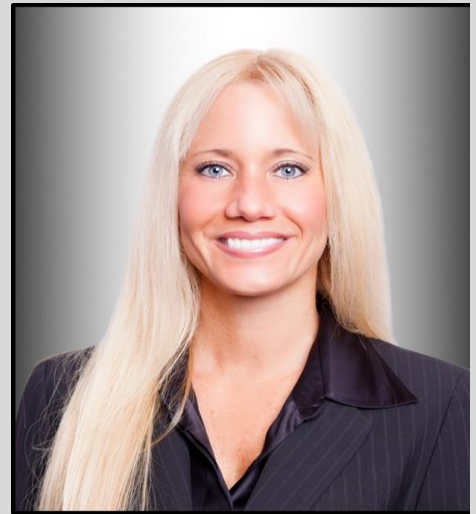
Since the beginning of the 20th century, advertising drove our economy in the form of a pre-packaged, one-way story. Today, it's a different story. We've gone from three channels to 500, from no web pages to a billion web pages. The choices that consumers have today are astronomical. There are more than 100 brands of nationally-advertised bottled water. Starbucks offers 19,000 different ways to order a beverage. With all the options available to the consumer, the shift of power cannot be understated.

The old way of selling on the street corner to anyone that will hear is over. People can easily ignore advertising today instead of being forced to listen. They can choose what they want to hear, and this is where permission marketing comes into play. It's better to deliver personal, anticipated and relevant ads to people who want to get the public. Once an idea is in the hands of people who care about its success, it may be lucky enough to benefit from digitally-augmented word of mouth. Modern ideas spread online and off, and this is faster and more effective than the old-fashioned centralized way of selling.

What makes a product or service attractive to a consumer isn't always directly related to what the product does as much as it's the free prize that you get with the purchase – the extra stuff that comes with it, the stylish bonus, the design, the service provided or the pricing. This is what makes people talk about the product and spread the word. Marketing is about telling stories that people want to hear. But most of all, it's about authenticity. Authentic marketing can stand up to the multi-dimensional scrutiny that the Internet brings. It amplifies the story you create and makes it more likely to spread once people become familiar with your product or service. When consumers think that you're selling a product that is not what you said it is, they stop paying attention and go somewhere else.

The best way to incorporate the new marketing is by building a permission asset. Send information to a group of people that want to hear from you about the new products and services that you have available. These kinds of people are called sneezers, those that will spread the word about your product or service. First, build a permission asset. As you gain a larger and larger base of sneezers, you can shift from finding customers for your products and start finding products for your customers — a happier, more profitable, better place to be.

Next, you want to create stories that your customers will want to tell themselves and their friends. These stories must be authentic; they must stand up to scrutiny and engage the worldview of the audience you seek to reach.



**JoAnn Lombardi, President**

