

The absolute truth is a monthly newsletter published by Absolute Marketing Group. The goal of the absolute truth is to assist businesses in marketing their company effectively. Please email info@absolutemg.com to have the absolute truth emailed to you.

C Confidentiality is Essential to Marketing Success

By: MacDalton Berns

Have you noticed an increasing number of companies tagging their email message signatures with 150-word confidentiality disclaimers? While message recipients may see this act as annoying and unneeded, I think it is a good marketing tactic because confidentiality of company information is essential for marketing success.

WHAT IS CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidential company information may include client lists, upcoming promotions, new product development, primary research, new business launch plans, strategic hiring plans, and new location possibilities. Basically, it is anything that you would not put on your Web site.

During my 10 years in the Red River Valley, I have helped over 1,000 companies with their marketing needs. In my experiences, I have witnessed increased breach of confidentiality challenges with employees, ex-employees and vendors.

EMPLOYEES

I have seen employees from multiple companies send family and friends confidential company information. Some employees wrongly assume that company information is public information. It's important to routinely educate employees about the confidentiality of company information and the punishment for violating company confidentiality policies. I believe that every employee should sign a confidentiality agreement and be required to display the company confidentiality policy at their desk.

EX-EMPLOYEES

I have talked with multiple owners of local businesses that have had employees send client lists to home email addresses before leaving. These ex-employees then used these lists to target clients for their new employer. I have talked to owners that had ex-employees hack into their active CRM systems to mine for valuable data. In all cases mentioned, a confidentiality agreement was not signed.

VENDORS

I have witnessed sales vendors disregard confidentiality. Here are three examples: (1) A sales manager notified us of the schedule and investment amount of our client's competitor, in hopes of increasing our client's budget. (2) A sales representative walked into our office and started looking at our confidential desk area to see what clients we represent in hopes of selling more to us. (3) A sales representative possessed privileged information about our client and shared it with our client's competition with hopes of increasing the sale.

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Because of these examples, I believe each vendor representative should sign confidentiality agreements. However, there may be other alternatives.

VEGAS

Las Vegas night life may have a higher expectation of confidentiality than marketing information etiquette. What Happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas. To bring back the respect for confidentiality, maybe we need to market "confidentiality" as something hip like Las Vegas: What Happens in Someone's Office, Stays in Someone's Office. Or maybe we should look to another industry for inspiration.

MIPA

The medical industry created the HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act, to establish confidentiality standards for patient records. You may remember signing extra forms at your last medical visit. Maybe we should start the MIPA, the Marketing Information Protection Act, to establish confidentiality standards for company marketing information? Every time you discuss marketing, you must sign confidentiality forms.

CONCLUSION

A handshake ensuring confidentiality is not good enough any more. Today's sales goal pressures and increased competition are eroding confidentiality as we know it. Going forward, what will you do to be proactive with confidential company information?

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Upcoming Events

Mar. 30 7:00pm West Fargo Chamber night at the FM Jets game