

MARKETING CASE STUDY:

HOW DO WE APPLY MARKETING PRINCIPLES AT THE ANGLO AMERICAN INFORMATION CENTRE?

Introduction

The Information Centre was established in 1946 and has achieved significant goals along the way. This has established the Information Centre firmly within the organisation and has raised its profile (within the organisation) over the years. The Information Centre has a reputation for service excellence. This is important for future marketing as we would like to retain our current customer base and this can only be achieved through continuing service excellence.

Mission statement

The purpose of the Information Centre is to provide an information service to assist decision-making processes, and to promote the active use of information for furthering the aims of the Corporation.

The mission statement of the Information Centre is:

- * to provide a dynamic, timely and cost-effective information service to our clients;
- * to focus on the goals and objectives of Anglo American and support business decision making in a global environment;
- * to strive for continuing improvement of service excellence in a friendly and professional manner.

Vision

The I.C. will play a pivotal role in facilitating the providing and use of information and knowledge to support (our client's) business decisions. The I.C.'s aim is to become the preferred supplier of information to the Anglo American Corporation.

In order to achieve our mission and focus on our vision we need to continuously be aware of our client's needs, and this is where the 4 P's of marketing are useful.

The 4 P's of marketing

I shall discuss the 4 P's of marketing within the context of the Anglo American Information Centre environment and how we apply the 4 P's. I believe that there is a 5th P and I shall discuss this in due course.

The four P's are:

- * Price;
- * Product;
- * Place;
- * Promotion.

Price

I quote Jim Courtis: **The price of all services is always wrong...**

There is no right price! The right price is the price that the client is prepared to pay for perceived value add.

What has our experience been? The client is prepared to pay for superior service. Now this sounds all very warm and fuzzy but if you have the right product, the infrastructure to deliver on promises and a client centered attitude, then the client will be prepared to pay for the service.

In our case we have a mandate from management to "recover" as much as we are able to from outside our corporate offices, while the remainder of the costs are considered as infrastructure costs, which are then spread across the various business units within the organisation.

This does not mean that we neglect our internal client base! We have to retain and maintain our service levels to our internal client base, but continuously seek to increase our business from the other Group companies and members.

As mentioned previously, the client will be prepared to pay for perceived value add. The price is also related to your Unique Selling Proposition (USP). If the client knows that the service provided would retrieve "exact hits" efficiently, then the client is prepared to pay for it.

In our case we levy a time charge per product, based on the time it takes an Information Officer to provide the particular products/services.

We have four categories of clients:

Corporate office clients
Outside the corporate office (group companies)
Outside Anglo American clients (members)
Non-members/Day visitors.

We do offer these groups of clients various levels of service and the products are priced accordingly.

Product

In the Anglo American Information Centre we provide our clients with several products. I shall briefly list our products but I shall only discuss our USP as this is our major strength.

List of products:

- * Processing of information requests, including access to our in-house database, which contains over 113 000 records;
- * Document supply on request, this is usually supplied from our in-house sources;
- * International commercial database searching on the various databases that the I.C. has access to e.g. IMAGE, Dialog, MEG, World Markets Online, Profound, etc.;
- * Current awareness from the journals that the I.C. subscribes to;
- * Ordering and administering all journals;
- * The ordering of books from local and overseas suppliers;
- * Ordering of newspapers;
- * Lending material from the I.C.;
- * Updating loose-leaf publications e.g. Minerals Act, etc.;

- * Full access to the interlibrary loan network within Southern Africa;
- * Document supply from overseas suppliers;
- * Assistance with Internet searching, e.g. addresses, search strategies, etc..

As you can see, these are mostly "traditional" services that most Information Centres provide. However, as I have mentioned before, our USP is our in-house database, which is tailor made to Anglo American's information needs and the mining industry (local and international).

Our in-house database and our ability to supply the references immediately are our major strengths. As I have mentioned before, you have to have the infrastructure to deliver "on the spot".

Place

Marketing is all about **LOCATION/PLACE**, whether it is physical or virtual. As we all know, "out of site is out of mind". A client that is physically removed from the Information Centre will use it less than the client that is in the same building.

It is our experience that even being in a different building has an impact on usage: it is not as easy for the client to browse.

The Anglo American Information Centre is located in the same building as the technical division (which is our main clientele). We are located in the ground floor to facilitate easy access from outside, and we are on route to two of the dining rooms.

We do have a virtual space as well – we are on our clients' desktops via the intra-net. In our case the virtual complements the physical.

Promotion

Promotion is all about communicating your products. How do we communicate our products to our clients or potential clients?

- Intranet homepage – our home page has the 2nd highest hit rate in the organisation: currently at 20 957 since October 1998.
- We publish our current awareness bulletin in hard copy and electronic format. A great number of our clients still prefer the hard copy.
- One on one interviews are held with clients to establish what their information needs are.
- We attend Departmental meetings.
- We send focussed e-mails to target groups rather than general e-mails.

Achieving ISO 9002 certification has been a great marketing tool as we were the first department, after Quality Assurance to achieve this. ISO 9002 demonstrates that we have the procedures and work instructions in place to support service delivery and that we are serious about service delivery. Surveys are conducted on a regular basis.

It has been our experience that the "extended network" and "word of mouth" are still the most powerful promotional tools.

The 5th P

In addition to the traditional market mix as we all know it, I have taken the liberty to add

a 5th P. The 5th P I call **Performance**.

As a service department, performance is probably the second most crucial aspect (after product). Product and performance complement one another. You can't have superior performance without the infrastructure and the product.

Performance is all about living up to your promises (to your clients). In the Anglo Information Centre we are proud of our turn-a-round time and the continuous feedback that we give to our clients.

Performance is about having a client centered attitude - the client is king and we go the extra mile for the client.

Performance is about having a quality control system in place and taking client complaints seriously. We log our client complaints on our ISO action system and formulate corrective and preventative actions.

Performance is about having the appropriate members of staff interacting with the clients.

Performance is about enthusiasm and passion for what you do, and concern for your client's information needs.

Conclusion

The Anglo American Information Centre has successfully applied the four marketing principles (price, product, place, promotion) to cement existing business, and to grow new business in a contracting business environment. In addition, through attention to performance (the fifth "p") the AAIC will continue to be the information source of choice for mining information to the Anglo American global corporation.

It has been our experience at the Anglo American Information Centre that word of mouth, and superior service are still the most powerful marketing tools available.

Bibliography

Courtis John. (1989) Marketing services: a practical guide. Kogan Page Ltd. London. ISBN 1-85091-657-8