



THE FIVE THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE MARKETING TO THE LGBT COMMUNITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



The 5 Things to Know Before Doing LGBT Marketing

1

Know Why You're Doing It

2

Honor Your LGBT Employees

3

LGBTs are Not Monolithic

4

Establish Trust First

5

Train Your Staff



NUMBER ONE



KNOW WHY
YOU'RE DOING IT

#1: KNOW WHY YOU'RE DOING IT



First, there's the business case. To be sure, the LGBT market is loyal and lucrative. In 2015, LGBT spending power was estimated at almost \$1 trillion, comparable to the African-American and Hispanic markets. Many companies are already marketing to the LGBT community. But does it make sense for your company or brand to reach the LGBT audience? If you work on something that indexes highly with the LGBT audience (e.g. relevant arts/entertainment or technology, luxury travel, men's cosmetics, high-end coffee, restaurants, fashion, jewelry, alcohol, relevant health products, high-end home appliances, pet products), there is probably a business rationale for targeting the LGBT community. On the other end of the spectrum, if your brand sells fried fast-food, diapers, toys, guns, cleaning supplies, trucks or mini-vans, etc., there may not be a clear business rationale for targeting the LGBT community.

Second, as important as the business case is the moral imperative. If your company does not stand firm behind its potential decision to target the LGBT community in the face of potential negative social media or even boycotts from far-right groups, then you risk alienating both the LGBT market and the far-right market. Those companies (e.g. Amazon, Starbucks, General Motors, etc.) that have stood firm in their support for the LGBT community have won millions of loyal supporters. Others that have wavered (such as Target) have taken years of painstaking backtracking to regain their toehold in the LGBT market.



NUMBER TWO

HONOR YOUR LGBT EMPLOYEES

#2: HONOR YOUR LGBT EMPLOYEES



Sometimes a company can gain LGBT awareness and customers simply by taking a stand to honor their LGBT employees. For example, when then-Governor Pence of Indiana signed a “religious freedom” law that enabled companies to refuse to do business with LGBT people, many companies that don’t necessarily market to the LGBT community actively spoke out against this law, and/or pulled business from the State of Indiana. Some of these companies, such as Salesforce.com, Angie’s List, Walt Disney and Dow Chemical, did this because they were supporting their LGBT employees.

Part of honoring your LGBT employees also incorporates your company’s internal policies. It is important to note that before marketing to the LGBT community, your company’s policies must also be supportive of LGBT employees – if not, organizations like the Human Rights Campaign will make this information available to LGBT consumers and your marketing campaign will be undermined. For example, does your company offer health insurance that covers transgender reassignment surgery?



NUMBER THREE

THE LGBT COMMUNITY IS NOT MONOLITHIC

#3: THE LGBT COMMUNITY IS NOT MONOLITHIC



Most people refer to the LGBT community as if it is one monolithic group. However, there are vast differences between lesbians and gay men, between bisexuals and transgender people. And there are also differences between white middle class suburban lesbians and lower-middle class urban lesbians of color, between older gay Jewish men and young gay Muslim men, etc.

Most of the time, when marketers refer to the LGBT community, they really mean gay men. This is because gay men tend to have higher incomes than the other groups, they are easier to reach (more media exists to reach them) and they are noted influencers of many other segments within society.

Marketing to the entire LGBT community without micro-targeting may not be efficient or smart. Some of these groups are easier to reach than others, and some of these groups may also be more important to your brand than others. The sub-segment you choose will also determine the messaging, imagery and the type of marketing that will be most effective for your brand.



NUMBER FOUR



ESTABLISH TRUST FIRST

#4: ESTABLISH TRUST FIRST



LGBT consumers tend to be smart and skeptical. If you don't have the right message or imagery, they will quickly skip over your product. And they can be fiercely brand-loyal, but if they sense that your company is not genuine in its support for the LGBT community, but simply wants to make a buck, there can be a backlash.

If you're new to marketing to the LGBT community, establishing trust is key. Sometimes this can be accomplished through articles in LGBT media outlets, or a partnership with a well-regarded LGBT non-profit organization, for example. But more importantly, this trust must be demonstrated over time. The commitment must be there in the long-term, otherwise your efforts will soon evaporate.



NUMBER FIVE

TRAIN YOUR STAFF

#5: TRAIN YOUR STAFF



Imagine you work in marketing at a national hotel chain. You have just launched a fantastic marketing campaign targeting the LGBT market. The messaging and imagery resonate, and LGBT guests are starting to book rooms. You are thrilled. That is, until the LGBT guests arrive.

At the front desk, the staff member looks wide-eyed at the male couple and asks (with a snicker), “are you SURE you want one king size bed?” Later, in the room, a pair of slippers is put by each side of the bed for the two male guests. One pair is for men, the other for women.

You can bet that in the age of social media, these stories will soon be all over the internet. The LGBT guests soon start to dwindle. Your efforts will be wasted.

In short, before launching any LGBT marketing effort, make sure all the company employees who will be interfacing with LGBT customers are well-trained on how to appropriately handle any type of situation that involves LGBT people.

FOR MORE INFO

If you would like more info on how to market to the LGBT Community, please contact us. We will give you a free 30-minute consultation.

FREE CONSULTATION

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