

GrayMatterz

THE ZIMMERMAN GROUP, INC.

Marketing/Consulting

JANUARY 2002

PREDICTIONS FOR 2002

A *New York Times* William Safire op/ed piece (12/27/01) begins: "If you correctly predicted everything that happened in 2001, you belong in jail." Obviously, this past year caught most of us off guard.

For awhile, especially after September 11th, the country ground to a halt. Now, in spite of the economy – or, rather, specifically to push the economy forward – companies are trying to figure out how to keep going. How to keep selling products and services. How to keep innovating.

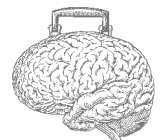
Consider this from *Fast Company*: "People and companies who think big don't want to scale back on their aspirations. They do, however, have to rethink their strategies, tactics, and timetables. What happens when the going gets tough? Tough-minded leaders keep going, because they understand that most of their rivals will give up leaving them bigger opportunities down the road."

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

In this tough-minded spirit, consider the powerful actions you can take now.

Chief among these? Plan for the future by setting new marketing priorities, considering new strategies, and monitoring your competition.

Here's what we're doing to achieve this for our clients:



Brains for hire.

SPECIFIC IDEAS

Gather direct feedback

- Interview your sales reps to find out what they hear from your clients and prospects as your greatest strengths/weaknesses
- Confirm these instincts by polling selected clients and prospects
- Then use this information to guide strategic planning

Create an integrated marketing and sales plan

- Identify all audiences
- Determine the distinct message for each
- Consider the best variety of vehicles (ads, brochures, direct mail) for greatest impact

Analyze your website and your competitors' websites

- Are you taking maximum advantage of your own site?
- What are competitors doing that you should adopt?
- Are your corporate partners featuring you as prominently as they should?

Develop stronger, more proactive public relations programs

- Expand beyond just sending the occasional press release
- Develop a complete strategy to help you meet your goals, whether that's developing a stronger press kit, contributing feature stories, gaining more press exposure at trade shows — or some combination of these

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Build an integrated corporate culture program

- Identify and build onto the unique culture of your organization
- Help new hires understand what is expected
- Keep employees motivated during difficult times

MORE IDEAS

Here are a few of the other ways we can help in 2002:

- Conduct an analysis of your competitors' pricing and distribution methods
- Facilitate a re-branding exercise to find out whether all your audiences see your image the same way – and the way you'd like them to
- Develop new training programs for your sales force, given the new realities of your market, including revamped scripts and materials
- Re-evaluate the best trade shows to attend, and plan what you'll need to maximize your participation (e.g., theme, key message, booth, giveaways, show program ads, training)



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ON A LIGHTER NOTE

We'll all be watching to see how and when we crawl out of the recession. In the meantime, enjoy these lifestyle predictions from The Scripps Howard Washington Bureau:

- "Americans will flock to sidewalk cafes and suburban bistros. Professional chefs will trend toward simplicity in menus, rather than time-wasting and hard-to-make 16-ingredient dishes. Out: plate pictures and food with squiggles on it."
- "Paris and Milan fashion runways will stress pants with fancy high heels over skirts for women. For men: it's white shirts and ties, and dress down any day disappears."
- "Earth tones and blue-heading-toward-purple are THE colors for interior design."

As you continue your 2002 planning, let us know how we can help you achieve your aspirations. Just call us at 919-490-6617. Or send an email to Ellen Zimmerman at ez@zimm.com.