

Promotion Strategy Specific to Organizations Participating in "Back to School" Program

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Abstract: Romania's stationery market records a growth rhythm of about 10-15 percent per year. For the beginning of school year 2007-2008, organizations of the type forecast a growth of 25%. During the top period, stationery sales grow generally with about 800-1000 % in comparison with a habitual period of the year. For distributors, the season of school stationery lasts from July to September, a period where it is accomplished 20-25% of the entire year turnover. All these events unfold rapidly in a relatively short period of time, 2-3 months for distributors and a month for retailers, producing a real storm in the frame of their management. In order to deal with "shopping fury" specific to the time before the school beginning, organizations of the field are in the position of applying a series of communication strategies. The purpose of this work is to highlight a practical example of communication plan specific to organizations involved in "back to school" program.

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1. Introduction

The role of promotional actions is to highlight products on the competition market of the organization, to position them better, and the application of adequate marketing policies causes the maintenance, strengthening, and sales extension. The organization undertakes also communication actions to inform the target public in due time, regarding the nature of the products launched to manufacture, their promotion on the basis of fair competition, carrying out special market researches, promotion of facilities granted to tradesmen (exhibition display stands, advertising materials, catalogues, posters, samples, credits etc.) and the highlighting of advantages towards the competition.

One of the most important decisions that the organization's top management should take into account refers to the size of promotion expenses. Specialized literature presents four universally accepted methods that an organization may apply in order to settle the budget, namely the method of possibilities, competitive parity, and the method of goals and tasks.

In the case of organizations taking part in the "Back to school" program, what Marketing Department may adopt is the percentage-of-sales method, keeping for the promotional budget a certain percentage of the effective or planned sales value. This method presents a series of

advantages. First, promotion expenses vary depending on organization's "possibilities". Second, its management may analyze the relation between expenses and promotion, the sales price and unitary profit. Finally, it is presupposed that this method creates stability at competition's level, as companies tend to allocate approximately the same percentage of their sales to promotion.

As budget size varies every year depending on sales volume, long-term planning is difficult to carry out. The organization directs promotional budget to the main promotional instruments: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations. They must be so carefully combined to create a coordinated promotional mix that should permit the reaching of marketing goals and advertising. For this, the organization must take into account the type of product and of market, the opportunity to apply a strategy of pushing or attracting, the stage of buyer's preparation and the stage from the product life cycle. In order to have a maximum impact of plannings and marketing programs, promotional activities must be organized and coordinated as a unitary system.

The value of stationery market in Romania runs into 150-200 million euros and records a growth rhythm of about 10-15 percents per year, due mainly to the growth of buyers' power of purchasing. In the stationery market, the main categories of school products are exercise books, covers, writing and coloring items, satchels and pencil boxes. This year consumers' tendency also follows the orientation towards brand products, so that design elements and quality win more and more consumers. Besides the classical characters Barbie and Disney that are on top of preferences, stationery design was improved with other characters loved by children: Spiderman, Ben10, Cars, Brats, Witch or Harry Potter.

For the beginning of school year 2007-2008, organizations of the field forecast a growth of 25%, due to the extension of market with new brands. During the top period, stationery sales grow generally about 800-1000 % in comparison with a usual period of the year. For distributors, the season of school products lasts from July to September. During these 2-3 months, they realize on the average 20-25% of the whole year's turnover. In 2006, the most requested brands were Canson (drawing blocks), Morocolor (drawing and hobby products), Stabilo (writing and coloring items), Carioca (drawing and coloring instruments, as well as writing instruments). The biggest sales volumes of season were carried out by exercise books, covers, geometry instruments, products for drawing and coloring.

2. "Back to School" promotion campaign in the framework of Graphotek Expres S.R.L. Printing House

The general goals of the organization have the following shapes:

- Building a favorable attitude towards the GRAPHOTEK products and the organization in general
- Strengthening and maintaining loyalty of distributors and current loyal consumers by preserving the favorable attitude towards the brand and product and the belief that they have correctly chosen
- Rendering current "accidental" customers loyal
- Removing unfavorable attitude towards GRAPHOTEK products
- Modification of covers to the "Back to school" assortment (A5 exercise books, student notebooks, special notebooks - rough notebook, biology, geography, music, drawing, drawing block, word book)

- Attracting new customers from the indifferent and confused (towards the favorite brand) and their rendering loyal on long-term, and attracting new customers, consumers of competition products.

In order to support sales, organization's strategy was oriented towards two directions, at a national and local level.

a. At a national level. Promotion policy has as goals:

- Carrying out new collaborations with specialized companies and bookstores, developing the existing ones with a proper endowment: billboards, totems, banners, display stands, blisters, posters, catalogues, etc
- Providing material incentive of sales staff with little promotional gifts on the entire distribution chain: wholesalers, retailers, salespersons, and buyers
- Sponsorships granted for different actions
- Participation to the most important fairs and exhibitions, namely: PRINT SHOW 2007, TIB, TIBCO
- Extension at a national level of sales campaign that is to be applied at local level
- Official launching of GRAPHOTEK products in June/ July, framed by the broadcasting of advertising slots on national radio stations

b. At a local level. At local level (Galați - Brăila), it is necessary a sales campaign on a short term that will unfold between June 10 – October 1, 2007. The main goal of this campaign is constituted by the acceptance of Galați inhabitants of GRAPHOTEK products and salespersons' stimulation in the entire chain of wholesale, retail, salespersons, and consumers.

1. Marketing goals at the level of specialized store:

- Ensuring the presence of GRAPHOTEK products in all specialized shops and books stores from Galați and Brăila
- Reaching a level of informing, awareness and stimulation of local pride towards the GRAPHOTEK products of population with ages between 6 and 30 years from Galați – Brăila

2. Goals at the level of consumer/wholesaler/retailer:

- Informing of the public regarding GRAPHOTEK products, as well as the slogan that accompanies them
- Building a favorable attitude towards the name and the brand GRAPHOTEK and the positions themselves occupied by each product
- Removing the unfavorable attitude towards the GRAPHOTEK products and the belief of retrying
- Building favorable image towards the quality of GRAPHOTEK products after the first trials

The targeted segment is stationery's consumers. Generally, the profile of stationery consumer towards which is directed the sales campaign is formed of pre-school children, pupils, students, with ages between 3 and 30 years from Galați - Brăila, preoccupied by school beginning, by style and fashion, optimistic and exuberant.

Program's structure is as follows:

- June – market preparation in view of launching sales campaign;
- July – beginning of sales campaign;
- July - August – development of sales campaign;

Stages:

1. Drawing up questionnaires, filling them in and interpreting results, between

June 1 - 15 2007. After filling in questionnaires, one extracts information, interprets results and analyzes them in order to find new ideas and direction for the development of the sales campaign at a local level.

Estimated expenses: In order to be representative, the sample will be formed of 200 consumers, and the maximum admitted error of opinion poll is of 5%. Seven students will be selected and hired as promoters and they will be distributed questionnaires, thus:

For consumers' sample: 4 promoters x 50 questionnaires = 200 questionnaires

Filling in a questionnaire will be paid with: 0.7 lei x 200 questionnaires = 140 lei

For wholesale segment/distributors: 1 promoter x 100 questionnaires = 70 lei

For retail share: 1 promoter x 100 questionnaires = 70 lei. For salespersons sample: 1 promoter x 100 questionnaires = 70 lei. Total estimated expenses = **350 lei**

Carrying out the elaborate program is possible only under the conditions of acquiring pertinent information regarding:

- Psycho-social profile of stationery consumer from Galați - Brăila;
- The opinion that GRAPHOTEK product consumers have about them;
- The knowledge they have about GRAPHOTEK and its products.

Target groups: consumers; wholesalers, retailers, distributors.

2. Launching a show at Radio Galați in collaboration with Monitorul de Galați - Brăila, starting with June 1 2007

The talk show called "Școala de vară" (Summer school) will be broadcast once a week (Monday), at 6 p.m., an hour of maximum radio audience. The new show, as well its official sponsor, S.C. GRAPHOTEK EXPRES S.R.L., will be every Saturday and Monday on the cover of Monitorul de Galați - Brăila and of the information and advertising magazine Oferta Tecuceană, and by advertising it at the same time at Radio Galați, 5/6 times a day.

Sponsor's advantages: this one has an intense promotion by announcing the official sponsor at the beginning of each show: all advertising slots of the show in the radio will contain "GRAPHOTEK Company presents to you "Summer school". The same sentence will be underlined also in advertising dummy page of Monitorul de Galați - Brăila and Oferta Tecuceană, and the sponsor's name will not miss from news and articles. Another advantage is the possibility of organizing different contests of general culture within the show, with prizes granted by the show's sponsor, S.C. GRAPHOTEK EXPRES S.R.L. (office supplies, pencils, key rings, T-shirts and caps). Once a month there will be a great prize based on a score obtained along the four weeks and it consists of a satchel full of GRAPHOTEK stationery, a T-shirt and a cap.

Estimated expenses: sponsorship - 400 lei / month. Equivalent value of a satchel with stationery. Sponsorship will be granted for a period of three months: $400 \times 3 = 1,200$ lei, 3 satchels x 50 lei / piece = 150 lei. Promotional materials for 12 contests: 12 T-shirts + 12 caps = 41\$. Prizes consisting of stationery: 1set/week, 30 lei/week x 12 weeks = 360 lei. Total estimated expenses = **1,710 lei + 41 \$**

Target groups: pupils, students. The aim of this activity: attracting and gaining a social group of a considerable size "unoccupied" yet explicitly by other stationery brand – the young passionate of knowledge.

3. Starting with June 20, 2007, for a week there will be placed four mobile selling points in Galați, where there will be sampling with GRAPHOTEK products. Children will have at their disposal exercise books, drawing books, paper cubes realized by GRAPHOTEK. Children will have at their disposal writing instruments and will be encouraged to try the exercise books and test their quality. One will collect and note reactions and comments of those who test stationery. Possibly passers-by will be asked what their opinion about GRAPHOTEK stationery is and will be asked to note down their opinion in a special notebook of impressions. In these points, they will sell also the whole range of GRAPHOTEK exercise books in the form of wrapped packages 5+1. Also there, when people buy a GRAPHOTEK package, they will also receive a promotional object (pencil, key ring, pocket calendar, or a bag).

It is estimated that there will be consumed 4 boxes/ 4 hours/ day. The goal of this action is attracting new consumers, creating a favorable image over GRAPHOTEK products and banishing consumers' reserve.

Estimated expenses: The payment of the 8 promoters that will do sampling (e.g.: 7 lei / 4 hours). $8 \times 7 \text{ lei} = 56 \text{ lei}$ $\times 7 \text{ days} = 392 \text{ lei}$. 4 packages = $120 \times 0.5 \text{ lei} = 60 \text{ lei} / \text{day} \times 7 \text{ days} = 420 \text{ lei}$, 30 packages = $180 \times 0.5 \text{ lei} = 90 \text{ lei} / \text{day} \times 7 \text{ days} = 630 \text{ lei}$. Promotional materials needed: 100 pencils, 100 pocket calendars, 50 key rings/day, meaning $47 \$ / \text{day} \times 7 \text{ days} = 329 \$$. Placing the four mobile selling points does not cost when it is realized through the intermediate of the distributor or there is the possibility of a sponsorship by Galati City Council in exchange of obtaining the necessary authorization.

Total estimated expenses = **1.442 lei + 329 \$**

4. Starting with June 15 2007, broadcasting on Radio 21 of some commercials regarding the instantaneous prize awards of GRAPHOTEK stationery buyers, either if they are found in specialized shops or bookstores, or in wholesale stores. **Estimated expenses:** Production of advertising slot 30 seconds: 250 \$

- Between June 15 and 30 2007 broadcasting three advertising slots/day, thus: 07:53 a.m.- 1 spot -4.10 \$; 16:07 p.m.-1 spot - 3.80 \$; 18:07 p.m. - 1 spot - 4.10 \$; Total / day = $12 \$ \times 15 \text{ days} = 180 \$$
- Between July 1 and 15, 2007, broadcasting of two slots/ day, thus: 07:53 a.m.-1 slot - 4.10 \$; 18:07 p.m.-1 slot - 4.10 \$; total / day = $8.20 \$ \times 15 \text{ days} = 123 \$$. Total advertising slots broadcasting = **553 \$**

The advantage of contract conclusion consists in the bonus granted by Radio 21, namely: 15 free contests of 3 minutes each, with prize award from S.C. GRAPHOTEK EXPRES SRL: 1 package 10 exercise books GRAPHOTEK $\times 15 \text{ packages} \times 10 \text{ exercise books} \times 0,5 \text{ lei/exercise book} = 75 \text{ lei}$.

$15 \text{ T-shirts} \times 2.04 \$ / \text{piece} = 31 \$$. $15 \text{ caps} \times 1.38 \$ / \text{piece} = 21 \$$. Total estimated expenses: **75 lei + 52 \$**

5. Starting with June 30, 2007 until July 7, 2007, four teams of three people (two promoters + one GRAPHOTEK employee), simultaneously enter different specialized stores or bookstores. There they order stationery of 50 – 100 lei and ask for GRAPHOTEK

products. If they do not find, the team leaves and says, "Come to Eminescu/ Coşbuc Bookstore! There we always find GRAPHOTEK stationery". Where they find GRAPHOTEK stationery, they give the salesperson a cap, a T-shirt, a calendar of a GRAPHOTEK clock. They will also collect information about customers' attitude towards GRAPHOTEK stationery.

Target group: salespersons. **Purpose:** their stimulation and the striking root of the idea to demand the patron to bring GRAPHOTEK office supplies. **Estimated expenses:** 10 lei / day x 3 promoters = 30 lei / day x 7 days = 210 lei. Promotional materials: 350 T-shirts x 2.04 \$/piece = 714 \$, 350 caps x 1.38 \$/ piece = 483 \$. Total estimated expenses **210 lei + 1,197 \$**

6. Starting with July 10, 2007, 3-4 mobile teams will walk through the city in specialized stores and bookstores and award prizes instantaneously customers who have bought GRAPHOTEK stationery, thus: a free GRAPHOTEK pencil, an exercise book, a T-shirt, a cap. **Target group:** consumers. **Purpose:** attracting new consumers from non-consumers and those of other stationery brands

This action will develop on the entire campaign, not continuously, but done with interruptions (two weeks in bookstores and supermarkets, then two weeks of break). **Estimated expenses:** 50 pencils x 0.54 lei = 27 lei/day, 50 exercise books x 0.5 lei / piece = 25 lei/day, 50 T-shirts x 2.04 \$/piece = 102 \$/day, 50 caps x 1.038\$/piece = 53 \$/day, Total = (52 lei + 155 \$) x 30 days = 1,560 lei + 4,650 \$. Total estimated expenses: **1,560 lei + 4,650 \$**

7. Starting from July until October inclusively, there will be a sales campaign at the level of specialized store and bookstores. Contracts will be concluded with 15-20 specialized stores/ bookstores from Galaţi. Those who buy GRAPHOTEK stationery will receive a "GRAPHOTEK butterfly". With three "GRAPHOTEK butterflies", one can participate in an evening GRAPHOTEK (disco/fashion show) organized once a month.

Purpose of the action: Consumers' stimulation to buy GRAPHOTEK products and stimulation of retailers to have GRAPHOTEK stationery on shelves, temporary growth of sales. Like this, the company comes to retailers and distributors' assistance. **Target group:** especially the young.

8. Organizing sweepstakes at local level with a possible extension to national level

The criterion to participate at the sweepstakes will consist in filling in a coupon of participation received after acquiring stationery of 100 lei, a coupon that will be sent to the society's address together with identification data and the complete address of the young customer. For a better knowledge of GRAPHOTEK products, one can ask to answer a question of the type: "What is the slogan accompanying GRAPHOTEK products?" This sweepstakes should begin at August 1, 2007 and end October 10, 2007. Approximate duration: 9 weeks. Maximum time dates for drawing of lots: August 22, 2007; October 10, 2007. Prizes proposed for an extraction: 5 Samsonite satchels; 30 GRAPHOTEK prizes: packages of prizes with promotional products (a promotional packet contains a clock, a T-shirt, a cap, a key ring, and a pencil); 10 parcels with GRAPHOTEK exercise books). GRAPHOTEK GREAT PRIZE: a trip for two adults and a child in Antalya (on Turkey seaside). **Aim:** temporary growth of sales

Target group: GRAPHOTEK stationery consumers and non-consumers. **Estimated expenses:** 5 satchels x 150 lei/piece = 750 lei/month x 2 months = 1,500 lei, A trip in Antalya for 2 adults and a child = 1,500 \$, 90 promotional packets = 429 \$, 10 parcels of exercise books: 10 parcels x 120 pieces x 0.5 lei/piece = 600 lei. Total estimated expenses: **2,100 lei + 1,929 \$**

9. Sellers prize award. This will be done at distributors' indication. For example: for 10 parcels of sold GRAPHOTEK stationery one may offer a packet of 10 exercise books. The action will be monitored by the supervisor. **Estimated expenses:** 5 parcels/ day / 10 pieces x 90 days = 2,250 lei. Total estimated expenses: **2,250 lei**

10. Owner's stimulation

A password will be set and it will be announced at a radio station or mentioned in written advertisement. For customers who know the password, the distributor will give a facility. Advantages: the distributor will be searched for by customers knowing the password. The message/ advertisement in newspaper/ commercial on the radio will be carefully searched for/ listened. The advertisement will not pass unnoticed. It may partly be supported by the distributor also. The password may also function as an efficacy test of advertisement supports, because one may ask where the customer has heard the message.

11. Prize award with promotional objects of sellers and employers for the most merchandized store or bookstore from the viewpoint of GRAPHOTEK stationery that will be arranged in a certain order established by the organization.

Estimated expenses: Necessary of promotional objects: 300 T-shirts x 2.04 \$/piece = 612 \$, 300 caps x 1.38\$/piece = 414 \$, 300 pencils x 0.18\$/piece = 54 \$. Total estimated expenses = 1,080 \$. Total estimated expenses of sales campaign at local level: **18,400 \$**

After this sales promotion campaign, it is estimated a growth of sales for GRAPHOTEK stationery with 25-35 %. The unfolding of actions and their efficacy will be monitored and analyzed by the Sales and Marketing Director. Solutions of going out from unpredicted situations will be found by consulting the entire sales team.

Estimated expenses necessary to the application of marketing plan

Banners exhibition in bookstores and specialized stores: 500 pieces x 20 \$ / piece = 10,000 \$. Bright advertisements 100 pieces x 40 \$/piece = 4,000 \$. Stalls: 50 pieces x 200 \$ / piece = 10,000 \$. Advertisements: 30,000 \$. Equivalent value of festival participation: 5,000 \$ x 3 = 15,000 \$. Granted sponsorships: 500 parcels x 10 piece/parcel = 5,000 pieces = 2,500 lei (1,042 \$). Promotional materials: pencils 10,000 pieces x 0.14 \$/piece = 1,400 \$. Key rings 10,000 pieces x 0.35 \$/piece = 3,500 \$. Badges 3,000 pieces x 1 \$/piece = 3,000 \$. Caps 3,000 pieces x 1.38 \$/piece = 4,140 \$. T-shirts 3,000 pieces x 2.04 \$/piece = 6,120 \$. Stickers 1,000 pieces x 2 \$ = 2,000 \$. **TOTAL GENERAL MARKETING PLAN 2007 = 121,393 \$**

A part of these expenses represents investments in marketing infrastructure. For the next year, the Marketing and Sales department management proposes itself the increase of promotion funds with the stated purpose of conquering not only the market of Galati, but also the national one. This will be possible by using the experience previously accumulated but also through the adoption of new techniques and procedures of product promotion and selling.

3. Conclusions

Advertising consumes a lot of time, effort, and money. That is why, all these must be justified through the effect acquired by the organization, which most of the times it is directly proportional with the impact on the target public. A complete advertising should theoretically contain a title, a subtitle or more, a language, a basic line usually used for the slogan, a logo, an illustration, the product or an image of it, a coupon, a phone number, fax, or web site, an address, and eventually a price. The design of a poster is usually simpler and in the same time,

more exciting, a title, an audacious illustration, an idea and something extra. A powerful concept must also benefit from a competent execution. With a little common sense, balance, conciseness, simplicity, legibility, and the essential element – capture of attention, the advertisement should function. It must be seen, memorized, and transmit a true message with an intrinsic value, which would make it truly creative.

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