

How to Turn an Industry on Its Head

Become Masters of Delivering On Big Promises

By Kevin Lawrence and David J. Greer

Introduction

Marketing and advertising work best when you speak to the customer's biggest need or pain and show them how your products or services can give them what they want. In many cases, companies struggle with the effectiveness of their marketing because they talk about things that don't get the attention of their potential customers.

On the other hand, some companies are marketing masters and have a different challenge: they are not able to live up to the expectations they set to lure the customers in the door in the first place. Often, those customer ends up disappointed or feel like they were oversold or misled.

Mastery of marketing is not only promising to fulfill the core needs and desires of your potential customers, but having the whole business built to consistently deliver on those promises – every person and process in the company from sales, to service, to reception to the back office, to the executive team and the janitorial staff.

These businesses are what we call a Promise Delivery Systems (PDS): they make the right promises and then are fanatical about delivering on them. As a result, these PDS business can grow faster, have increased customer loyalty, and generate more referrals from existing customers.

In this article, we feature a dynamic business leader who knows how to market his services and who has the key systems in place necessary to consistently deliver on those promises. We will show how Mike Jagger, Founder and CEO of Provident Security, makes the promise that matters the most to customers better than any of their competitors to revolutionize their industry by being a Promise Delivery System.



Incredible Vision



Before Mike started Provident Security, he was amazed to learn that when an alarm goes off at a business or a residence very little happens. Most alarm companies respond with a phone call, at best. In Vancouver, Canada where Provident Security is based, the average police response to a burglar alarm report is two hours and six minutes. Mike was convinced that customers have an expectation that when an alarm goes off, the alarm service will do something proactive about the alarm. Mike saw an opportunity to deliver on customer expectations. Mike made a bold promise that speaks directly to the core concerns of his greatest customers:

Provident promises its customers that they will be at the customer's door within five minutes of an alarm going off -- guaranteed.

Mike knows what he needs to do to earn business from his customers. Where a lot of businesses would stop at their customer promise, that's just where Mike starts. Mike not only communicates up front and tells customer things to make them want to do business with him, he is almost to the point of being obsessed in delivering on that promise.

Five Minutes

When Mike first founded Provident he got out a map of Vancouver and drew a circle around his headquarters that he could drive to in five minutes. Unlike other alarm companies, some of which take on customers over a 5,000 square mile geography, Provident focused on this one area. Mike figured that with five minutes driving time, he could satisfy his promise to be on site within five minutes of an alarm going off.

Mike and his team discovered that there is much more to getting to a residential or business customer premises in five minutes, 24 hours a day. A single traffic light could introduce a one minute delay to the process. Mike had a guarantee to keep and he was fanatical about delivering on what he promised his customers.

Mike and his team approached the problem as a tactical military exercise and broke it down into the reality that five minutes equals 300 seconds. Second by second they looked at each part of the response they could control and the parts they couldn't. It became clear that knowing where the guards were and how to dispatch them was one of the slowest parts of the process.

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In particular, the process of having an employee respond to an alarm signal on their computer screen, pick up the phone and dial the number for a mobile guard in the field was a significant time waster. As a result, Provident built customized software that automated the dispatch procedure so that when an incoming alarm is received, it is immediately and automatically relayed to the closest guard's Blackberry within four seconds of the alarm going off. The email sent to the guard includes the customer's name, address, and which zone in the building or house triggered the alarm. Innovation and automation are critical factors in delivering on their five minute promise.



Keys, Keys, Keys

Getting the guards to the right place within five minutes when an alarm has gone off is only the start of the process. What is the guard supposed to do once they arrive at a residence or business where an alarm has gone off? The guard needs a key to enter the premise to see what is going on. This simple concept of the guard having access to a key at the right time and right place is a massive challenge for Provident.

Mike and his team focused their creative energy on this challenge. It was not reasonable to have a key for every client stored in every vehicle. Further, what if one of their vehicles was stolen? What if one of the guards was dishonest?

The solution they came up with was to have a vault box welded to every vehicle. Inside each vault is six or seven key cases. Inside each key case is hundreds of manila envelopes, each one identical except for a unique number written on the outside of each envelope. If someone stole one of the vehicles, they would have thousands of keys, but no reference whatsoever to the address corresponding to any key.

When a guard has responded to an alarm and shows up on site, he makes a request to the operations center for the key number of the envelope with the key to the premises. Provident's custom system has been designed to verify that an active alarm exists at the address for which the key is being requested. Once the request has been received, someone in the operation center must authorize the request and once that's done the system issues the number to the guard. The system does not show the person in the operation center what the key number is. For every key request, there are two levels of security.

After an envelope is opened, the key must be returned to the Provident operations center. A new unique number is generated for the key and it is once again sealed in a manila envelope with the unique number on the outside. The envelope then must be returned to the original vehicle where it came from. At all times, wallboards in the operations center indicate how many keys have been requested, are in use, and are awaiting recoding.

Thriving With Chaos

In the security business all days, evenings, and nights are not created equal. At times multiple alarms can be going off, each one clamoring for attention. If there is a natural event like a wind storm, activities in Provident's operations center reach chaotic proportions, due to the number of signals being received. In the past, employees found these events stressful and the risk of an error being made during these very busy times was high.

To bring order to the chaos and to deliver on their five minute promise to customers, Mike identified key numbers that track the pulse of the business. In Provident's operations center, all key indicators are displayed on large LCD monitors. All indicators are automatically updated in real time as events happen. KPIs are chosen so that zero is perfect. Employees talk about "Going for the doughnut", that is going for zero.



Indicators are displayed in one of three colors:

Yellow: Good
 Red: Coming up to deadline
 Flashing Red: Overdue



The more yellow, the calmer everything is. Mike says that even if there is an external event like a wind storm that causes alarms to go off all over the place, the color coding and the real time nature of the feedback keeps team members focused. In those moments of chaos, the operations center becomes the center for a military operation. Before these systems were in place a wind storm event could cause people to panic,

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reducing their responsiveness to the situation. The wallboards allow Provident employees to focus by making it clear which issues need to be prioritized.

Lessons Learned

For Mike, the changes at Provident have meant that for each employee he can quickly identify one of three gaps:

1. Where there needs to be more training
2. Where a person needs to improve
3. Whether a person is in the wrong role and needs to be moved to a different one

For Mike himself, there were other benefits to introducing key productivity numbers. Everything is clearer to him and all the employees. Mike no longer has to tell people what to do – his systems make it easy for employees to know what to do. Each person in the organization knows where they fit in the organization and there is less drama in their twenty four hour operation. They now attach financial numbers to many of their key numbers, so that employees know whether this is a \$60,000 impact or a \$100 one. With the financial impact clearly attached to the KPI, revenue numbers grow faster.



Provident press coverage and company beliefs

At Provident, there are systems in place to measure the quality of the work being done. When key numbers were first introduced the numbers went up, but at the expense of quality. New quality control measures needed to be introduced. Mike says that Provident employees want to do a great job. The key numbers let team members know how they are doing relative to one another. Peer pressure helps keep the numbers moving to zero – the perfect number at Provident.

Every Provident employee “owns a number.” Every day, employee groups meet together in huddles for fifteen minutes to discuss the issues for the day. In these huddles,

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employees have to “own up” to what the real number is. This transparency makes it easier for people to take ownership of issues and insures that employees have the data that they need. Because feedback is in real time there is instant gratification – “do it and the number goes down.”

A Passion to Deliver

Mike is a leader who has a passion for understanding and then fulfilling the greatest needs of his customers. He has developed his businesses to be a Promise Delivery System. Mike made the commitment to put the people, process, systems, and accountability in place so that Provident can deliver on their promises – not just talk about them.

The results are spectacular. Provident is the fastest growing security company in Vancouver. And, Provident is still working on ways to innovate and get even better. Good is not good enough for them...

To learn more about concrete strategies and tactics to help your organization become a promise delivery system, contact Kevin Lawrence or David Greer.

About David J. Greer

With a professional background in software engineering, David Greer has many business successes to his credit. He built up and ran a highly profitable multi-million dollar software company with a global industry presence and Fortune 500 customers. He has also been active in the Vancouver, Canada angel investment community, and instrumental in launching and growing several emerging companies.

David provides tailored, senior-level support to companies needing to accelerate areas of their operation that have plateaued, or to capitalize on high-potential, but as yet untapped, product or market opportunities. His key areas of focus are Sales and Revenue Generation, New Business Development, Product Performance, and Industry Relationship Management.

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About Kevin Lawrence

Kevin Lawrence is a business coach, speaker and agent of change, who is driven by a relentless passion for helping entrepreneurs and business leaders get what they really want, in business and life. He deeply believes that entrepreneurs can have tremendous professional success along with an enriching, adventurous and fulfilling lifestyle, taking a 'have your cake and eat it too' mentality to an entirely new level.

With more than a decade of hands on experience as a business coach to hundreds of entrepreneurs and business leaders across Canada and the United States and the Middle East, Kevin is an expert at helping clients overcome major obstacles, deal with tough decisions and capitalize on new opportunities to achieve breakthrough results. His strategies, style and savvy approach have helped his clients increase revenue, profitability and productivity; build higher caliber teams; attract ideal (and eliminate headache) clients; and, reduce stress levels and hours worked so that they are freed up to live their personal version of outrageous quality of life.

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