

Marketing doesn't operate in a vacuum

Literally! You may remember a few months back I bought a Bissell vacuum, basically because price being equal, I believed its tagline: Bissell means clean. Well, my experience has proven otherwise. The vacuum is hard to handle and seems to have lost suction power already. Based on this experience, I'd be hard pressed to recommend Bissell. Which leads me to my topic—marketing should be more than great taglines and fun ads. It should be more than a great media relations campaign or unified branding. It should be about products and services that are good, that work as described, that do offer the goods. Unfortunately, many times marketing DOES operate in a vacuum. Marketing people are relegated to their offices, and most of their dealings are with agencies and other marketing affiliates. How many marketing people actually visit a production line or test a product? I would bet not many. Sometimes, marketing people are the last to know about changes or production timetables. Years ago, when I worked at an ad agency in Boston, we had put together a media buy for the launch of a laptop computer. Guess what? The computer was not going to be available by the time the ads were scheduled to run. That hurt both the agency and the product. We had to scramble to change or cancel buys, and the media weren't too terribly impressed by our client.

In a sense, companies undervalue their marketing departments, but marketing departments sometimes are not quick enough to get involved with the overall operations of a company. I am sure Bissell loves its tagline—its great after all. But the truth is that marketing something that doesn't deliver its promise is a mistake. In my case, Bissell means not so clean. There is a saying, the proof is in the pudding. Let's make sure the pudding is always really yummy (and preferably

chocolate).