Interview of a Marketer

Lynn Roth

Marketing Director at Eagle Point Solar

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Ryan Ehlinger

 For my interview, I interviewed Lynn Roth, the Marketing Director at Eagle Point Solar and a fellow coworker of mine. Eagle Point Solar is a solar installation company whose main headquarters is right here in Dubuque. The marketing department is relatively new at Eagle Point Solar, and Lynn is in charge of the two-person team. While at Eagle Point Solar Lynn has been responsible for many things including a completely new and improved website as well as improving the company’s Facebook page. For Lynn, day to day activities range anywhere from press releases to website management to bringing in new customers. Even with everything that he does, his main responsibility is to maintain and strengthen the brand of the company. Interviewing Lynn was good for me since I was familiar with him, because, not only am I able to better understand what it is that he does for our company, but I also was able to connect to the things he said during the interview more easily since I am familiar with the field he works in. The interview in general was also very helpful to see examples of what we have been learning in the real world.

 One of the big things I got out of the interview was just how vast and diverse marketing is. Obviously, our entire course has encompassed this, but it was most noticeable the first week of class. I came into the class thinking that all marketing was, was advertising and promoting products to consumers and that was exactly what I wrote down when asked to write down what we thought marketing was. When we shared our answers out loud and you told us it was everything we had said and more; that everything is marketing and my whole interview really focused on that and heavily reinforced it.

That was what Lynn indicated as his biggest reason for liking marketing. He said it never really gets boring because it is so broad. He referred to marketing as the fire fighters of a company. What he meant by this is that the marketing department can be used to solve so many problems (put out fires) because they are so diverse in what they do. He also pointed out that one thing that arises at work can lead to many different jobs. The example that he used was the hiring of a new employee that actually happened the day we had our interview. This means that the new employee needs business card, they need to have their picture taken for the website, the company has to do a press release to the local media, and the new employee needs to get trained for everything that comes with their job. So just in the hiring of one employee, four or five different things have to happen as a result. That is the kind of thing that keeps Lynn from getting bored and also really shows me that there is so many different things you could do by going into the field of marketing. Some things that Lynn likes about his job at Eagle Point Solar specifically is that he is a fan of renewable energy and he likes that the company is doing good things like helping the environment and saving people money on their electric bills.

On the other hand, Lynn’s biggest gripe with marketing is the constant changing media landscape. This came as a surprise to me because I thought marketers would like that since it is constantly providing new ways for the company to get themselves to the consumers. However, he says that it is frustrating because as soon as you get used to a new system or media outlet and you really master it, there is another one that you have to learn in order to stay relevant. You spend all this time learning one thing only to have it replaced as soon as you’ve gotten the hang of it. I believe that the diversity of the industry does help to balance this out though.

Another example of the reach of marketing was the career advice that Lynn gave me. He told me to be very diverse when seeking out a job in marketing. This is always something that I thought was important no matter what field of work you’re going into, but I never really grasped the significance of it until Lynn explained the reasons behind why he was hired at Eagle Point Solar.

Before Lynn was hired, Eagle Point Solar was using an ad agency for their marketing. Therefore, someone within the company had to work with the agency because they didn’t know anything about solar, they only knew about marketing. As the company continued to grow, they realized that they didn’t have time to set aside to work with the ad agency and that they needed to hire someone. They could’ve brought in someone to specifically to work with the ad agency, but they would have had to pay that employee as well as the agency. Instead, they hired Lynn because of his vast skill set. Lynn is an award winning graphic designer, so he eliminated the need of an ad agency. He is also a very skilled copyrighter, so the company had no need to hire one. Illustrations are also a big thing included in the sales packet and other promotional items that used to be done by an outside group, but Lynn began his career as an illustrator so he was able to cover that as well. He also brings media buying and negotiation to the table as that is what he did in his 13 years with DuTrac before joining Eagle Point Solar. A couple of other skills that Lynn possess would be web design, video, and photography; all of which are now done in house, rather than through an outside company. As Lynn kept listing off all these skills it seemed like the list was never going to end and it dawned on me how important it really is to have a diverse skill set, especially when going into marketing.

All of these different skills can help Lynn make sure that marketing has a strong role within the organization. Eagle Point Solar heavily follows the marketing concept and has a strong market orientation. Lynn believes that Eagle Point Solar is one of the best solar companies at incorporating the marketing concept. Their sales process is eight steps, while most of their competition has only five or six steps and they are a sales oriented company; everything is focused around sales. The extra steps are to analyze the customers’ needs. This would be an example of the company’s market orientation as well as how they excel at non-price competition. The eight step sales process is also a very close representation of the personal selling process.

Eagle Point Solar is a client driven business; constantly asking for feed backs and getting reviews from customers. They mainly use direct mail and social media to reach their customers. I think that this would be an example of customer relationship management. I also think that they are obviously an example of green marketing.

The target market of Eagle Point Solar is broken into 6 basic industries; agriculture, commercial, residential, municipal, utility, and academic. For most of these markets, they would be operating in a business market. For their residential market; however, they are operating in a consumer market. They’ve obviously segmented the residential market because marketing to everyone is just stupid. EPS uses demographics, geographics, and psychographics to find their exact market. Their target market segment in the residential industry is people around 35-65 years old and middle class and above. Geographically they focus on eastern Iowa, Wisconsin, and western and central Illinois. Psychographically they are focused on customers who are looking to lower their electric bills or those who are concerned with the environment.

 We also talked about a few things that were just about marketing as a whole rather than just Eagle Point Solar. One of those things is rebranding. Lynn pointed out that rebranding can either be a good thing or a bad thing. If the brand isn’t resonating with consumers it can be good to rebrand if you do it successfully. As we talked about in class, this can be difficult, because consumers already have a certain perception of a company and the brand in their head, whether good or bad, and rebranding has to change that perception. He also mentioned that a brand can get tired. The public may like a brand at first, but after a while it grows old for consumers.

 He also said that designing with the same brand can get tiresome for marketers. This was one of his reasons that he left his job at DuTrac. He got tired of designing with maroon and green every day and wanted some change. He compared it to wearing the same shoes or eating the same food every day; you’re going to get sick of it. Once you have a brand established it can get pretty repetitive to work with.

 Another thing we discussed was marketing academic programs. On most campuses the marketing, communications, and graphic arts departments are segregated and barely interact. Lynn believes that they should be combined into one bigger program because students should have all these skills. This goes back to what he said about having a diverse skillset; why hire three separate people for a job that one person could do if they had a diverse skill set.

 All in all, this interview was very insightful on marketing in the real world. It helped me to connect in class concepts to real life applications and it helped me gain a better understanding of marketing.