

## **The 7 Most Common Marketing Mistakes (and how to avoid them!)**

**By Jay Lipe**

Like a lot of things in life, good marketing comes only after making a lot of mistakes. That's why I'm writing this Special Report. Better for you to benefit from the countless mistakes the rest of us have made. That way, you won't have to.

If you ever notice any of these things happening in your marketing, stop! Then think about what's happening for a moment. If you don't, you're bound to assassinate your marketing effort.

***Do you...***

### **1. Lack Patience?**

These days we expect immediate results. Want to know how your stocks are doing? Dial into the Internet for an up-to-the-minute check. Want to see what I'm looking at?—I'll fax you a copy. Need to know what Kevin in Kenya, Carla in Canada and Tim in Timbuktu think?—I'll set up a conference call while we're on the line.

In a world like this, is it any wonder we have short attention spans? Yet, successful marketing depends on an approach that's 180 degrees in the opposite direction. Why? *Because marketing is about changing people's behavior.* And that simply doesn't happen overnight (those of you with kids really know what I'm talking about!).

Several years ago, I met with a fellow consultant and told him about my marketing work with mid-sized companies. After several meetings, he assured me he'd refer some business my way. Months later, after receiving my newsletter, he let me know he still had me in mind. A couple months after that, he introduced me to one of his clients—it led nowhere. Several months after that, I met with another client of his—again no deal.

A couple months later (we're now 1½ years and counting), he suggested I lunch with yet another client. More meetings, lunches, and

then finally, a full 2 years after meeting this gentleman, I began working with one of his clients.

Today, this company is a very valuable Emerge Marketing client. What's the lesson here? Stick it out. If I'd given up after year 1, I'd have missed out on all those revenues.

### ***How you can avoid it...***

***Be patient. Try any new marketing venture at least 3 times before you consider junking it. It'll take at least two of something to get your prospect's attention. By the third time though, your audience will sit up and take notice.***

## **2. Over-rely on one marketing vehicle?**

We've all met one-dimensional people, haven't we? They talk on and on about only one subject. The result? Boring! This is a little like the company that markets only one way to its prospects. What happens? The prospects get bored! Don't let this happen to you.

Instead, seek variety in your marketing attempts. Variety keeps prospects on their toes—wondering what you'll do next. Variety also keeps you front and center in a prospect's mind. If they see your company in a variety of ways, they'll remember you more easily.

If someone says "I've seen your name a lot recently, but I can't remember where"—I take this as a compliment. It means I've marketed using a variety of tools—and kept them a little off balance.

Variety also increases your chances of being picked up on others' radar screens. A media editor may single you out as an expert after hearing you speak to an audience. A company may receive your direct mail piece and contact you about an alliance. A key supplier may refer a prospect to you after reading a trade magazine article about your company. Keep the variety and the phone will keep ringing!

### ***How you can avoid it...***

***I want to challenge you to roll out 2 new marketing initiatives each year. That way you'll constantly test new ideas. Some will work—others won't. But you won't know until you try.***

### **3. Fail to recognize missteps as learning opportunities?**

If you're in a small or mid-sized business, listen closely. One of your key advantages is your ability to take risks. In larger companies, you spend countless hours just selling your new ideas to management. Not so with a smaller company. If you work in a smaller company, you can use this time to refine and execute your idea. Let the corporate folks waste their time with meetings, 'selling up', and face-time. By the time a big company's finally OK'd a new effort, you've tested it, refined it, and re-tested it!

All this calls for embracing risk, though. And you'll need to get comfortable with the notion that, from time to time, you will fail. Remember the first time you dove off the high-dive at the swimming pool? You slowly mounted the steps to the platform. You inched your way out onto the diving board. You probably chickened-out a couple times (I know I did!). In the end though, you finally did it. And—wasn't it a kick?

We all approach new things (high dives, marketing plans) with hesitation—because we're afraid of what might happen. If you fall into this category, you **MUST** change! Otherwise, you'll never try new things, and that spells marketing death.

Several years ago, I taught classes at a prestigious institution thinking this would help build my business with mid-sized companies. After a few semesters, I discovered my target wasn't represented well in the audience, so I stopped teaching. You'd think this was a marketing failure, wouldn't you? Didn't achieve my objective—invested a lot of time—no bottom-line impact to my business.

But wait. As a result of these classes, I recognized there was a whole new audience (entrepreneurs, free-lancers, and home-based business people) who could benefit from my products and services. That led to books, workbooks and special reports ([www.emergemarketing.com/publications](http://www.emergemarketing.com/publications)). Without that 'failed' teaching experience, I'd never known of these opportunities.

#### ***How you can avoid it...***

***Approach failure as a learning experience. These learned lessons will no doubt be valuable at a later date—usually when the stakes are much higher.***

#### **4. Lack diligent follow through?**

I once worked with a client who owned a home-remodeling business. We had very productive discussions during the marketing planning process. He had a good grasp of his business strategies and how these would translate into marketing activities. All this momentum ground to a halt when we started to implement the marketing plan.

Suddenly, his whole demeanor changed. He endlessly nit-picked small things. He backed out of several marketing events. And most distressing, he couldn't meet a deadline. If he had a short section of copy to write, he'd be weeks late or never turn it in.

I quickly realized this was a fellow who liked to create ideas, but had a real problem implementing them. This inability to get things out the door means big trouble in the marketing arena. The best marketing plan in the world means nothing unless it's tested in the marketplace. How can you change a prospect's behavior if they never see anything new from you? You must commit to on-going activity in any marketing effort.

#### ***How you can avoid it...***

***Regularly schedule (in your day-planner if you have to) an hour per week to get a new marketing 'thing' done. Write the first draft of a direct mail letter. Take a prime client out to lunch and ask them 5 question about your business. Take a Champion out to breakfast and ask for more referrals. Biting off just a little at a time helps you generate a slow but steady momentum.***

#### **5. Throw nickels around like they're manhole covers?**

Don't get me wrong. You have to spend your marketing money wisely. And knowing how much to spend and where to spend it is a marketing skill altogether. But, you can take it too far. How do you know you've gone too far?

- You catch yourself always saying "We can't afford it".

- Your suppliers start turning down your business.
- You start hearing the word “cheap” from your customers

Spending a little extra to make a marketing piece look nicer probably won't result in more orders. But it will communicate a more successful image for your company. And that may pay off in more referrals down the road.

So from time to time—splurge. Use an aqueous coating on your next direct mailing. Hire a graphic designer to give you some fresh new images. Test a 2-color ad instead of 1-color.

### ***How you can avoid it...***

***When you develop a marketing budget, set aside an ‘opportunity fund’. Use these dollars only for ‘rainy day upgrading’—when you’d like to spend a little extra to make something look nice. That way, you can tap this extra reserve without endangering your other marketing programs.***

## ***6. Lack a marketing plan?***

When you take a road trip in your car, what's the last thing you pack? Probably your roadmap. From this document, you'll scout out the destination, identify intermediate stops, plan which roads to take, and calculate arrival times. All the same principles apply to a marketing plan.

A marketing plan helps you identify your final destination (vision), plan intermediate stops along the way (goals), identify routes (marketing programs) and calculate arrival times (timelines). For you, a marketing plan is your road map to success!

A marketing plan forces you to think about some very critical, strategic issues for your business like:

- ❑ What business are we in?
- ❑ Who are my best customers?
- ❑ What benefits do our products/services provide to customers?
- ❑ What are our business strengths? What do our customers rave about?
- ❑ What do we do better than our competitors?

When you commit answers for these questions to paper, something profound happens. You understand why you're in business. And what makes your company special. And why you should do marketing program A and not B.

If you need help with the plan format, use any of the books at the library about marketing plans or you can use my Special Report entitled "[How to Write a Winning Marketing Plan](http://www.emergemarketing.com/publications)" ([www.emergemarketing.com/publications](http://www.emergemarketing.com/publications)). Whatever the method, this step is the linchpin of a successful marketing campaign.

### ***How you can avoid it...***

***A Marketing Plan is your roadmap to success. Leave home without one—and you'll likely get lost!***

## ***7. Lack consistency in your marketing images?***

These days, it's estimated each person is subjected to over 3,000 marketing messages **per day**. That means any marketing messages you craft must be so focused and so concentrated, they break through that clutter.

An effective way to do this is by using consistent images throughout your marketing. That way, when a prospect receives another message from you, they know who it's from. Start using the same graphic images, type fonts, slogans, and colors in every marketing piece.

One of my clients is a 1<sup>st</sup>-ring suburb of Minneapolis. After scouting the city's signage (road signs, park signs, vehicle stickers,

etc) I realized there was a lack of consistency in their marketing imagery. Old logos were still featured on some signs, while newer signs used a completely different logo. Moreover, many police cars and uniforms didn't use the city's distinctive logo. As a result, some residents weren't sure if those cars and officers were really the city's police!

The net result was a confusing and inconsistent image for the city as seen through the eyes of the resident.

### ***How you can avoid it...***

***Tell your graphic designer you want to create some consistent imagery. Get them to tell you which icons, typestyles, colors, etc they think best represent the organization's image. Then, use all or some of these in every marketing piece. The result will be consistent, compelling imagery.***

### ***Bonus! —Fail to emphasize face-to-face marketing?***

If I told you a company's sales and marketing consisted of these elements:

- ❑ Direct mail
- ❑ Internet
- ❑ Advertising

would you be impressed...or concerned? I'd be concerned. Why? Because all three marketing vehicles are indirect vehicles. That means they aren't carried out in a personal, face-to-face manner. That's bad. Why?

Because prospects are bombarded with thousands of indirect marketing messages a day—leading to an inherent distrust of most indirect marketing. These days, a marketing effort must strive to 'show the face of a company' to prospects. Face-to-face marketing activities will help by putting forth a company face.

If you or your company does any of the following, you're doing face-to-face marketing:

- ❑ Trade Shows
- ❑ Seminars
- ❑ Workshops

- ❑ Speaking engagements
- ❑ Personal Selling
- ❑ Open Houses
- ❑ Demos
- ❑ Presentations

If you're leaving these out of your marketing kit bag, consider adding some in.

***How you can avoid it...***

***Give prospects a chance to see the face of your company. If you don't, they'll never know its personality!***

The common marketing mistakes discussed above can't all be totally avoided. I find myself slipping back into some of them myself. But if you keep an eye out for them, you'll prevent yourself from slipping too far. Remember that marketing is an art—not a science. Every little bit of perspective helps.

May your marketing emerge!

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