

CREATIVE COMPOST

Where Great Marketing Ideas Grow

Vol. III, No. 4

FIVE COMMON MARKETING MISTAKES: Fixable or Fatal?

Judging the effectiveness of your marketing efforts is easy — they're either producing results or they're not. If you're less than thrilled with your current ROI, here are five fixable mistakes to boost your results:

Mistake #1: Hyping product features instead of benefits. Instead of "XYZ product has a 64-gigabyte overdrive capacity," try "You'll cut your payroll processing time in half!" What sounds more compelling to you? Remember...it's not all about you, but rather "what's in it for me?"

Mistake #2: Not clearly stating your USP. Why should I buy from you instead of your competition? That's the essence of your Unique Selling Proposition. Whether you're competing on price, service or responsiveness, make sure that "why buy" reason comes through consistently in every piece of promotion you create.

Mistake #3: Not identifying your customers' needs. Designing your USP around the needs of your customer is a smart strategy. How do you find out? Ask! It's called identifying their pain. You may think price is the driving factor when what your customer really want is reliability. Once you've ID'd the pain, focus on what your business can do to fix the boo-boo.

Mistake #4: Making it difficult to do business with you. Is every single person in your company driven by customer satisfaction? Are phones answered promptly, or do customers get dropped into voicemail hell? Try calling your main number or customer service center to test the level of success or frustration your customers face daily. Is contact information easy to find on your website? If you make someone work for it — they won't.

Mistake #5: Not recognizing what works...then sticking with it. How do you know which ad, headline or offer most appeals to customers? By putting them all to the test. Rather than running the same ad for three weeks, why not run three similar ads with slightly different offers and measure which draws better? Or split your marketing dollars between print and direct mail to see which produces better results. And don't expect the phone to ring off the hook with just one ad. It takes up to seven exposures to make an impression on a potential buyer. If you bail out at Week 6, you're cutting short your chances for a sale.

Fostering a More Creative Mindset

No matter what you're selling, when it comes to increasing your customer base,

creativity is the key to grabbing a prospect's attention. But unfortunately, creativity isn't a switch that you can flip on when needed. How can you foster a more creative outlook in your daily life? Try these three easy ways to get started:

Gather some inspirational tools. Look through your own daily mail, trade magazines and other business resources to develop what's known in the advertising trade as a "swipe file." Set up a folder and toss into it anything that catches your eye. It may be your competitor's latest coupon,

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Have a marketing tip to share? Email to compost@fahouryink.com

Cashing in On Business Cards

Want to gather leads from trade shows, but don't have the time or budget to travel to every show in your industry? Name the event and describe your sales target, and American Hopper will send a representative called a "hopper" to collect business cards for you. The company boasts an average of 211 cards collected at the events they attend, probably better than you'd achieve on your own.

While American Hopper is gathering those business cards for you, they're also expanding their online database. In addition to hiring a hopper for a specific event, companies can also purchase access to the database and download leads ranked from hot to cold depending on when they were gathered. Costs start at 29¢ per card for data that's 6-9 months old. Records older than nine months are deleted from the system. High-demand "hot" cards (0-3 months old) are 79¢ per card.

A limited and eclectic number of industries are currently accessible online, ranging from pharmaceutical and construction to retail. You can also peruse the list of shows American Hopper will be attending in the next three months.

Though some people may object to their business card data ending up for sale on the Internet, American Hopper founder Sean Mulvihill likens his service to other database companies like Reference USA, but with better accuracy. Because who's going to put an outdated phone number on their business card?

www.americanhopper.com

Working with Freelance Talent



Not everyone has the luxury of an in-house creative staff to execute their marketing vision.

Assuming you've reviewed portfolios and checked references, here are some tips for a stress-free and cost-effective relationship with your next freelance copywriter or designer:

- During your initial meeting, be prepared with detailed information on the scope of the project and your budget. You should be able to answer questions about the audience for the piece, how it will be used, and your overall goal — awareness? Lead generation? To drive traffic to your website or 800 number?
- Have a budget in mind. Professional writers and designers can scale their efforts up or down to meet the requirements of a particular project, with no discernible impact on quality or effectiveness. For example, you may be able to forgo that competitive research or fancy Photoshop work if the success of the project doesn't hinge on them.

Being up front and realistic about your budget avoids misunderstandings and allows a freelancer to concentrate on the areas that matter most.

- Pull together samples. Every marketer should have a "swipe file" (see *Creativity* on p. 1). These samples can help you clearly demonstrate what you're looking for — and what you're not. You should also provide your freelancer with samples of your previous marketing efforts, as well as press releases or sales kits containing useful background information.
- Specify what has to appear in the piece, and what's negotiable. Does your logo need to print in a specific corporate color? Is there a must-have tagline? Contact information? Product shots? Provide high-resolution electronic files of logos or art for best results. Anything else could result in extra charges if a designer has to "fix" your low-resolution art.

Spending a few minutes on preparation can avoid costly rounds of revisions and frustrating delays. Treat your freelancer as your marketing partner, and you're more likely to achieve positive results.

ASK the Composter...

Dear Creative Compost:

I'm trying to establish a following in a very tough industry with tons of competition. How can I make myself stand out without spending a fortune?

My Fellow Marketer:

Sometimes going back to basics is the best place to start. Common courtesy has disappeared from the business landscape as surely as it has from the highways of America (we blame the SUV). After a sales call, or even after making a networking contact, immediately pen a brief thank-you note. Handwritten and with a mention of something that transpired during your meeting, the thank-you note distinguishes you as a courteous and respectful individual. Given the choice, who'd want to do business with anyone else?

TREND ALERTS

For the first time ever, women topped men in online shopping during the 2000 holiday season, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project. The average spending per shopper rose nearly 19%. Thirty-two percent of respondents also reported doing at least some of their online shopping from work. Oops!

Using Customer Relationship Management technology, Victoria's Secret discovered an interesting sales trend. Shoppers in the Northeast tend towards brightly colored lingerie, while those in the Southwest preferred more muted hues for their undies.

Creativity (fr. p. 1)

a clever newspaper layout, a dynamic color combination or an interesting brochure fold that made you itch to open it. When you're ready to start a project, you now have a built-in library for creative inspiration.

Take a new approach. Drive the same route to the office every day? Tomorrow, take the road less traveled for a new perspective. Watch a movie you never dreamed you'd sit through.



Grab a different seat tonight at the family dinner table. Love jazz? Try a dose of country or talk radio for a day. Simple changes can do wonders to jolt us out of our comfort zone, open our eyes and encourage new perspectives.

Stay up on current trends. The easiest way to grab a quick trend snapshot is to head down to your local book superstore and browse through the magazine racks. Keep an eye out for recurring themes or common cover subjects across different categories. Also, note any new categories or those suddenly populated with new titles.

Creativity can be defined quite simply as keeping your eyes, ears and mind open to inspiration. Keep a small notebook or recorder handy — you never know when that next big idea will strike.

Make Pals with Your Printer

Wouldn't it be great to know your next print job was squeezing maximum impact out of minimum cost? Whether you're printing the occasional postcard or producing monthly mailers, develop a relationship with a printer and you can bring projects to a new level without exponentially increasing your spending.

The key? Taking advantage of their expertise while your project's still on the drawing board. A good printer can advise you on the most efficient layout for printing, as well as ways to maximize postal discounts if you're producing a direct mail piece.

Size matters

A 1/2" can translate into huge cost savings if it means a printer can get your job onto a more economical press, or configure it to cut down on the number of impressions.

Size also has a big impact on postage. Did you know the maximum size to mail at postcard rates is 4-1/4 x 6"? Anything bigger and you're paying full first class freight. That's pennies on a small mailing, but the savings on larger mailings can be significant.

The stock solution

Paper can be a major component of your printing cost. Many printers buy certain sheets in volume and can pass the savings

onto you. Shops may also have a pretty wide selection of papers left over from previous jobs. Let your printer know you're open to suggestions.

Die hard

Why reinvent the wheel and pay hundreds for a custom die? Ask your printer for samples of recent die-cut pieces they've produced — maybe you'll find a format that will work for you at no additional cost.

Partner with a printer early in the process, and together you'll be amazed at the efficiencies you can achieve — and the headaches you can eliminate.

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More than a Motorcycle: The Leadership Journey at Harley-Davidson

by Rich Teerlink & Lee Ozley, ©2000,
Harvard Business School Publishing

Who'd have dreamed that a simple motorcycle plant could be the scene for a legendary organizational transformation?

Full of practical insights, *More than a Motorcycle* chronicles U.S. motorcycle giant Harley-Davidson's purposeful transformation from a typical "command-and-control" culture to an open, people-driven environment.

In the late '80s, while the business press was celebrating H-D's remarkable financial turnaround, company leader Rich Teerlink knew the company now faced an even greater challenge — maintaining and improving upon its success in the absence of an external crisis.

This honest, compelling description of the transformation is a must-read for anyone struggling to accomplish organizational change. The authors detail three fundamental truths: that people are your company's only sustainable competitive

advantage; that there is no quick route to positive, lasting organizational change; and that leadership is not a person, but a process to which every employee must contribute.

The best part? Teerlink and Ozley don't sugarcoat the process. This unflinchingly honest account replays the fears, the mistakes, and the successes to vividly demonstrate how change happens in the real world.

Part CEO memoir, part self-help tome, *More than a Motorcycle* provides practical, reality-based approaches for strengthening employee effectiveness. Readers will also enjoy the unique lessons distilled from the "Harley experience" — in a nutshell, living one's values and cultivating an environment where all kinds of people can thrive. And that's a simple yet effective blueprint for success that any business can take to heart.



110%

by Pat Croce, ©2001, Running Press

A colleague or customer gives you the standard greeting: "How are you?" Instead of the usual "fine" or "OK," author Pat

OFF THE BOOKSHELF



Croce is best known for exclaiming with gusto: "I feel great!" His first book, *I Feel Great and You Will Too*, introduced this philosophy, and follow-up volume *110%* is a handbook of techniques needed to achieve it.

Silly? Yes. But Croce's methods have taken him from business owner to in-demand motivational speaker to part owner of the Philadelphia 76ers. *110%* offers some simplistic nuggets of information, but who hasn't needed a wake-up call to the obvious every once in a while? The book offers 110 (hence the title) pages of advice relating to the simple things in life — from getting enough sleep and organizing clutter to performing random acts of kindness. Funny and observant quotes accompany each kernel of wisdom.

110% is a fast and enjoyable read, and you're sure to take away at least a little feel-good boost. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go clean out my junk drawer.



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