

# CREATIVE COMPOST

Where Great Marketing Ideas Grow

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## MARKET SHIFTS: Grab Your Share

When large groups of consumers migrate from one type of behavior or product to another on a long-term basis, new business opportunities can quickly result for those who are tuned into trends. Some recent successes to illustrate:

- The switch from vinyl to CDs left diehards out in the cold when it came to replacing their worn stereo needles. The enterprising soul who bought out manufacturers' "useless" stock (hopefully at bargain prices) now has a potential goldmine on his hands.
- Affordable home laser printers increased the glut of used cartridge carcasses clogging up landfills. It's a recycler's dream business...refilling tapped cartridges instead of discarding.
- To take advantage of the market switch from small cars to behemoth SUVs, a company now designs and manufactures folding steps to help smaller drivers and children climb aboard.

### So, how do you capitalize on these seismic shifts?

- Sniff out changes in consumer buying habits by reading marketing research reports and trade association forecasts.
- Keep an eye on current fads and new products that are growing in popularity. Right now, cell/camera phones and portable indoor grills are two that come

to mind. And don't limit your trend-watching to U.S. shores — camera phones were a Japanese craze over two years ago.

- Examine changes in your own buying habits. Why are they occurring?

*(cont'd on p. 2)*

## Think...NEGATIVE

Struggling to create a memorable positioning statement for your company or product? Don't rule out using a weak point as the foundation. Crazy? Maybe not. Called a "problem-based USP," this bold approach can transform a perceived disadvantage into your strongest marketing tool.

The best-known use of a problem-based USP has to be Avis, the car rental company which ran a distant second behind Hertz until they coined the tagline, "We're Number Two. We Try Harder." Hebrew National is quite possibly the first and only company to use religious dietary restrictions as a USP, in "We answer to a higher authority." L'Oreal's Preference hair color is priced considerably higher than the rest of the drugstore competition. But know what? "I'm worth it." And don't forget KFC, whose buckets of fried chicken were suddenly not greasy, but rather "finger-lickin' good!"

If you're struggling to stand out, don't

settle for boring platitudes that do zilch to break you out of the pack. Finding a true point of difference is tough, and not for the fainthearted. But, ask a customer and they'll quickly put their finger on your Achilles' heel. Obviously, you're not aiming for "Slow and proud of it," but something more akin to "We will sell no wine before its time."

Best of all, your new USP is forever safe from the competition. Because who'd ever dare to compete on *your* weakness?

## Two words to better marketing

Remember that "features vs. benefits" lesson during Marketing 101? Rather than giving a hoot about your carefully crafted product features, customers selfishly cut right to the chase: "What's in it for me?"

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## TrendWatch



**ACCORDING TO THE** National Association of Realtors, single women are now the second largest group of homebuyers in the U.S., right behind married couples. And, more than 90% of these female homeowners categorize themselves as “do-it-yourselfers.”



**WE WISH WE'D COME UP** with this catchy trend description ourselves, but the honor goes to Fitch Worldwide, a global design and business consultancy. They coined the term “transumer” to describe on-the-go consumers who spend, on average, 15 to 60 minutes indulging themselves while in transition at the airport or train station.



**RATHER THAN RENTING** questionable opt-in lists for broadcast email campaigns, savvy marketing sisters and brothers are discovering the power of advertising in third-party email newsletters. Why?

- ✓ More likely to be read than “just” a sales pitch.
- ✓ Less likely to be perceived as that dreaded spam.
- ✓ Easy to find vehicles that address your particular niche market.

And, with ad rates now often cheaper than list rentals, it's definitely worth a test drive.

## Market Shift

(from p. 1)

Are you shifting your own habits for convenience? Status? Economics? Then, ask yourself two questions:

- Can I address a current market switch by providing the major product or service — a new model of camera phone, perhaps?
- Can I provide second-tier products or services related to a new major product, such as a portable device for printing out those photos?

Finally, don't rule out targeting those who *don't* adopt the new technology or buying behavior. As demonstrated by the earlier phonograph needle example, there will always be a market for those left behind. It's called “retro.”

## Easy EMAIL Branding

You wouldn't dream of sending out a business letter on blank paper. But as email becomes the preferred method of communication, you're pretty much doing exactly that every time you click “send.”

Enter LetterClick BrandMail...the company that turns every email you send into a letterhead look-alike. In a nutshell, BrandMail makes your email look like a business letter on the company's letterhead.

BrandMail can be used to apply multiple, centrally controlled formats to all external email communication — department-specific formats, legal disclaimers, even rotating sales messages. No more choppy text messages or arbitrary adherence to your firm's signature file guidelines. Even

better is the nonexistent learning curve — you just keep on sending emails as you normally would. Setup of art files can be a bit arduous, but tech support is pleasant and responsive.

LetterClick offers tiered pricing for corporate accounts, small businesses, and individual users. For an additional fee, they'll also send actual letters on your letterhead via fax, USPS, or express mail.

**Source:** [www.letterclick.net](http://www.letterclick.net)



**Tool Time:**  
Let someone else reinvent that wheel

Somewhere out there, somebody has lived through exactly the scenario you just found yourself in — having to create a detailed spreadsheet, let's say, or come up with an inventive workflow plan. Why re-do what's already been done? Chances are, you'll find what you need at [myworktools.com](http://myworktools.com), a useful compendium of free and low-cost templates for everything from customer service to supply chain management.

Looking for boilerplate contracts, forms, or job descriptions? Got 'em, plus spreadsheets by the truckload. The site's marketing area also includes a useful little section called Checklists and Audits. Never hired a PR agency? Have to outsource telemarketing? These guides enable you to leverage the experience of others and ask all the right questions. My Work Tools also packages various tools into time- and money-saving “solution suites.”

Tool prices range from \$1.99-\$29.99. One warning to Mac users on tight deadlines — tools are compressed using a PC-only program for downloading, so your order is instead emailed to you within 24 hours.

**Source:** [www.myworktools.com](http://www.myworktools.com)

## Two words (from p. 1)

Two words can help you quickly distill the answer: “so what?” Ask this question with unrelenting persistence and you’ll soon uncover the heart of your sales pitch. And don’t give up until you truly can’t answer it anymore. When you reach this point, you’ve likely reached the core value of your product. Here’s an example:

Q: What does your hand cleanser do for its target market?

A: Well, it contains a patented antibacterial agent that kills 99% of all known germs without the use of alcohol.

Q: So what?

A: That means that when you use it, almost all the germs will be killed and your skin won’t get dried out.

Q: So what?

A: That means that your hands will be cleaner and softer.

Q: So what?

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A: When you touch somebody, your hands will be clean, soft and smooth.

Q: So what?

A: Well, moms won’t have to worry about harsh, dry skin or spreading germs when they’re holding their baby.

Q: So what?

A: Moms will feel like better parents, and their kids will be happier and healthier.

Q: So what?

A: That’s it: more confident, successful parenting and happy, healthy kids.

Q: Now I understand! You sell parental peace of mind and family health.

See how you’ve drilled down to something the customer wants...something you can actually position a product on? This kind of exercise is essential to good marketing. Give it a try and see how easily you can strengthen your own sales message.



A new survey finds that millions of Americans claim the Internet has played a key role in their decisions to:

Buy a car — 14 million

Choose a college — 11 million

Make a financial decision — 9 million

Find a job — 8 million

According to surveyor Pew Internet & American Life Project, the pattern of responses suggests that the Internet is relatively more important when an abundance of available information is especially helpful; where the activity is focused on learning new material on a complex subject, or where the ability to compare information is especially significant. Now *that’s* power!

## Incentive Show Trends & Traumas

Dear *Compost* Reader:

This article was originally conceived as a recap of the 2003 Incentive Show (previously the Premium Show), held in NYC this spring. However, running the gantlet of poorly trained exhibitors quickly turned it into a 30-second primer on how *not* to approach trade show selling.

### Insulting potential customers

A manufacturer of liquid-filled cotton swabs (cool idea, lots of potential apps) snatched his first sample out of my hand and replaced it with a makeup remover version because I was “just a woman, not a buyer.” Seriously.

### Snoozer opening lines

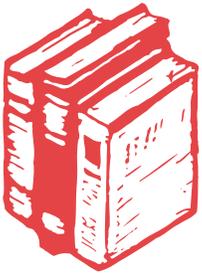
Asking “Do you want a catalog?” is not the most compelling way to persuade someone to pause at your booth. Why give someone the opportunity to say “Nope!” These people can’t be single or they’d have better pickup lines.

### Even duller booth graphics

If a glance doesn’t reveal what your product or service is, it’s time to repeat Exhibit Design 101. American Airlines was one of the few exceptions, with a simple yet eye-catching 10 x 20 constructed to look like the exterior of a 747.

Overall, products on display were the usual suspects — caps, pens, magnets. One interesting trend to note: the heavy presence of traditional retailers like Bath & Body Works, Williams-Sonoma, and Linens-n-Things. Could your company follow suit? If your product has possible applications to the premium, incentive or business gift market, it might be time to explore as a new revenue stream.

Lisa Fahoury, Editor



## Off the Bookshelf

In developing a new marketing seminar called **Think Like a Fish: Develop Your Creativity and Jump-Start Your Business<sup>SM</sup>**, we recently had the opportunity to examine a slew of resources on the creative process. Here are a few of the more notable:

***Five Star Mind: Games & Puzzles to Stimulate Your Creativity & Imagination***, by Tom Wujec, Broadway Books

Fight your way through the annoying food metaphors, and this book is an inspirational gem. A terrific section on visual brainstorming walks readers through the process of creating an “idea map” to clarify relationships and discover useful links between various elements of a problem. Clever exercises to flex mental muscles help keep your brain sharp.

***Why Didn't I Think of That?*** by Charles W. McCoy, Jr., Prentice Hall Press

More pedantic than ***Five Star Mind***, (probably because the author is a former California Superior Court judge), this book helps you hone your powers of observation and analysis. Author McCoy uses real-life situations and various cases from his judicial career to illustrate his own “eureka!” moments. An interesting section, “Why Didn't I Appreciate That,” reveals the benefits of thinking empathetically to discover what *really* motivates others. A useful skill, for sure.

***The Creative Whack Pack***, by Roger von Oech, Creative Think Publishing

This package pairs von Oech's venerable ***A Whack on the Side of the Head*** with the Creative Whack Pack, a set of 64 bizarre yet thought-provoking idea cards. One exercise, called “three-day agenda,” suggest you draw five cards and use them to guide your work goals for the next three days — for example, flexing your risk muscles, changing your viewpoint, or looking for new patterns.

## ABOUT THE SEMINAR

Who couldn't use an invigorating burst of creativity to refresh their mindset and help their business grow? **Think Like a Fish: Develop Your Creativity and Jump-Start Your Business<sup>SM</sup>** is a 90-minute presentation that helps business people tap into their innate creativity. Hands-on exercises, practical tools, and entertaining examples invigorate participants and elevate their thinking to new levels of creative problem solving. From getting into creative thinking mode to proven tools for inspiration, **Think Like a Fish** will spark ideas you can put to work immediately.

For details on bringing **Think Like a Fish** to your company or next networking/business group meeting, drop us an email at [fish@fahouryink.com](mailto:fish@fahouryink.com) or call (973) 324-2100.

Why **Think Like a Fish**? A famous tournament-winning fisherman was once asked to explain his amazing success. “Simple,” he said. “I don't think like a fisherman. I think like a fish.” Ahhhh...



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What's the secret to  
better marketing?  
Two little words...

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