

The top 30 marketing mistakes

1. You don't have or have a short - sighted vision

You must have an attractive, worthwhile and achievable mental image of the future that is widely shared by shareholders, staff and other stakeholders. If you don't know it and haven't agreed with them what it is and how to achieve it how do you expect to realise it?

2. You don't have clear missions – and that means specific and particular goals

Don't drive the fire engine without a route. You need a plan. Take the time to thoroughly investigate your market and target customers, the competition and other basics and ensure that you have a business model that you can use for 'what if' calculations. Focus on answering one deceptively simple question: how will I make money?

3. You haven't an explicit, written business and marketing plan

Don't write an intricate marketing plan that becomes impossible to carry out. Many marketing plans look like jigsaw puzzles with hundreds of pieces. Make sure your marketing plan is built on simple steps that will be easy to implement and monitor.

4. You don't have clear objectives, strategies and tactics for your missions

Objectives, strategies and tactics need to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely. In addition to delivering the business and marketing plan, they must deliver 'mission success' and move you closer to your vision.

5. You don't know what a marketing plan should achieve

Your marketing program must establish your credibility, generate interactions between you and your prospects, gain your prospect's commitment, and maintain your client's loyalty. Programs that don't achieve all four steps will fail.

6. You haven't made marketing a priority.

Make marketing a priority for you or someone in your office. Or hire an outside consultant so you make sure the work gets done. Implement your plan at the earliest possible moment. A poor marketing plan that is up and running is infinitely more profitable than the "perfect plan" that never gets off the ground. Don't turn your marketing on and off like a light switch. Keep your program in gear so you always attract an ongoing flow of new clients. Maintaining an effective marketing program is the most important investment you can make. Why pay for an office and staff if you don't have enough business to justify the overhead?

7. You make decisions by committee

The quality of a decision is based on how long it takes to make the decision and how much the decision has been watered down by compromise. One person working alone has the potential to make good decisions. When two people work together things begin to bog down. And if you're waiting for three people to agree, don't hold your breath. By all means discuss things but one person makes the decisions!!! Marketing is like football. Can you imagine how long it would take if the entire team offered their ideas and everyone had to agree before they could make the next pass?

8. You let the owner or the 'chairman's wife' make the decisions

When it comes to stuff in which you have a huge personal investment (kids, home, business), you risk losing your objectivity. It's a human thing. But when you're inside the bottle, it's hard to read the label and that's when you risk putting your own interests at the expense of your customers' interests. Make sure one person makes the decisions but make sure that they are totally customer focused – that is, all too frequently, not the case with the owner or the 'chairman's wife'.

9. You haven't identified your market properly

You haven't researched your market enough. Do you know what it is that your market wants? Have you ever taken the time to go back to your customers and ask them why they bought from you in the first place? Have you spent time in discussion groups, mailing lists, and newsgroups to find out what problems people may be having or what they are looking for? You must specifically identify who your likely customers are and how and where they can be reached.

10. You have fallen in love with your product

Your product may be "your baby", but you will have to be willing to give it up if it isn't what the market wants. Every day the world market is changing and you have to be changing right alongside it. Your prospects' primary concern isn't that you've been in business for 25 years; it is do you know the problem they want to solve. It may be that demand for your product is declining. If so, are you willing to give it up and find a product people want?

11. You don't understand how to price.

Do you know what your product or service is worth? Do you know how much others charge? Do you know what your costs and margins are? Should you be competing on price or value or service or?

12. You don't know which customers you want

Do you know which of your customers are profitable or unprofitable? Do you know their lifetime value? Which of your products and services they are buying and not buying? Have you measured customers' purchase behaviour patterns, their loyalty / retention / repeat purchase and multiple product purchases? Do you know what channel

preferences customers have? Do you know what strategies you can use to improve a customer's profitability profile?

13. You haven't budgeted your marketing properly

Do you know how much you can afford to spend? Do you know what ROI you need on your expenditure? Would you rather reach 100% of the people and convince them 10% of the way or reach 10% of the people and convince all of them all the way?

14. You don't have a unique position and proposition

What makes your company or product different to everyone else's? Why should anyone buy from you visit you instead of somewhere else? Why should they buy from you instead of the competition? If you can't answer those questions in one quick sentence, then you don't have the type of UPP you need to succeed in today's worldwide business environment. Design your marketing program so you take control of your niche. If that niche is already dominated, create a new category for yourself. Then promote the category so prospects see you as first in that new area.

15. You don't have a clear and complete marketing message

If your message lacks even one essential element, your efforts will fail. It isn't the programme it's the message. Before you implement your marketing program, make sure you create a competent marketing message. Without a clear and powerful message that is relevant to the audience your marketing programme is doomed. A word here, a phrase there can change your response and conversion rates dramatically.

16. You aren't dealing with customers and clients as people and as individuals

Don't talk to everyone...deal with individuals. Automate as much of the marketing and production process as possible, but there still comes the time that you have to deal with people. Sales statistics are numbers but people are not. Be willing to help, to give away free information, free samples, etc.

17. You don't use the right marketing media.

Without question print media, radio and television can help you attract business. But many companies think of publicity as their entire marketing program. Exposure can increase your business. But often exposure by itself isn't enough. In addition to exposure, you need something that causes you to interact with prospects. Sales people, websites, telemarketing, direct mail and other media all create interaction. Make sure your marketing program brings about interactions between you and your prospects, such as over the telephone or in person. Interaction is a critical step in the marketing process and the step too many marketing programmes overlook.

18. You don't create campaigns

Some people make spur of the moment buying decisions, but most need to become familiar with your services and products, and this takes time. If you want your marketing

to work, you need to ensure that your prospects see or hear your message regularly. No single advert constitutes a campaign, Rome wasn't built in a day, and friendship isn't a first-sight phenomenon! Studies have proved the only variable that influences the success of any campaign is the power of your message. So make sure you are saying the right thing about your unique story; focus your campaign; commit to your message and be prepared to give it time.

19. You get your timing wrong

You've got to think about the timing your messages. Who is your audience and when are they most likely to see, hear or read your message? Your goal is to give your prospects and customers the right message and deliver it when they have the time to take it in. Is Friday at 16.00 a good time to receive a marketing email or does it depend on what you have to offer?

20. You haven't targeted your specific media effectively

Be careful to avoid over or under segmenting your audience or database in your efforts to reach your target. You only need to get your message to the decision-makers but decisions are seldom made in a vacuum. Don't neglect the influencers.

21. You don't test, test, test

It is rare to get the campaign correct first, second or third time, even fifty second time though by then it's probably improving at the edges that is all that is required. But each medium and campaign and piece has different costs and results and you need to know this so that you reinforce successes and drop failures rather than vice-versa. Choose different methods that you believe will reach your prospects. Then test each method on a small scale before you invest serious dollars. This way you'll know which method is most effective at reaching your target audience and how well it attracts the clients you want.

22. You don't track, track, track

One of the most fundamental mistakes is failing to track where each and every customer, client or contract comes from. Do you know if you are making more from your advertising than you are spending? Track each of your campaigns and you'll know where to spend your money in the future, what to modify and what to eliminate.

23. You confuse response with results

Slick, clever, funny, creative and different are very poor substitutes for informative, believable, memorable and persuasive. The name of the game is results: getting people to take the action you want them to take.

24. You don't move prospects to action or build relationships.

Are you successful at attracting prospects but generating few sales? You have to give ample opportunities to interact and reasons to buy. Remember it is 7 – 10 times easier to market a product to an existing customer than it is to a new customer. How are

you building relationships with your current customers? Are you seeking out and finding new products that meet other needs and wants they might have? Are you treating your current customers as your most valuable asset in your business – building relationships, giving them a reason to stay or repeat purchase, sending them information or a relevant newsletter?

25. You don't build well - crafted adverts

When you or your agency prepare any form of marketing, make sure of focus on the intended prospect and no one else. How many times have you scanned an ad in a newspaper and not had the slightest idea what it was about, or for whom the information was intended? Ads, mailing pieces, or commercials, all need a headline. Think of the headline as an ad for the ad. Its purpose should be to attract only those who are most qualified to be a prospect for your proposition. Whatever you're trying to sell, and whomever you want to reach with your message, be specific. Send your message directly to your prospective customers, and tell them what you're offering. Remember these points: attract the attention of your target audience in your headline or opening remarks, state your proposition or offer, use the rest of the ad to develop, support, and present your offer and your reasons why the prospect should embrace it. Finally, tell that prospect how to act on your offer.

26. You give up too soon

Sometimes people give up on advertising too soon. They don't test it enough. Sometimes making a sale requires sending a note or picking up the phone and calling your prospects. If you have an effective lead generation strategy, prospects will provide you with their contact information and the problem they want solved. Use the web, email, and the phone to follow up and close the sale. Most ads, commercials, etc., produce only a modest percentage return every time they are run. Direct response ads usually produce a 0.5% to 3% response. You may have to run them 1,000 times before you even begin to saturate your market. Just because you are tired of them, doesn't mean your marketplace is tired of it, and they have the only vote that counts.

27. You don't have 24 / 7 / 365 marketing and service or don't make doing business with you easy, appealing, desirable, and fun

In today's world technology allows 24 / 7 / 365 marketing and some customers expect to be able to research or respond or buy on that basis. Not delivering your marketing message until prospects 'come into' or not allowing them to buy on the web or by phone or at 12.00 may be why you are not doing as well as the competition.

28. You don't have well trained staff

Put yourself in your customers' or prospects' position. When people 'find you', how well trained are your staff? How much time have you spent preparing proper greetings, qualifying questions, presentation skills and advice for your people to ask or offer to customers? Do you take your customers, prospects, and business for granted? By merely stepping outside your office, walking up to your business, and looking through the customer's eyes, you should see a lot of flaws in your operation. Once they are remedied, you can dramatically improve your current and repeat business potential.

29. You can't provide the product or service

This may sound unbelievable but it happens. A marketing campaign also includes delivery of the good(s) or service(s). There is no point in advertising if you can't do that in a timely manner!!!

30. You don't think!

All business requires thought as well as action. Far too many organisations forget this and leap from frying pan to fire to volcano.

Remember:

You cannot service too much.

You cannot educate too much.

You cannot inform too much.

You cannot offer too much follow-up.

You cannot make ordering too easy.

You cannot make 'coming in' too desirable.

You cannot think too much.