



Most marketing fails

Did you know that most marketing fails? Most new products fail (In the grocery business alone, 17,000 new products were introduced last year, yet, the average grocery store only stocks 30,000 different products.) .

The question becomes why does most marketing fail and, more importantly, what can you do to avoid failure?

I've been engaged in marketing for 20+ years. After creating and implementing hundreds of marketing campaigns for clients in just about every industry imaginable (from agricultural services and water filtration systems to financial services firms, manufacturing, real estate developers, chemical companies, and contractors), a handful of elements kept coming up as essential.

Learn from my experience:

1. Your message isn't customer-driven

What you're saying about your product is important to you, is understandable to you. But not to your customer. Sorry, in marketing it doesn't matter what's important to you. What is important is what is important to your customer. They buy for their reasons, not yours. Make sure your message is important to them. How? Ask them.

2. Your marketing methods aren't customer-centric

You keep concentrating on "the stuff" like brochures, trade shows, and advertising in that trade magazine because it's the best and biggest in the industry, but the decision-makers inside your customers' companies stopped paying much attention to it two years ago. How do your customers expect to learn about vendors like your company? How do they prefer being contacted? Ask them! But first align your internal experience with what your customers' want to receive with their expectations and preferences.

3. Incomplete marketing support (not a campaign)

I see it all the time. A company sends one mailing, not much happens and they go about the task of figuring out why their marketing isn't working. Or they place one ad or go to one trade show. No follow up.

Things change. A prospect may not be open to your message this month, but might be next month. Think marketing campaign: multiple contacts executed a variety of ways (ads, direct mail, Internet, trade show, etc.). One ad or one mailing or one trade show does not a campaign make.

4. No testing/quit before you succeed

Make small affordable tests. Learn, change the headline. Change the offer. Change the price. Add a picture. Test. Rarely is something that “fails” 100% wrong. Testing helps you eliminate the bad and keep the good. Don’t quit before you give yourself a chance to succeed.

5. Too much “me-too”

Great xxx, fast, friendly service and reasonable prices. Wonderful, but why should I buy from you?

Are all those wonderful things you’re saying about your product really differentiating you, or do they sound like everybody else? My best antidote to too much “me too” is two things:

1. Make sure you’re giving people reasons to buy that are their reasons, not yours (a previous topic).
2. Be specific. Quality, service and price are so overused they have no impact. What does quality mean? Research shows that there are 17 words that are the most effective, attention getting words – use them.

6. You don’t contact enough people

At its most basic, marketing is still a game of odds. The more people you contact, the higher the odds your message gets to people who want your product at that time.

7. You don’t contact people often enough

Same as above. Get the odds in your favor. I may not need or want your product today, but I may next month.

The **first rule**, obviously, is to **focus on the perspective of the person you are trying to persuade**. Call them, invite them into your office, but talk to them. Do not, I repeat do not, send them a questionnaire asking them for their opinions. Talk to the people that you are attempting to persuade. Let them tell you why they will buy.

Rule two, spend 40% percent of your words describing the problem and convincing your reader you understand how they’re feeling right now. The biggest problem most copywriters make is spending 90 percent of their words describing how wonderful the product or service is, and maybe 10 percent (or zero percent) convincing the reader they understand their problem. People buy solutions to their problems, not your product’s wonderful features.

Rule three, use simple, emotion-packed words. Write the way you talk, not the way you write right now. There isn’t very much to be said about this topic really. Simply do this. Read your copy out loud. The best copy sounds like conversation. Bad copy sounds like writing. If you want to connect with somebody emotionally, if you’re attempting to sell them, then you better write conversationally.

Last rule, tell a story. This is huge! People love stories; it's in our DNA, from the cave drawings and grunts around the camp fire to wandering minstrels/storytellers to today's testimonials, we love stories. What's a story? You have a story, the story of what makes you better, how you came to it and why that's important to you. And your customers have a story, the story of how they selected your company and how your product solves problems for them.