



The Twenty Biggest Marketing Mistakes Most Businesses Make!

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Preface

As they say, "hindsight is 20/20," and when you examine why businesses, or more specifically why their marketing fails, there are very few surprises. What you find are common reasons – mistakes that could have been averted.

These mistakes represent "opportunity costs." In other words, these mistakes cost you the revenues your business would be earning if you didn't make them!

The key to averting these mistakes and to realizing greater revenue is to be proactive! But, the proactive process has to begin with understanding the critical elements within a successful marketing effort. I chose to phrase these critical elements in the form of 'mistakes' because I believe it helps you, the reader, to recognize if you're making them.

Knowledge of these common mistakes represents the important first step in the design of your successful marketing program. But, recognizing a problem is one thing, and fixing it is another. Consistently following best practices is the final challenge.

This booklet is full of practical and valuable marketing know-how. However, it is generic. If you need a hand applying these concepts to your own situation, call me. I'd be happy to show you how to leverage marketing in order to turn your business into a gold mine! We can even show you how to use award-winning technology to help you with many of the best practices I written about in this document!

Robert J. Ritter
President, First Direct Corp.

1. 'Bowling' When You Should Be Playing 'Chess'

In the marketing game, too many businesses make the big mistake of approaching their marketing like a "bowler" rather than a "chess player."

- In bowling, you send the ball down the lane with the objective of knocking down all the pins on the very first roll. The second move is purely reactive. In chess and marketing, the first move is often just an opening move with the subsequent moves being planned proactively.
- Bowlers don't adjust their game to their competitors'. Chess players and marketers are responsive to the competition and the market, they adjust their play in order to optimize results.
- Bowlers have one tool, the bowling ball, they can use to get 'results' on the 'receiving end.' Conversely, chess players and marketers have a wide selection of tools, better known in business as tactics, to choose from.
- In bowling, the strategic objective on every roll in every frame is the same. Knock down all the pins. The strategy in chess or marketing is more complex. A Grand Master in chess has diverse strategic and tactical options! So does a master marketer.

Here are examples of strategic options:

- Up-sell and cross-sell
- Negative option
- Ship till forbid
- Efforting program
- Trials
- Load-up offer

Here are some examples of tactical options:

- Direct mail
- Telemarketing
- Direct response broadcast
- Free standing inserts
- Package ride-alongs
- Card decks

Knowing the applications and strengths of each tactic, so that you're able to select the optimum combination in order to achieve the desired effect, is the measure of a how good a player or marketer you are.

Certainly, both bowling and chess require special abilities, skills and talent to become a champion. But metaphorically speaking, as marketers, we'll be far

better off if we approach our marketing game more like chess players and less like bowlers!

2. Not Recognizing the Cumulative Value of Repetition

It's rare that your first marketing communication will do the trick. It can happen, but you're better off if you factor the need for repetition into your marketing plan and budget.

Consider These Six Benefits Of Repetition:

1. **Residual Effect** - When your marketing communications repeatedly reach your prospect, the impressions build on one another. Your next impression benefits from the residual impression of those communications, which preceded it. Therefore, the impact of your impressions increases with repetition.
2. **Timing** - Timing is everything! Being in the right place at the right time is great! However, because life is a moving parade, this is easier said than done. A contact that was not interested six months ago may be on the verge of a buying decision today and out of the market the following month. Unless you can read minds, the surest way to reach your prospect at the right time is through repetition. It stands to reason that a timed stream of marketing communications multiplies your odds of being in the right place at the right time!
3. **The Right Message** - If you only advertise once or send only one direct mail package, you only have one opportunity for the message you've chosen to hit the mark. Repetition affords you more opportunities to test major elements of your message such as headlines, offers, etc. If at first you don't succeed . . . try, try again!
4. **Top-Of-Mind** - People who sell advertising stress "top-of-mind awareness" as justification for repeatedly advertising in their media. They're right about the relationship between repetition and "top-of-mind awareness." However, what some ad salespeople may not tell you is that "top-of-mind awareness" may be better achieved through integrated marketing - the combination of direct mail, direct response advertising, and other medium.
5. **Database Maintenance** - Repeated, periodic direct mail and telemarketing is a great way to learn of changes to contact information such as address, name, position, phone, etc. Your in-house list is too valuable to just let it rot-away. Repetition will keep your list fresh, in addition to generating more business.
6. **Relationship Building** - Have you ever told a friend to stay in touch? Repetition, especially personalized messages, will help you to build a relationship with your customer. Wouldn't you appreciate it if a friend were to let you know about a great sale on a product that you had shown an interest in?!

Repetition is more costly. However, if you take into account the amount that repetition lifts response and sales, you'll soon see that failing to use repetition is a big mistake, which in the final analysis will cost you far more!!

3. Making It Hard On The Consumer

Too many businesses are so busy figuring out how to make it easier on themselves that in the process they end up making it harder on the consumer. Big mistake! The backlash of making it harder on the consumer is they simply do business with somebody else.

Watch out for these common ways businesses make it harder on the consumer?

- Hard to find you, reach you or respond to your promotional offers.
- Hard to understand your communications.
- Hard to obtain your products or services.
- Hard to establish an account, credit or pay with credit cards.
- Hard to get information.
- Hard to register a complaint.
- Hard to take advantage of a guarantee or warranty.

In the move to streamline operations and control operating costs, it's dangerous if we're simply shifting burdens from ourselves to our customers.

By asking and observing the consumer we'll discover plenty of ways to make it easier on them.

The easier we make it for our customer to do business with us, the more they will!! (By the way, the same can be said for making it fun or pleasant!)

4. Not Testing

Who's to say what is the best approach or medium or message to use in your marketing? The consumer, that's who! Testing enables marketers to correct for their own biases and gives a business a sound basis for having the confidence in a campaign before going full throttle with its ad budget. Testing mitigates losses and maximizes the overall return on our advertising investment.

That's why there are two rules in direct marketing: Rule #1. In order to know what will work best, you must test. Rule 2#. If you believe you know what the consumer will do without testing, read rule one again.

Direct marketing professional Ed McCabe confesses, "Every time we get creative we lose money." Marketers need to test new ideas or changes to major elements in their current "control" or campaign to make sure they can dethrone their best direct response advertisement or mailing. When you do so, the better performing campaign, or element within a campaign, moves into the position of the new control. By continually testing, over time we optimize the results of our marketing efforts and validate that our marketing is in touch with the mind-set of our consumers.

In marketing we can test just about anything, but as direct marketing legend Ed Mayo puts it. "Don't test whispers." We should test major elements, which have the greatest likely impact on response. Examples of major elements in a campaign are: the offer, headlines, body copy, primary benefits, the envelope, the reply device, etc.

The best direct marketing professionals know that even they make many wrong assumptions. That's why the axiom which direct marketers live by is, "test, test, test," or as I like to say, "The Best Test . . . The Rest Guess!"

5. Institutional Versus Direct Response Advertisements

Institutional advertising is often more concerned 'impressions' rather than sales. (Sometimes the impression that the agency or artist is concerned with is their peers, rather than the actual targeted consumer.) Institutional ads seek "share of mind" from the consumer, in order to create "top-of-mind awareness," hopefully leading ultimately to purchases. Whereas, direct response advertising seeks a more immediate action, aka "show of hands."

The consumers' show of hands to direct response ads can come in many different forms. Examples include: Reply cards, fax-back forms, redeemed coupons, calls to an 800 phone number, orders, participation in contests, etc.

In direct response advertising, the orientation is on action! Direct response advertisements strive to motivate consumers to take some specific, measurable action, which can be attributable to the advertisement or marketing! Direct marketers have the philosophy, "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it!" And, if you can't measure it or manage it, its not accountable. So how can you really know how to improve it?

In distinguishing between direct response advertising and institutional advertising, direct response advertising must have the following four characteristics:

1. An Offer
2. Enough Information To Make A Decision On The Offer
3. A Clear Call To Action
4. An Identifiable and Convenient Means of Response

Direct marketing experts agree, the results of your DM campaign depends nearly 40% on the offer, which is tie for first place with the importance of your audience or list. Central to the success of any direct response campaign is the power of the offer. It's said that if you want to dramatically increase your results, dramatically improve your offer. As direct marketing pro, Bob Hacker so succinctly puts it, "It's the offer stupid!" If the performance of your direct response advertising isn't what it should be, Hacker recommends you check the offer first.

Here are some of the many benefits of direct response advertising:

- The first step in countering the consumers' negative inertia is to create some involvement by your prospects, such as requesting a free sample.
- Negative inertia is the force in us that discourages us from buying on the spot.

- Responses can be tracked and measured in order to evaluate the effectiveness of our message and the medium used to deliver it to the consumer.
- We can build a database for future direct follow up.
- We can learn things about the respondents that can help us improve our presentations or reach other consumers with similar traits, or to reposition ourselves in order to target a different audience.

The direct result of direct response advertising is more leads, sales and information. The "buy" product of repetition is name recognition and top-of-mind awareness.

6. Failing To Focus On Relevant Benefits In Headlines

In studies of which type of advertisements draw the best response, as a rule of thumb, headlines that contain strong consumer benefits will outperform those without. Yet, many businesses and advertising agencies mistakenly stray from what ultimately matters most to qualified customers - the bona-fide benefits that they seek through their expenditures.

While humor may make an ad more entertaining and memorable, customers do not buy products or services because of cute, clever or funny advertising. They buy them for a purpose; to obtain certain benefits or outcomes to fill unconscious and conscious desires. Benefits, which are relevant to these desires, are what will attract the consumer to our headline and ultimately to your product or service.

To make your benefits more impressive- follow these six guidelines:

1. Be Identifiable - prospects should be able to identify with the benefit and users who they see, or want to see, as similar to themselves.
2. Be Significant - your benefits should make some meaningful difference in one's life or business.
3. Be Clear - clarity is paramount, confusion kills response.
4. Be New - for added impact, make your headline sound like news.
5. Be Believable and Credible - people are suspicious of big unsupported claims.
6. Be Unique and Exclusive - this gives you a competitive edge in order to draw the prospect to you

In stressing benefits, as the saying goes, "it's best to fire your big guns first." Lead with those benefits which your research and testing have proven to be the most desirable. If you bury major benefits in the body copy or put them at the end, your prospect may be long gone, especially in today's overloaded and fast-paced times!

7. Graphics, Which Cloud Your Message

In the Fine Arts, creativity is an end unto itself. Whereas in advertising, graphic design and creativity are a means to an end. Ad legend Ray Rubicam's rubric is, "The object of advertising is to sell goods. It has no other justification worth mentioning." The bottom line from a direct marketing perspective is, as Jay Ogilvy said, "If it doesn't sell, it's not creative."

Graphics should be used to further the communications objective and serve the marketer's purposes, not the artists. In reality, each piece or element in a direct response campaign has its own specific purpose. For example, consider the purposes of the following elements:

- Put the salesperson in the letter to meet objections and motivate the consumer to act.
- The offer should entice qualified consumers to respond immediately.
- The order form should facilitate the order. It must be inviting, intuitive, and easily returned.

Here are some of the purposes of advertising graphics:

- Attract attention.
- Move the reader's eye along easily through the copy to the order form.
- Transfer, clarify and emphasize the message of the marketer.
- Say some things more efficiently and effectively than words. ("A picture is worth a thousand words.")

Marketers do themselves a disservice by not employing professionals to aid them. Skillfully done graphic design combined with adroitly written copy makes a world of difference.

John Kennedy, so called father of advertising said, "Advertising is selling in print." Ad graphics, like advertising overall, has a job to do - sell. If the graphics don't help the ad to sell, then no matter how attractive they may appear or how many awards they may have won, they've failed to do their job. If ugly sells better than pretty, and sometimes it does, then so be it.

8. A Poorly Developed & Maintained Marketing Database

Did you know that on average, someone who's purchased from you once before is 100% more likely to buy from you again? And, that a two-time customer is 200% more likely?

Your firm's house file should be one of its most prized assets. In today's computer age, even a mom & pop business can maintain a fully functional database. Once you come to appreciate the many ways to use your database, you'll quickly see how essential it is.

A good Marketing Database will help you through many marketing activities:

- Prospecting
- Qualifying
- Customer Retention
- Customer service and help desk
- Keeping track of accounts and credits
- Analyzing the effectiveness of your marketing
- Targeting special promotions or testing new campaigns
- Personalized communications
- Selling
- Market research
- Territory and account management

Have you ever gone to do a mailing or broadcast fax and found that your database is sorely out-of-date or lacking information? If so, then you know that if you don't maintain your database on a regular basis, it won't be ready for you when you need it. And, when you need it, it's too late to start cleaning it up.

Proper maintenance of your database is something that requires time, attention and procedures. It must be clear to those using the database or responsible for entering anything in it what the correct and incorrect way to do things are.

So many facets of your organization, including sales, customer service, marketing, and management, all rely on and take advantage of a good database. Your marketing database is central to your marketing activities. It is a valuable asset that should be used and cared for.

9. Missing Opportunities To Qualify

Qualifying suspects and prospects enables you to focus finite time and other resources on prospects that are most likely to yield an optimal return on your investment. By the same token, qualifying reduces wasted time, effort, and money on leads that have too low a probability of return.

Qualifying can take place in all phases of the advertising and sales process. Most businesses do some qualifying, but not enough. Be aware of all the opportunities, ways and times, when you should be qualifying suspects and prospects?

The Headline

The headline is an instant qualifier. Your headline should call out to your target audience and go unconsidered by others.

The Offer

Your offer also qualifies leads. Offers may be described as "hard" or "soft." The "harder" the offer the "tighter," or more qualified, the leads who respond are. On the other hand, a soft offer will generate more, but less qualified leads.

These features in an ad will affect the types of leads you receive:

The Hard Offer

- A toll call
- Requires postage
- A fee for information
- No trial offer

The Soft Offer

- Has a toll-free 800 number
- Postage is prepaid
- Information is free
- Trial offer or free sample

Here are some other good opportunities for asking qualifying questions and gathering useful qualifying information.

- Sales follow-up calls
- Incoming calls for literature
- Customer service calls
- Walk-ins or walk-ups

- Reply cards and order forms

Qualifying is not a single step in the sales & marketing process. It should permeate the entire process. Make sure your prospects deserve your attention. And if they do, give it to them!

10. Lack of Persistent Follow Up

Have you heard the estimate that 80-90% of sales are made on the 5th-7th contact? Do you also know that only about 10 - 20% of salespeople make that many contacts? These figures help to explain why the top 20% of salespeople do 80% of the business. They also explain why so many companies lose so much of the business from the leads that their advertising generates.

Consider the following example:

In 1994, IBM conducted a study of follow-up. In the study, they responded to 1,500 trade ads. 23% of the people they responded to never sent back any literature at all. 87% of those who did had no follow up. Of those who did have follow up, the average was 88 days. Less than 5% sent literature and followed up in less than 3 months! Guess who got the business?

Why is follow-up so poor?

The number one answer is because companies assume little to no corporate responsibility for follow-up and leave it largely up to the sales force. There are several reasons why so many salespeople don't practice persistence. Many salespeople give up because they're concentrating on their most recent inquiry and forgetting to follow-up on less recent inquiries. Besides lacking good follow-up habits, most salespeople simply aren't prepared to be persistent. Follow-up requires planning, organization, a system and administration. All things that most salespeople are not terribly good at.

Here are some things, which will help sales to be more persistent:

- Plan out the steps, frequency and purpose of your prospecting and marketing communications.
- Prepare communications in advance for future phases in your contact sequence. Have a library of merge letters for common types of communications.
- Prepare response kits in advance, so that all you need is a merge cover letter and envelope. Have everything ready to pick & pack efficiently and quickly.
- Maintain a central database of leads and have the company assume much of the responsibility for direct marketing follow-up.

If you anticipate the contact sequence and have things ready-to-go, you can respond rapidly so that your materials will reach your prospect before their interest goes cold or they buy from someone else.

Less than 1 out of 5 salespeople will do sufficient follow-up. Persistent follow-up requires motivation, resources, planning, and a process.

11. A Poorly Planned & Disorganized Marketing Process

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the demanding barrage of mundane tasks you have to satisfy everyday? Part of the reason may have to do with the fact that you lack a process to help you manage these demands.

A successful advertising campaign, which generates much better than expected response can be a predicament if your firm is not ready to handle the response. Developing, and continually improving, your marketing process will ensure consistency, quality, productivity, economy, and best of all, results!

Design a process or system for probable events or activities in your business. Those events and activities, which occur most often, are best suited for management through a process. Certain set processes that happen with regularity can even be automated.

Some examples of marketing areas where you can establish processes include:

Prospecting - advertisements, cold calls, direct mail, response fulfillment, etc.

Selling - presentations, FAQ, handling objections, etc.

Order Processing - taking the order, pick/pack & ship, tracking, billing, etc.

Tracking, Measuring and Evaluating Results - on ads, sales, forecasting, etc.

Database Maintenance - adds & deletes, updates, filtering, etc.

A well-organized process will allow you to use lower skill and lower pay employees to accomplish more, thereby freeing up time of your higher skill and higher pay personnel, including yourself! Plus, a process is more easily transferable. It can be transferred to a new employee, or to a new owner.

Processes help your company to run better! The more your business is comprised of processes, the less at risk you are if an employee leaves, and the more salable your company is!

12. Reducing, Rather Than Increasing, 'Selling Time'

"Selling time" is the amount of time in the day that your sales force has for selling. The more time your sales people sell, the more sales they'll make. So it's in your organization's best interest to increase your sales force's "selling time." How do you increase selling time? Here are eleven ways:

1. A literature fulfillment system. Set aside an area where information packages can be prepared and train support staff that sales can delegate fulfillment to.
2. Establish a library of letters. This library help will ensure that your salespeople spend less time struggling to write letters and your prospects will spend more time reading and responding to them.
3. Use sales automation software to streamline your selling process and give yourself more time.
4. Invest in envelope/label printers to avoid the time consuming process of using a typewriter or feeding them into a printer one-by-one.
5. Use inbound service reps to complete qualifying and data entry functions.
6. Plan campaigns well enough in advance and have enough needed follow-up materials and people ready to respond to inquiries.
7. Provide your salespeople with reports which guide them to opportunities and help them to see their progress.
8. Evaluate and analyze campaigns and sales methods and provide salespeople with constructive feedback.
9. Produce FAQ sheets and fax-back documents to answer common questions, aid fulfillment and handle technical support problems.
10. Do research on prospects and customer needs/wants so the sales force can zero in on selling opportunities and hot buttons.
11. Create effective sales presentation materials and tools to aid your salespeople.

Salespeople should be on the revenue side of the equation through their selling and not the expense side of the equation doing administration. Give them more time to do what they do best, and take away responsibilities that they're terrible at or can be done just as well by others for less cost. One of the nation's top sales consultants, Gil Cargill puts it succinctly, "Salespeople should sell, and everybody else should do everything else."

13. Not Outsourcing To Experts

Outsourcing is the practice of contracting out functions your business needs done. Marketing is one area that offers many opportunities for outsourcing.

Where outsourcing is appropriate, an outsource service provider can offer you important advantages because of their specialization:

- Experience and expertise
- More state-of-the-art technology
- Efficiency and economies-of-scale
- Contacts and resources
- Capacity and greater productivity

Before you decide to outsource, you need to determine which functions should be controlled in-house and which are better off outsourced. What should remain in-house are those areas where your firm adds the greatest value to the process. Typically these represent areas where your firm possess special skills, talents or abilities, referred to as core competencies. You'll probably also keep in-house those functions, which are highly intermittent or change very frequently or are extremely sensitive for security reasons.

To determine what you should outsource, "The Nations Leading Authority on Outsourcing," Michael Corbett, says to ask yourself this question, "Would someone hire me to do that for them?"

In terms of marketing, here are some functions which you should consider outsourcing:

- Certain kinds of telemarketing projects
- Graphic design
- Direct response advertising
- Database analysis
- Direct mail layout & design
- Copywriting and call scripts or guides
- List Selection
- Letter-shop services
- Broadcast fax

Outsourcing is a strategy you can use to elevate the professionalism, effectiveness and capacity of your marketing.

14. Not Building Urgency Into Your Promotions

There's a saying in direct marketing, "later is never." People put-off. Our attention is easily and quickly diverted to other problems, opportunities, and distractions. What we do as marketers in the brief moment that we have our prospects attention will determine whether we will have their business.

Unless we limit our offer somehow, the consumers' sense of urgency is driven entirely by their individual need for our product or service. And as we know, the longer a prospect waits, the less likely they are to respond to a particular campaign. Building urgency in your marketing promotions will lift response.

There are many ways to increase your consumers' sense of urgency. To effectively incorporate a greater sense of urgency into your marketing promotions, you must first understand the seven forms of urgency:

1. Emergency Urgency - Feeling threatened by serious harm to person or property, which can be averted through the acquisition of a product or service.
2. Ego Urgency - Our ego is either directly or indirectly linked to the need for a product. At stake are feelings such as shame, embarrassment, prestige, status, sexual attractiveness, and belonging.
3. Scarcity Urgency - This is triggered by the threat of running out. A short or visibly dwindling supply, and rarity are triggers for this type of urgency.
4. Competitive Urgency - Plays on our natural competitiveness. Variations in quality, and insufficient supply will trigger competitiveness.
5. The Rules Say So Urgency - Urgency can be created with policy or an established practice. Example, "The store is closing." "The sale ends today." Such rules must come from a higher authority who is removed and unswayable.
6. Enough is Enough Urgency - The influence of reciprocity is at work here. Urgency is triggered when we've cross the threshold of fairness.
7. The Prospect's Own Independent Urgency - This form of urgency is triggered when the need for a product or service is somehow linked to some other urgent need. For example, the boss may be pressuring you to reach a decision, or you may have another appointment you need to go to, etc.

Aside from increasing response, urgency will also shorten response time. So, put urgency into your message and watch your response rate soar.

15. Failing To Establish Credibility

Bert Decker, famous speech coach put it this way, "You have to be believed to be heard." Without credibility, your message will not be taken seriously. That's why it is essential to establish credibility in order for your marketing to work.

A fantastic offer from one company can sound like a scam, while virtually the same offer from another company can cause a stampede of interested customers. The difference could simply be that the first company had awful credibility and the second company had tremendous credibility.

There are several different factors, which contribute to your credibility.

- Congruence
- Name recognition
- Demonstrations, pictures, illustrations, testimonials
- Referrals and references
- Proof, test results, statistics, specifics
- Education
- Sincerity and openness

Credibility, like trust, is as much emotional as rational. So in striving to build credibility, don't limit your messages to factual figures and test results. You also need to humanize your case with anecdotes and personal accounts.

Credibility is a catalyst. When you establish yourself as a credible source, you do not have to try as hard to sell your product. Credibility helps to transfer your sales message. It makes any sales message more powerful, more believable. The more credible a company or person is, the less they have to say to sell their product.

16. Not Realizing That Clarity Is Paramount

In the business of marketing, the saying goes, "If you confuse them, you lose them." The communication of any message depends on clarity. Without clarity, your message will not be understood, and you will not achieve your objective. The following is a list of things to think about before you draft your communications. These techniques will contribute to clearer communication.

1. Outline the letter tightly. Develop a natural progression through your points and write the letter accordingly.
2. First focus on your train of thought versus nit-picking each part of the copy.
3. Give yourself plenty of time. "Sleep on it" if you don't feel that the letter is coming out as well as it should be. By giving yourself some time away from what you're doing, your perspective will change. A renewed perspective will allow you to iron out the rough spots in your writing.
4. Draft and redraft. Revise your work as many times as it takes to get it right.
5. Hearing your copy is different than seeing it. Read your copy aloud and have someone read it to you.
6. Don't assume that the reader understands what you are writing about as well as you do. Make sure that you spell out any parts of your copy that may be confusing, rather than hoping for correct interpretation..
7. Write shorter sentences and paragraphs. Short sentences and paragraphs are more readable and easier to understand.
8. Use proper grammar and punctuation. Poor grammar and misplaced punctuation send the message that you aren't to be taken seriously. Also, readers tend to stop reading when you make a mistake in these areas. Instead of considering your message, the reader is concentrating on your error.
9. Here's a copywriter's trick - Eliminating the first paragraph improves most letters.
10. It's almost always a mistake to try to sell two things at once.

Even the best offer can get lost in an unclear communication. Remember:
"Anything that breaks the flow or comprehension of your marketing message can lower response."

17. Using Headlines Which Lack Powerful Appeal To Your Target Audience

Nearly 75% or more of an advertisement's effectiveness lies in the headline. Your headline must have a strong appeal to be effective. Don't dilute the impact of your message by trying to appeal to too broad an audience. If you attempt to be all things to all people, your messages will not pack the punch they need in order to appeal to your target audience.

No where else in your copy is your choice of words more important than in your headline. To create headlines, which are appealing, use vocabulary that has proven effective in headlines. Here are several examples: Announcing, Presenting, Introducing, Just Published, First, How To, Free, Why, Which, Who Else, This/These, Advice, Can You, Test Your, To the (identify audience), Goodbye... Hello..., Wanted, Now, At Last, Beginning (date).

Headline Facts: Here are some points to consider before you construct your next headline.

- No element in an ad is more important than the appeal or reason for buying.
- A headline's first job is to catch attention.
- A good headline is telegraphic ... it sends a potent message.
- A good long headline is better than a poor short headline.
- Emphasize words with significant relevance to your consumer.
- Avoid headlines that are "too smart," or hard to grasp.
- The advertiser may be able count on the name of their company to supplement and make clear the meaning of the headline.
- Headlines are not always just words; they can include graphics as well. A picture may supplement copy. It can help clarify copy.
- Specific figures boost the credibility of a claim in a headline.

The appeal of your product or service is what compels the consumer to buy. Though easier said than done, by creating more appealing headlines, you will attract more customers.

For every person who reads the body copy, there are scores who just read the headline. If you have a year to develop an ad, spend 40 weeks determining the strongest appeal, 8 weeks writing the headline, and 4 weeks on the rest.

18. Making It Risky For Consumers To Do Business

There are two sides of the selling equation -- Increasing attractions and decreasing detractors. I call it push-pull marketing. Some techniques and messages are used to pull or draw the customer to you, such as stating major benefits. Other techniques are used to reduce or eliminate those factors, which detract from the sale or push the customer away. For example, a strong guarantee, which assures customers that they are protected against product defects or other forms of dissatisfaction.

In today's society, the consumer is educated, savvy, skeptical, cynical, and totally time crunched. If they sense that you've deliberately tried to deceive them or waste their precious time and budget, they will resent you and never trust you again.

It is not enough to simply state your product's or service's benefits. You also have to overcome your consumers' buying fears. These are some of the things consumers feel their risking:

- Wasting their time
- Being dissatisfied
- Being taken in by misrepresentations or exaggerations
- Losing money
- Loss of privacy or security
- Making a mistake in judgment

Now, here are several things you can do to reduce the consumers' real and perceived risks:

- Accept Credit Cards
- Accept Returns
- Guarantees and Warranties
- Testimonials, Endorsements and other Social Proof
- Trial Offers, Negative Options
- Bonuses for Considering
- Pay For Return Shipping

Fear is sometimes the only thing keeping potential consumers from buying. There is a direct inverse relationship between risk and response. The higher the risk, the lower the response. Conversely, as you address and reduce the consumers' risks, you increase response!

19. Poorly Conceived & Ineffective Marketing Strategies Combined with the Improper Use of Tactics

A marketing strategy enables us to achieve the goals we set. Marketing strategies are conceived and designed in order to accomplish specific objectives. Finally, strategies are executed through the effective use of intelligently selected tactics given the means or resources at our disposal.

Before you can determine the optimum strategy, you must define clear and specific objectives that you wish to achieve, such as: higher conversion of suspects to prospects and prospects to customers, greater profit margins, customer retention, greater buying frequency, better brand recognition, lead generation, etc..

Strategies are built in the context of:

- Who your customers and prospects are;
- Current sales trends and what they suggest;
- Our present strengths and weaknesses;
- The marketing environment;
- Our competitors' presence, activities and likely response;
- What the "status quo" will get you.

Richard Mayer, Chair of KFC said, "A strategic plan that doesn't include action steps, isn't a plan at all." Action steps are the specific details of your marketing plan. They include the actual tactics or methods, dates, assigned responsibility, budgets and resources required to do the job.

Good judgment depends greatly on being aware of your options and their implications. Successful marketer Martin Gross says that, "Whoever knows only one direct marketing skill . . . does not even know that properly."

Many businesses do not set aside and devote enough time to planning their marketing. We're easily consumed by day-to-day operational issues and chores. We need to step back and think about our marketing from a strategic perspective. Planning taps into our brain's highest powers and enables us to see things in enlightening and powerful ways. Eureka -- This is how we rise above our competitors.

Our true competitive advantage comes from our vision for opportunity and our ability to translate our vision into focused goals. Success marketing depends on how well we design and execute effective marketing strategies through the intelligent and resourceful use of all the tactics that are available to us.

20. Not Having A Marketable Unique Selling Proposition

A Unique Selling Proposition, or USP, is what makes our business special. A strong USP, brings focus and direction to our marketing. It positions our company in the market and establishes a strong meaningful identity for the consumer to relate to.

Before you can develop your company's Unique Selling Proposition, you must understand the components of a good USP. The following list includes six characteristics of a powerful Unique Selling Proposition.

1. It is highly strategic.
2. It eliminates competition.
3. It possesses a marketable theme.
4. It communicates a relevant added value.
5. It is exclusive.
6. It is integrated throughout your entire marketing program.

One way to create your own USP is to be the first at something. This can be done by a technique called "shifting paradigms." It involves combining two product attributes, which are not ordinarily associated with one another. For example:

- Miller Lite "Tastes Great" and is "Less Filling."
- Nissan created the first "Four Door Sports Car," the Maxima.
- Nissan did it again with their Altima, the first "Affordable Luxury Car."
- Dodge Ram was the first to combine comfort & luxury with the toughness of a truck.
- Saturn later introduced "a new kind of car company," emphasizing the type of company they are and the relationship you'd have with them, rather than the tangible differences in their vehicle.

All of these companies have developed USPs that presents everyday products in a new way and positions their product and company apart from their competition.

Creating your own Unique Selling Proposition gives your company focus and identity. A good USP will allow you to concentrate on what sets your company apart from its competition. Through your USP you effectively carve out a niche in the marketplace for your business.

Summary

Here's a brief overview of what you need to do so you can avoid "The Twenty Biggest Marketing Mistakes That Most Business Make."

1. Metaphorically speaking, as marketers, we'll be far better off if we approach our marketing game more like chess players and less like bowlers!
2. Repetition is more costly. However, if you take into account the amount that repetition lifts response and sales, you'll soon see that failing to use repetition is a big mistake, which will cost you far more, in the final analysis!!
3. The easier we make it for our customer to do business with us, the more they will!! (By the way, the same can be said for making it fun or pleasant!)
4. The best direct marketing professionals know that even they make many wrong assumptions. That's why the axiom which direct marketers live by is, "test, test, test," or as I like to say, "The Best Test . . . The Rest Guess!"
5. The direct result of direct response advertising is more leads, sales and information. The "buy" product of repetition is name recognition and top-of-mind awareness.
6. In stressing benefits, the saying goes, "It's best to fire your big guns first." Lead with those benefits which your research and testing have proven to be the most desirable. If you bury major benefits in the body copy or put them at the end, your prospect may be long gone, especially in today's overloaded and fast-paced times!
7. John Kennedy, so called father of advertising said, "Advertising is selling in print." Ad graphics, like advertising overall, has a job to do - sell. If the graphics don't help the ad to sell, then no matter how attractive they may appear or how many awards they may have won, they've failed to do their job. If ugly sells better than pretty, and sometimes it does, then so be it.
8. So many facets of your organization, including sales, customer service, marketing, and management, all rely on and take advantage of a good database. Your marketing database is central to your marketing activities. It is a valuable asset that should be used and cared for.
9. Qualifying is not a single step in the sales & marketing process. It should permeate the entire process. Make sure your prospects deserve your attention. And if they do, give it to them!
10. Less than 1 out of 5 salespeople will do sufficient follow-up. Persistent follow-up requires motivation, resources, planning, and a process.
11. Processes help your company run better! The more your business is comprised of processes, the less at risk you are if an employee leaves, and the more salable your company is!
12. Salespeople should be on the revenue side of the equation selling, not the expense side, administering. Give them more time to do what they do best, and take away responsibilities that they're terrible at or can be done as well as or better by others for less cost. One of the nations top sales consultants,

Gil Cargill puts it succinctly, "Salespeople should sell, and everybody else should do everything else."

13. Outsourcing is a strategy you can use to elevate the professionalism, effectiveness and capacity of your marketing.
14. Aside from increasing response, urgency will also shorten response time. So, put urgency into your message and watch your response rate soar.
15. Credibility is a catalyst. When you establish yourself as a credible source, you do not have to try as hard to sell your product. Credibility helps to transfer your sales message. It makes any sales message more powerful, more believable. The more credible a company or person is, the less they have to say to sell their product.
16. Even the best offer can get lost in an unclear communication. Remember: "Anything that breaks the flow or comprehension of your marketing message can lower response."
17. For every person who reads the body copy, there are scores who just read the headline. If you have a year to develop an ad, spend 40 weeks determining the strongest appeal, 8 weeks writing the headline, and 4 weeks on the rest.
18. Fear is sometimes the only thing keeping potential consumers from buying. There is a direct inverse relationship between risk and response. The higher the risk, the lower the response. Conversely, as you address and reduce the consumers' risks, you increase response!
19. Our true competitive advantage lays in our vision for opportunity and our ability to translate our vision into focused goals. Success depends on how well we design and execute effective strategies through the intelligent and resourceful use of all the tactics that are available to us.
20. Creating your own Unique Selling Proposition gives your company focus and identity. A good USP will allow you to concentrate on what sets your company apart from its competition. Through your USP you effectively carve out a niche in the marketplace for your business.

Again, think of this list of mistakes as a list of opportunities or ways you can market more successfully! Remember that by improving in these areas you'll gain powerful advantages over your competitors, who are very likely making these mistakes as well.

My professional marketing expertise and assistance is available to help you increase revenues. Call me today, and let's Turn Your Business into a Gold-Mine©!

Grow Your Business ... Call Today (800) 935-4386!