

# The **10**



# **MOST DANGEROUS MARKETING BLUNDERS Revealed**

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# 1 Not Realizing that the Era of Simple Selling Is Over

Did you ever watch an old 1960's TV show like "*The Andy Griffith Show*"? As you may remember, the fictional North Carolina town of Mayberry had a typical old-time Main Street with one barbershop, one drugstore, one auto repair, etc. If you lived in Mayberry, you shopped in Mayberry, or you drove a long way to the next town for more choices. **Think this is a corny example?** Then think back just to the 70's and even the early 80's. Say you wanted to buy a Buick. You went to THE Buick dealer, (there probably was not another one for a couple of towns) and you really didn't have a lot of choices either. If you wanted a car the size and comparable cost of a Buick, there were only 3 or 4 models from GM, Ford and Chrysler to choose from (the imports had not even made a dent in the full size car market yet).

**So what happened?** You looked at what the Buick dealer had on the lot, chose a color and settled on a price. Simple selling. The salesperson had all the power and knowledge.

## Fast forward to the present...

First of all, if you want a full size Buick today, you have a multitude of other choices from American automakers AND almost every import. *So right away the seller (the Buick dealer) has lost a little power.* Secondly, if you actually settle on a Buick after looking at all the other makes and models that fit the bill, *there is probably a Buick dealer every 10-15 miles in a typical suburban area.*

So let's say you've decided that Buick is the car for you and you've selected a dealer. Today, even the most minimally educated consumers know what the dealer paid for the car, what rebates are available, how to get the most for their trade, and how to have several dealers bid for their business – *all without leaving the comfort of their home!*

## You see, the balance of power has shifted from the sellers to the buyers .

Most of the so-called marketing experts fail to address this "shift of power" in their writings. **You must create a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) that leads today's buyer that has many choices to say,**

***"I'd have to be nuts to buy from anyone else!"***

# 2 Not Developing a Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

*Failure to identify your company's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is one of the biggest mistakes that is initially made.* What is a USP? It's that unique, special, distinct, and appealing idea that sets you apart from your competition. It can be price, quality, service, exclusivity, guarantee, etc.

It is imperative that you first decide what your USP is before you can begin your marketing campaign. What's important is to choose a USP that distinguishes you from your competitors. It is more important to focus on one segment and not try to be all things to all people.

Often when you ask a business owner to speak about their particular USP, they have no definitive answer. Why? Because they've never thought about the concept of USP. Most of them have no USP. Just a "follow the leader" mentality. It's no great surprise that these types of business owners at best will just get by, because they only get a small piece of the pie.

## What if you feel that there is nothing special about your business?

Believe me when I tell you, if you feel that there is nothing special about your business, **then it's time to "close shop" and lock the door.**

However, if you're really stuck for ideas, adding or creating a new twist to your services can help the process. Using the pre-emptive approach creates the illusion of being different from your competitors. After all, you are selling your services to customers and not competitors!

Every business should take the time to make themselves stand out from the competition.

## Once you have established your USP, it must be conveyed in everything you do.

It's what makes you different and what your customers will always remember. Have you ever heard of the "UnCola" (7 UP) or "Have it Your Way" (Burger King)? Take this test when you think you have come up with the perfect USP:

## *Ask, "Who else can make that claim?"*

If the answer is "no one," chances are you've got a pretty good USP.

# 3 Not Relating Your USP To Your Potential Customers

**You may have the greatest USP (Unique Selling Proposition) in the universe, but if no one knows about it, what good is it?**

We've already spoken about the utmost importance of a good, strong USP, and how not having one is a recipe for disaster.

**Once you've defined your USP, you must then:**

- 1. Say it well**
- 2. Say it often**

You see, if you **combine** something good to say (your USP), and say it *well* and *often*, you can't lose. The marketing dollars you invest will bring you a significant return on investment (ROI).

*The words you use,  
combined with the way you  
use them in your advertising,  
will make all the difference  
between marketing  
that costs you money,  
and marketing  
that makes you money.*

# 4

## **Using Institutional (Image) Advertising Instead of Response Advertising**

Spending marketing dollars on ads that are designed to just keep your name in the marketplace is generally a **waste of money**.

Running ads that do not bring a measurable response, is a waste of time and does not leverage your marketing dollars.

This concept of institutional marketing is usually ineffective. Occasionally, an offer will be extended, but subsequently a solution isn't offered nor is there a call to action for the consumer. It's only purpose is to create a positive spin or a big, warm, fuzzy feeling about the company. *There is no compelling reason why consumers should be doing business with them.*

**Conversely, direct response marketing tells people what to do and why to do it.**

It leads to action. It starts a dialogue/interaction between a potential customer and the company. It leads customers to see the advantage of doing business with you. This leads to direct sales.

**Direct response marketing is very simply making the sales pitch in the ad instead of in person.**

The idea is to pose a problem and to find a solution. Creating a need and in turn filling that need. Building a case, which leads to customer action and response. A case to buy!

***Unlike institutional advertising, direct response advertising provides a means to track, evaluate, and implement customer action.***

It serves in the same capacity as institutional advertising by keeping your name in the marketplace, but generates measurable results as well.

# 5 Not Using Direct Response Methods

A direct response method of advertising is any advertisement (mail, print, radio, on-line, television, etc.) that makes a clear and direct offer of your product or service to your customer. To make a clear and direct offer the ad must contain three elements:

- 1. Provide a description of your product/service.**
- 2. Provide the price of your product/service.**
- 3. Provide a manner for the consumer to purchase your product/service.**

When Pepsi-Cola aired a commercial some years ago with Britney Spears singing and dancing as she drinks a Pepsi, this may be very effective in Pepsi's grand marketing scheme but, it's not a direct response ad.

You may be asking yourself, if it's good enough for Pepsi, isn't it good enough for me? Well, the Britney Spears ad is just one component of the 5 million dollar marketing campaign. Every Sunday there's also tens of millions of FSI (Free Standing Inserts) flyers in the newspaper with coupons and ads for Pepsi-Cola telling the reader how long the price is good for and where they can purchase the soda. That's the direct response aspect of their marketing campaign. So Pepsi's letting us know that if we want to be desirable like Britney we should drink Pepsi, and they can put this message out knowing we will learn where and when to get the product through various direct response methods.

# 6 Not Working and Cultivating Your Own Customer List

Working or cultivating your own customer list means putting a program together (preferably as automated as possible) that will systematically communicate with your customers to ensure that they are aware of all the services or products you offer. The two biggest misconceptions most small business owners have causes them to make this marketing mistake:

- 1. My customers know all the products/ services I offer.**
- 2. If my customers wanted it ...they'd ask for it.**

This mind-set is so prevalent that this represents one of the most common marketing mistakes business owners make. *By not working your own customer list you're losing sales.*

Working and cultivating your own customer list is a multi-pronged effort that should be incorporated into every aspect of your marketing, from your web site and print materials straight through to your signage. But, it doesn't stop there. In addition to keeping all your products and services top-of-mind when the customer is engaged with you, it's more important after the sale, when the customer has moved on. At this point, your knowledge of your products and services will indicate when and what the offer to the customer should be.

Do you sell a product that needs refills every 30-days? If so, don't wait and hope to see them in a month. Instead, remind them via regular mail or e-mail every 25-days and offer them something to ensure the purchase. If you are a house painter who also offers home power washing, every homeowner you've painted for this summer should receive a postcard offering your power-washing services the following spring.

From a marketing standpoint, this is so essential when you consider that the most difficult sale to make is the first sale. *Not maximizing and cultivating your own customer list is equivalent to throwing money away.* When someone purchases your product or service and is happy, they will be glad to purchase other items from you, if they need them. If they were happy with your house painting, they would believe and take your recommendation regarding power washing. Remember a happy customer wants to be a repeat customer... make it easy by working and cultivating your own customer list.

# 7

## Not Writing the “AD For The AD”

### The Headline

How many times have you scanned an ad in a newspaper or magazine and not had the slightest idea what it was all about, to whom the information was intended? *Ads, mailing pieces, commercials, etc., all need a headline that attracts the potential buyer.*

**A powerful headline is a crucial element that impacts the sales offer.** It is imperative that you grab a potential customer’s attention immediately. *A headline simply serves as an ad for your ad.* It should instantly send a clear message to the consumer of what will be said in the body copy. Without exception, humorous, abstract, or indirect ads *are a waste.* They must be concise and focus exactly on your target audience. **It’s crucial to create a headline that tells only the right people precisely what you are offering.**

However, attracting attention is not enough. **You must always identify your prospect and be as specific and personal as possible.** A great example of this is a newspaper. Without a grabbing headline that attracts the reader on the front page, there is a good chance that the paper won’t sell and ensuing articles and ads will not be read.

In addition to attracting audience attention, you also must state and support your offer. **This will lead the reader to take action.** Always telegraph your message only to the people who are your primary prospects. The more specific you are with your target audience, the more of those prospects will be reached.

**“New Shampoo Leaves Your Hair Smoother —Easier To Manage.”**

A result that all women want is clearly stated. The use of the word “Leaves” makes it sound so effortless.

**“Do You Do Any Of These Ten Embarrassing Things?”**

This is a bull’s-eye question. All of us are afraid of embarrassing ourselves in front of others. *Which ten are they? Do I do any of them?*

**“Here’s A Quick Way To Break Up A Cold.”** In simple everyday words, a direct promise to end an unwanted condition--quickly.

**“Here’s A Great Headline Test:”** if you can add the phrase “Well, I would hope so,” you have a terrible headline. For example a car-dealer that uses the headline “**all vehicles priced to sell**” well, I would hope so... should they be priced NOT to sell... Here is another dumb headline that is used all the time. “**best prices, best selection**” well I would hope so... why would I shop there if they have the worst prices and the worst selection. Do you get the idea?

How about an example of a good headline? “**We will service any copier, printer or fax machine in your office up to 12:00 midnight, at our regular hourly service rates no matter where you purchased it.**” Try adding “well I would hope so” after that killer headline... You CAN’T.

# 8 **Not** **Testing Your** **Campaigns**

## **Why test different forms of marketing?**

**It will ultimately take out the guesswork and allow you to maximize your marketing dollars.** You will increase your sales and profits just by testing. Any questions can be cheaply, quickly, and firmly answered by a test campaign.

## **Let the few decide what the many will do**

by making a small investment, then watching costs and results (large companies spend millions on testing). Averages are established on a smaller scale. We now know our investment, our sale, our profit or loss, and how soon our investment comes back.

The best way to get started is breaking down the different segments you are trying to reach and testing one variable against the other. As a result, the market will define what it wants the most.

Variables that need to be used in the testing process include the headline, the offer, the pricing, the guarantee, media choice, product offering, packaging, etc. Once testing is complete, the successes must be integrated into your overall marketing philosophy. **However, this does not signal a time to sit still and become complacent.**

***The only way you will maximize your marketing dollars is by continuing to test over and over again.***

# 9

## **Not Sticking With Campaigns That Work**

**Just because you are getting tired of an ad, doesn't mean your customers are.**

Did you know that most businesses get sick of their advertising campaigns long before the marketplace does? If an ad has been running for a long time, it doesn't mean the market is saturated. **The customer's vote is the only one that counts.**

By stopping campaigns prematurely, the business owner does not let the long-term effect work for him. In addition, the dynamics of testing will not work and could hurt the company's image by constantly changing. **If it doesn't need fixing, don't fix it!**

**If you're getting a steady and consistent response from your campaign, why mess with success?**

However, you should always continue to test different marketing strategies during this process. You might uncover a different approach, which just might work better and cost a lot less. This continuous cycle of testing should be repeated over and over to discover ways that work better as you continue to grow.

# 10

## Not Giving a “Reason for the sale”

If your advertising and marketing lends itself to “sales” make sure the sales promotion is *believable*.

Headlines like: “*Mid-Summer Sale,*” “*Hot Summer Savings,*” “*Memorial Day Blow-Out,*” etc., mean absolutely nothing and convey no urgency or sense that there is any real savings to be had.

If you’re going to run a sale, make it **legitimate**; otherwise your ads end up sounding like the fable “The Boy Who Cried Wolf.” *When you really have a good sale to promote – no one will believe you.*

Here’s an example:

### **Inventory Clearance Sale – All Items 50% Off.**

**Because we have to count every item in the store this Friday, we are offering 50% off everything in the store until midnight Thursday. The less we have to count, the faster we’ll be finished. We’d rather sell them than count them!**

**Remember, 50% off this Thursday, closed Friday.**

This headline and sub-head is a great example of a super offer and a REASON for doing so (especially believable since the store is actually closed Friday).