

Eight Marketing Mistakes – and How to Avoid Them

Every business, whether large or small, will make marketing mistakes. But since no company's marketing budget is unlimited, it makes sense to avoid these mistakes if at all possible.

How do you do this? First, know the classic faux pas that have been made by countless entrepreneurs before you. Then, follow these steps to avoid making them yourself.

1. It's all about me

It's not about you. Sounds harsh, but it's the truth. It's not what you like or want, but what your customers will respond to.

How to avoid: Evaluate every marketing message by reading it and then asking, "So what?" Odds are you can skip the original statement and use the answer to "So what?" as the message.

Example: "We've been in business for 20 years." So what? So, we're reliable or people wouldn't keep doing business with us, we provide good service, and we know the area intimately. Those are all reasons people do business with you. The fact that you're 20 years old is not.

2. Nebulous messaging

People are interested in your business because you can solve their problem. Whether you're a dentist, plumber, or dog sitter, the reason people seek you out is the same: They need your help!

How to avoid: Rather than hint at their problem, spell it out:

- Identify the problem – "Is the drip-drip of a leaky faucet keeping you awake at night?"
- Explain why the problem should be solved now – "Every drip is wasted money down the drain!"
- Explain why you are the right company for the job – "We've fixed 500 leaks in the last six months and guarantee we'll fix yours on the first visit."
- List the benefits of working with you – "We'll fix your leak in under an hour or it's on us – guaranteed!"

3. Spray and pray marketing

Sure that ValPak advertising offer looks good and the sales person swears it will benefit you. Will it? Or are you just doing it to say you're doing something?

How to avoid: Identify your ideal clients. Then find out what marketing avenues will best reach them. Pursue those using differentiated messaging, measure your results, and tweak your marketing program as necessary.

It sounds simple, but will be a full-time job. Get some help from marketing pros or you'll quickly find yourself back in a boat called Spray and Pray.

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4. Selling when you could be educating

People don't like being sold to. You don't, I don't, no one does! So when most entrepreneurs seek new business, why is it that they try to sell everyone they meet?

How to avoid: Give people something for free. It can be a free report, sample of your product, or educational DVD. By giving people something up front you build trust, position yourself as an expert, and create follow-up opportunities – just remember to get their contact information so you can follow-up!

And don't worry about "giving away the farm." We're giving you some great advice here, but does that make you respect us less – or more? Does the information you now have make you think you are a marketing expert – or just let you know there's a lot to learn?

5. Not following up

Following-up with prospects and current customers is the easiest and cheapest way to get more business. Prospects will know you're thinking about them, and customers will remain customers for much longer if you solicit their feedback.

We've kept in touch with potential clients for a full year before they signed on, but when they did the relationship was rock solid. And the project reviews we do with clients give them a chance to tell us their thoughts and us a chance to grow.

How to avoid: First, don't be shy. As long as you call or e-mail just once a month or so, no one will think you are a stalker. Second, keep a list of people to follow-up with and when to do it next. You can use Outlook, a client database, a white board – whatever works for you.

6. Marketing to non-prospects

It would be awesome if your product or service appealed to everyone, but that's just not true. Think of it this way: Almost everyone needs a car, but does Maybach advertise on TV? No, because only a very few people can afford Maybachs.

How to avoid: Go back to tip #3 and identify your ideal clients. Who are they, why do they buy from you, and how do they find out about you? You can even be bold and ask a group of people in your target market!

7. Not telling a story

Before humans had written communication we used storytelling to keep stories alive and pass vital information on to younger generations. This process is still ingrained in our collective psyche – just look at how much kids love stories and how popular movies are for proof that storytelling is good!

How to avoid: Use case studies and testimonials so people can see a real-life example of how your product or service helped someone. You can crow about yourself until the cows come home, but nothing drives home the point like a good story.

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8. Not asking for the sale

Okay, so this seems to fly in the face of tip #4. But you really won't get any sales if you don't ask for them.

How to avoid: Make sure your timing is right – after a good conversation or near the end of a meeting with a prospect. Then just blow them away with your suaveness by saying something like, “It's clear you have a need that my company can fill. Are you ready to move forward?”

Then just stop talking. Many a sale has been lost by a salesperson trying to sell someone who's already sold – and turning them off in the process.

We hope you will put these tips to good use. If you have questions feel free to contact us.

Since you've read this far, it's clear you have a need that we can fill. Are *you* ready to move forward? Are you ready for more sales via methods that are easier than you imagined? Call us for a no-obligation conversation.