

Whitepaper

Worst-Practice Marketing. How to Bring Your Sales and Marketing Engine to a Screeching Halt, With 9 Things to Avoid for Revenue Success.

As a marketer entering my fourth decade working exclusively in B2B, I have seen plenty of successes and failures when it comes to marketing small to medium-sized tech businesses. Yes, Promotions are but one of the Four Ps of marketing. I've seen many a business thrive based on Product and Place alone, and this is a staple of a lot of tech companies whose formulaic approach is (seemingly) a great product demoed to the right audience, equaling success. This is a good place to start, but if you don't have at least these, Price isn't going to help you much. In a world where most tech products are commoditized, ignoring promotion is like running through the forest wearing a blindfold and expecting to make it out the other side unscathed.

In this whitepaper, I will share 9 things to avoid when thinking about how to successfully market your tech business. I'll also include a few examples of customer "anti-success stories." From "word-of-mouth advertising is all I need," to "a website is just a necessary evil," the worst practices I've heard run the gamut. What comes to mind in the pinnacle of worst-practice marketing was an exchange I had with a client a couple of years ago.

Me: "Could we speak to your sales team to get an understanding of what they are up against? This would help with how we position your message and perhaps gain some insight into your product's key selling points?"

Client: "Oh no, we don't want you talking to sales. We want them to sell and you to focus on marketing."

This dialog left me speechless, yet when I look across the spectrum of companies marketing to the Fortune 1,000, these worst-practice marketing approaches are all too frequent.



Okay, so what else can you do to wreck your revenue building model?

For the sake of argument, let's assume Company A has done its due diligence investigating market need and produces a viable product or service that is truly wanted in the marketplace. This is no easy task as it involves a lot of time, research, and understanding of the software "process." This is only a small part of the battle and even when you get here, you're looking at a long road ahead to recurring revenue and a robust staff to help you manage the chaos.

If you are a bootstrapping startup or working off first-round minimal funding like many tech startups, what more can you possibly do with the resources available to you? It's hard to say. Each company and its ownership will value things differently, but we know for sure that if you don't avoid worst-practice marketing, you're going to be doomed from the get-go. So, when you get past the market feasibility and product-building stage of your tech company and are about to attack the marketing planning phase, here's what you SHOULD NOT do:

1. Failure to understand your target audience because you don't understand research:

One of the most important (and most common) mistakes companies make is failing to deeply understand their target audience. You're not going to sell riverbank fishing equipment to someone who's looking to go deep-sea fishing. Failing to identify your target audience will lead to ineffective marketing campaigns that fail to resonate with potential customers, wasting precious marketing resources.



Who are they? Where do they live or work?

What motivates them? Can your product solve a problem for them? The list of things you need to know before you spend the first marketing dime is a long one. Don't assume anything.

Research is available to you in publications specializing in your target audience. Also, look to industry associations that have a lot of data about their constituents. For the best possible results, you will likely need help in the research phase as it is a highly specialized endeavor.

2. Failure to understand the importance of branding:

Branding is crucial to the success of your marketing awareness efforts which in turn affects your efficacy in building a good prospecting pipeline. It sets you apart from competitors and creates a top-of-mind connection with your audience.

Ignoring branding can lead to a lack of recognition for your company/product/service when being "at the right place, right time" matters. Many (in regulated industries, all)

software purchasing journeys are created by an event. In InfoSec it's generally a regulation, mandate, or worse yet, a breach (could even be triggered by a competitor breach).



An event that kicked off the great data governance and data privacy initiatives today (modernization and digitization) was the pandemic of 2020.

You never know when an event will trigger a prospect seeking a solution so you must be ready with your brand going across your audiences' desks every day (see #1 above). If you do a good job of branding, you'll be top of mind when such an event occurs.

Not knowing (or ignoring the importance of) branding is, well, a brand killer and eventually a company killer. It affects you in ways you probably can't imagine. It's why, when you are driving down the highway, you'll see a Coca-Cola® billboard with only their logo on it. They are simply staying top of mind with you as you drive down the road so when you stop to get gas, somewhere up there you'll think "Coca-Cola!"

Brand Equity is equally important. Wrapped up in a nice, neat package, brand equity is how well you execute to the promise of your brand. Every single thing you do, from your graphic presentation to how you handle the phone or handle a support request is a reflection of your brand equity. It's what your audience and customers think of when someone mentions your company, essentially your brand reputation.

Done poorly, it is a company killer. This is why many, including me, say everything in your company should emanate from your marketing leaders, who, ideally, have done the research, are in touch with the market and your customers. Having this knowledge, they/we understand building a sales pipeline, establishing the brand, and building brand equity is a process that takes a lot of time, expertise, and money - so don't waste it.

3. Neglect your website:

Your website is your business's Grand Central Station. It's often potential customers' first impression. Remember what your parents said about first impressions? You can change many things in your business to right a wrong with a customer, but with a prospect you can never change a first impression. That's generally what leads to a second action with your company (as in a click to another page for further information).

You must start with a website that is fast, quickly informative, easy to navigate, aesthetically pleasing, and mobile-friendly.



Then determine how you can create value for potential customers with it. You only have one chance to make a first impression. Make it count.

4. Neglect the power of the OFFER:

You must keep website visitors involved with fresh, pertinent new content, and you MUST HAVE AN OFFER that initiates a call to action (CTA). I am always amazed at company leaders who say, "We're not getting anything out of our promotions."

When I audit their content, I generally find that their "offer" isn't much of an offer, so it's no wonder they're



getting nothing from their promotions. If you don't believe you have a compelling offer, you don't know what you don't know about your business. Your offers

should be appealing in value (give more for less or give more for nothing as trial) or appealing in education (help educate on a problem in your tech space and how a client solved it). We have a tech client who provides a lot of education where it is hard to find at a reasonable cost. For as small a business (with a small budget!) as they are, they have amazing email performance. Never do anything in promotions without an offer. Going to a trade show with your team and booth and big budget? Don't forget to take an offer with you.

5. Neglect the power of content marketing:

Content marketing is a great way to attract and engage your target audience. If you are a software vendor with a long sales cycle, it's the only way to engage your audience. Creating valuable, informative content can establish your company as a thought leader in your industry, leading to increased brand awareness and trust. New content is picked up by Google, Yahoo, and Bing when they scan and index your site. Without new content your website is stale, and the search crawlers pass you by. Your ability to show up in search is further diminished (AND you're likely already behind the eight ball) if you are a startup because showing up on pages 1 and 2 of search engine results is expensive.



It's essential to prioritize content marketing to increase your online visibility and engage with your target audience. Continually adding new, quality content will also feed other marketing efforts such as email marketing, social media marketing, and public relations communications. It also gives your sales team additional reasons to reach out to prospects in long sales engagements: "Hello Brenda, just wanted to reach out and let you know we had a new blog post today. Hope this helps and talk to you soon."

If your sales team is connected to your marketing content generators this is beautiful synergy, which leads to...

6. Let teams work in a silo and fail to communicate!

Few things can derail your sales efforts like lack of communication during the marketing promotions process. How many times have you had a customer call and say: “Hey this new promotion you just sent me is way cheaper than what I just paid for. How come I didn’t get that deal?”

Here’s another gem: “Hey I just talked to Joe yesterday, why is Susan calling me today about the same thing?” In enterprise sales, the process is long and drawn out. These communication failures are a great way to kill momentum in a sales cycle where you are always trying to get a next meeting. If you want to look like you know what you are doing – and therefore can execute for a potential client – don’t communicate like this.



Working across silos doesn’t mean you have to talk to co-workers 10 times a day. This is why you have CRM and Marketing Automation systems. If you are good about documenting activity in your sales/marketing ops systems, this constitutes communicating and breaking the barriers of siloed-mentality work process. If you don’t have a good CRM and Marketing Automation system, please let us know. Perri Marketing is a certified HubSpot Solutions partner. Learn more about Perri Marketing’s partnership with Hubspot [here](#).

7. Forget the story then lead with a sales pitch:

I worked for a global software company whose CEO said, “Look at these dashboards! All you have to do is show a CIO these beautiful dashboards and this product will sell itself.”

While sales are vitally important, focusing solely on sales attributes can be detrimental to your pipeline-building efforts (pipeline building starts with numbers 1 through 4 above). Consumers are bombarded with sales pitches every day, and if that’s all you’re offering, you’ll sound like the rest of the companies doing this and your message will be lost.

You may have a great sales message, but the sales message should always be secondary to telling a story. Storytelling is important because it gets people interested and frankly, it’s different because so many tech company CEOs are saying, “just demo this or show a video and it will sell itself.” After you tell the story, if you give them other supporting content that helps round out the story, then you can hit them over the head with an offer and add better prospects to your pipeline.



Storytelling helps you establish a brand voice and focus on building relationships with your audience, providing value beyond your product or service. It is instrumental to building trust. A company that prioritizes sales blah blah blah over customer real-life experience will always lose customer loyalty in the long run.

8. Rely solely on one marketing channel:

While it’s tempting to focus all your efforts on one marketing channel, it’s important to diversify your approach. Consumers engage with brands across omnichannel initiatives because humans consume content across multiple channels in the 2020s. Even in the 1960s humans were consuming information across multiple channels – radio, television, print media, billboards. Today that omnichannel approach has exponentially expanded to include social media, email, search engines, and other digital channels.



Neglecting any of these channels can result in a missed opportunity to reach potential customers because you are negating what we call the compounded effect of omniscient branding. You must brand everywhere. A company that only advertises on one social media platform may miss out on potential customers who only use other platforms. The “marketing mix” is making a comeback and today we call it omnichannel. Make sure yours is well-thought-out, which leads to the next item.

9. Neglect the importance of budgeting:

To create a proper budget, you must be able to analyze data from previous marketing programs to arrive at the predictability of marketing spending. Think of it as reverse-engineering your pipeline. If you know how many leads it takes to get to 1 opportunity you can put that in a planning worksheet – a budget – and predict how much revenue \$1 will contribute to. This is not an easy task, and it takes specialization and expertise to be able to decipher data then put it into a marketing budget and ultimately a campaign planner.

Your budget should be based on your goals. And keep your goals simple and attainable such as: increase web traffic 10% and add 3 opportunities to your pipeline in the next 6 months. You'll need data to set the parameters and looking at the data will tell you if 10% and 3 opportunities are attainable. Unattainable goals are false hope and always look like failure when in fact, the ask was the failure. Once you establish your goals and have the data to make fact-based decisions, you can reverse engineer your budget to fit the goals. This exercise can also tell you if your goals are attainable, e.g., do you have the budget to achieve what you are trying to do. If not, then again, you have failed at goal setting, not failed at achieving.



You only have one chance to make a first impression and there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to

creating your marketing strategy. You need to consider every tool in your toolbox and every team member on your staff. You are only as good as your weakest link. You must find the right fit.

I have seen the litany of mistakes companies make in their marketing efforts because they are not thinking about 1 through 9 above. You must learn to avoid the worst-practice marketing pitfalls. It's muscle memory. You won't get it overnight and there will be a lot of trial and error. The key is to be cognizant of the list above and have the visibility to see what's working and what's not working. In doing so, you'll begin to do more things that are working and fewer things that aren't. Your company will grow, and you'll be able to better sleep at night.

How can you avoid these pitfalls?

Let Perri Marketing help you achieve your marketing goals. Whether it's full-service or a la carte marketing services, or help developing your mar-tech stack, Perri Marketing has the experience and tech industry know-how to help you sell more, faster, and with greater efficiency. Let's schedule a free 30-minute discovery call to determine where you are and talk about how we can help put you in your prospects' crosshairs when the next buying opportunity arises. We might even offer up some quick solutions that you can immediately put in place to help your business stand out. Visit us at perrimarketing.com to get the ball rolling.