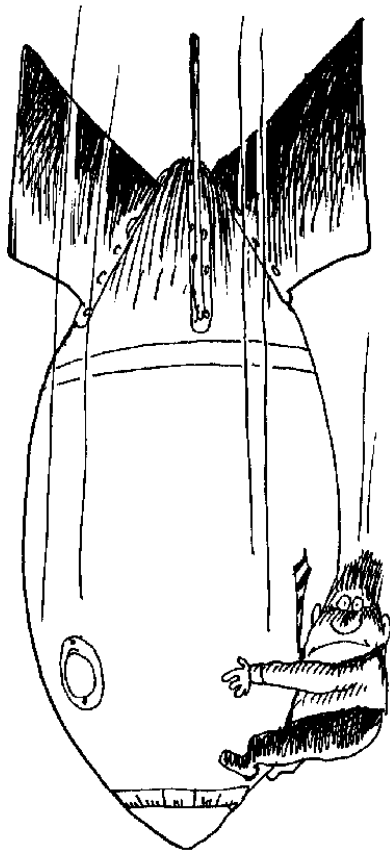


5 Critical Mistakes That Can Doom Your Marketing Effort Before It Touches Your Prospect

...And How To Avoid Them!

By Gil Efron



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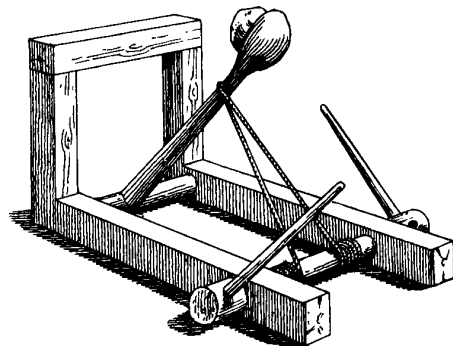
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Mistake #1:

Thinking that a single bullet is all you need

One of the reasons the marketing, direct marketing, and advertising industries talk about deploying “**campaigns**” is that campaigns describe something *more than a single event*.

Once is *not* a marketing campaign. Once is a shot in the dark. Once is keeping your fingers crossed and hoping for the best! Touching clients and prospects only once can critically impede the effectiveness of any marketing effort.



In fact, marketing experts agree that **it's better to touch a smaller number of people more often than it is to touch gobs of people only once.**

When it comes to marketing, you want to hammer away at your message. To do this, you want to rely on two key strategies...

Repetition, repetition, and repetition... and Frequency, frequency, and frequency!

The more often clients and prospects hear your message, the greater the likelihood that you remain “**top of mind**” -- that is, that they think about you when the time comes to write a check or pull out their credit card.

When you send a marketing solicitation, for example, you may **fill an immediate need** that your prospect has today. Someone has been thinking about what you have to offer. Your solicitation arrives at the perfect time to give them the opportunity to buy now.

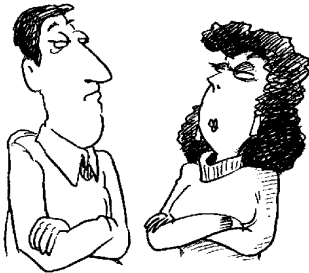
Or... as a result of your marketing, you **create a desire or need** on the part of a prospect to buy something they hadn't even been thinking about.

Or... after seeing your marketing materials and activities over a period of time, **you become familiar** to them. They already accept you as a vendor, partner, expert, or trusted resource.

You build a relationship and trust through familiarity

By repeating your message frequently... continually... prospects begin to feel that they know you, that they can trust you, and that you will be around to provide them with exceptional service.

Let's Talk.



This is called **branding** -- building awareness of who you are and the products and services you offer. We live in a world of brands. By relying on repetition and frequency, you get on the **brand bandwagon**. (Try to say that real fast 7 times.)

And, at the same time, you increase your likelihood of reaching them on a day when they have taken the time to peruse your message... or on a day when they are in a better frame of mind. The bottom line is that you want to reach out to your market often. Select a group -- a "dream list" of highly qualified people and individuals -- and bang away at this audience.

It's always best to concentrate your marketing efforts on a smaller, finite market segment than to be so broad in your reach that you can never build any momentum or repeatability.

So, start by determining a size of market that you can handle -- whether that market size is 100 or 1,000 or 100,000 or 1,000,000. Then work that market repeatedly.

Mistake #2: Lacking a time-sensitive call to action!

The problem with human nature is that it is as *predictable* as it is *unpredictable*. When it comes to marketing, human nature brings us to this not-so-surprising corollary:

The *longer* someone takes to respond, the *less likely* they are to respond -- no matter how valuable the product or how sound the offer.

So, the job of marketing is to generate a response (action) **now!** After all, there is no better time than now for you to book new business or make a deposit to your bank account.



Yet most marketing falls flat on its face because it fails to point out the dire consequences of ***not*** acting today!

Action versus inaction

Anyone who spends any time at all around marketing knows what a **call to action** is.

It says, "**Do it now.**" It rarely requires fancy or creative language. It just reaches out in very direct language and gets right to the point..

- Buy now
- Pick up the phone and call
- Order today
- Call right away

Yet, while even the largest and most successful organizations that market include a call to action, many fail to tie that call to action to a specific day or time at which **the offer expires**.

Remember, the longer someone takes to respond, the less likely they are to respond. So, if you are able to say, "Pick up the phone and call before June 14 (or whenever)," you are forcing that response to occur *sooner* rather than *later...* or never!

They face dire consequences

If they don't respond by that date, there is a dire consequence. They lose out. The special offer goes away... perhaps never to return.

As old and proven as this marketing ploy is, the lack of the presence of a specific cancellation date dooms many solicitations before they reach their intended audience. It's just too easy for a consumer to set it aside and say, "I'll get a round tuit." Wanna bet?

Let's take a couple of our ordinary calls to action (above) and turn them into time-sensitive calls to action.

- When you place your order on or before June 14 (or whenever), you get free shipping plus free gift-wrapping.
- Pick up the phone and request our new catalog before June 14 (or whenever), and you receive the catalog plus a free gift.



The prospects coming in contact with this time-sensitive call to action now know that the special opportunity disappears entirely after the termination or cutoff date indicated in the call to action. After that date, they lose out entirely.

It's your duty and responsibility

Sometimes, marketers don't believe that what they are selling is truly time sensitive. Don't go down this road.

I say that it is your **duty and responsibility** to find a way of making your solicitation and your offer *time sensitive*.

There's another benefit to you as the marketer. When you include a specific termination date for your marketing activity, it helps you plan for your next solicitation.

For example, if you know your present promotion and call-to-action offer disappears on June 14, you can be ready to deploy a new promotion that expires on July 25. Make it a different offer, however. You don't want to condition the marketplace that you have only one deal and that you just keep extending the date.

This time-sensitive call to action works extremely well in a one-on-one sales presentation. "As of the 30th, we'll be instituting a price increase. So it is in your best interest to sign up now, before the 30th."

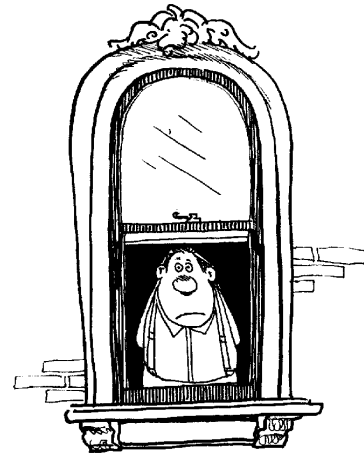
How much time is too much time?

So, how much time do you allow between the time of your initial contact and the cutoff date of your time-sensitive offering?

You never really know for sure. But you can learn through **testing**. Allow eight weeks of response time for your first offering, six weeks for your second offering, four weeks for your third, and so on.

Watch the bell curve. By studying the response, you'll soon learn what works best for you and your market. And it won't be the same for everyone or every offer!

Always work to force a response to occur sooner rather than later... or never! And always be sure to point out the dire consequences when response does not occur by that specific time.



Mistake #3: Failing to include a guarantee

Let's say you are presented with two practically identical solicitations or purchasing opportunities.

Both offer the same or similar products at prices within pennies of each other.

One carries a 90-day money-back guarantee. The other doesn't. Go ahead. Place your order! Which one are you going to buy? Need we say more?

The corollary is that when you fail to provide prospects with an opportunity to purchase **risk-free** (that is, free of risk), you diminish your ability and potential to sell.

When your prospects don't see or believe that they have **recourse** -- *a way out* IF and WHEN something goes wrong or if and when your product or service doesn't live up to what you say -- you lessen your ability and likelihood to make a sale.

That's why marketing experts agree it's so important to include **risk reversal** as a standard component within your solicitations.

It's easy to ensure that you sell more and encourage more people to take you up on your offer and solicitation when you use these magical words:

GUARANTEE or GUARANTEED!

When you provide a guarantee, you assure your prospects that they can buy with **absolute confidence**. After all, they reason that



you **could not** and **would not** offer such an impressive guarantee if your products did not perform as you claim.

And so your guarantee promises to fix, adjust, replace, and even to provide them solace for their inconvenience.

Guarantees in your solicitations can be simple, dramatizing your **confidence** in your product or service. "Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back."

It starts to look almost like a **free trial**, doesn't it? It says to your prospects that they can try it freely, knowing from the outset that whatever they buy may be returned -- if necessary.



Direct behavior with your guarantee

Guarantees in your offers can help **direct behavior, too**. "Guaranteed for two additional years when you use your Acme credit card." People will use their Acme card when it means the warranty is now twice as good or lasts twice as long.

Now, just as I say that it is your duty and responsibility to find a way of making your solicitations and offers time sensitive, I say that it is your duty and responsibility to find a way of incorporating risk reversal into your all of your marketing activities -- reducing the risk of buying by offering a guarantee.

People like guarantees, and so do you.

People respond to guarantees, and so do you.

By the way, your guarantee, no matter how good it is, has no value unless you advertise it, promote it, and back it up. So tout your guarantee aggressively.

Your overall marketing effectiveness and response increase when you eliminate risk and include a guarantee. If you're not already offering a guarantee, look for ways of doing so. Remember, in order to be effective, a guarantee does not always need to be a full money-back guarantee.

One final note:

As I'm writing this report, Chevrolet is advertising a 60-day money-back guarantee: "If you are not completely satisfied with the Malibu, return it." Is it helping? You tell me. Their sales numbers are up!

So I suppose you could draw the conclusion that risk reversal is important for all purchases -- large or small.

Mistake #4:

Marketing to the wrong people

One of the critical mistakes that can doom a marketing effort before it touches a prospect has nothing to do with how it looks or sounds, whether it has a compelling offer, or if it has a great guarantee.

It is simply this: When marketing reaches the **wrong** person -- that is, someone who is **not qualified** to receive or buy your product or service -- it's **a waste of time...** and it's **a waste of money.**

Sorry about being so blunt. But you need to know the impact and ramifications of this mistake on your bottom line before you launch your next campaign, solicitation, or head out on your next sales call.



One size doesn't fit all

The problem is that very few marketing touches are truly universal in nature. True, in our world, almost everyone uses paperclips. But beyond that, you probably need to be a little more careful and precise in who you market to.

You could say that everyone drives a car and therefore, everyone is qualified to receive a solicitation for oil changes and tires. Not so.

Some people have just purchased a new automobile and are under a full-service maintenance program. They don't need your service. Not everyone is able to afford your product or service. Or, not everyone is credit worthy to receive your offer. In other words, you

need to be **selective** about who to market to... and who *NOT* to market to.

Mailing list versus database

Let's look at two approaches for getting to the right people. The first is a **mailing list** -- a list of names and addresses.

The second is a **database** of clients or prospects. This is a file of names and addresses that contains additional information about the people on that list. That additional information can include financial information, home ownership, credit data, previous purchase history, hobbies, birthdates, and on and on.

Traditionally, businesses buy or rent mailing lists when they are searching the world for new prospects. Then, by combining these new lists with their existing databases of clients, customers and prospects, they develop a **master database**.

The master database puts exceptional clients over here... occasional clients over there... prospects over on that side... and prospects they've had personal contact with in a different area.



Do you see what's happening here? You are manipulating and managing data based on what you know about the people who are most likely to buy your product or service.

The word is "segmentation"

So, now, when it comes time to deploy your marketing, you look at your offer and you look at your database. Then you determine who (within your total **universe** of clients) should receive it based on your specific offer.

The word is segmentation -- taking your entire database and breaking it down into smaller segments, each with its own unique characteristics.

For example, exceptional clients might receive every offer and opportunity based on what you know about them. Prospects from a new list might receive only a few introductory and qualifying touches a year. But these contain offers designed specifically to win over new customers from your competitors.

Hopefully, by now, you see how marketing to the wrong person can negatively impact your solicitation. And, hopefully, you realize that now is the time to do something with your database.

This is one area in your direct mail program you want to give a great deal of attention to. It's an area where you definitely want to make a wise and appropriate investment and seek expert advice... especially when your numbers are large.

THE BIG CAUTION

Databases require more than just an upfront investment. They require constant maintenance and updating because they are never truly 100% accurate. Something is always changing.

Think about this. In the time you've been reading this page, your database has changed. *Something* in the life of one or more of your clients or prospects has changed.

However, through a concerted effort and commitment on your part... and with the help of a qualified service bureau... you can keep your list squeaky clean.

And a clean list costs you less. There's less waste, no duplication, and your distribution costs are lower (proportionate to how clean your list is). You don't inadvertently reach out to or waste time with someone who isn't there!

A marketing message that goes to the wrong prospect has no value at all. It's the equivalent of throwing money down the drain. Because when your solicitation reaches the wrong person -- someone who is not qualified to receive your message or to buy your product or service -- it is a waste of time... and money.



Mistake #5:

Failing to think of marketing as a process

I like the word "campaign."

To me it represents more than just a single message or activity... more than a single, isolated idea, activity, or occurrence surrounded by the rest of the world.

It represents making a definite commitment to a marketing message or objective... and then banging away at it for a predetermined amount of time.

You see campaigns on television, in print, and in direct mail. The one that comes to mind as I'm writing this is the Verizon Wireless campaign.

We've been watching the same nerdy guy with a couple hundred of his nerdy friends standing behind him for years... on television... the Internet... subways... everywhere.

While the message may change slightly... and the backgrounds... the continuity and consistency of the campaign is unending.

But as much as I like the word campaign, I like the word **"process"** even better.

A process is a "method" or "system" -- a series of steps -- for achieving a specific end result.

In a broader sense, it refers to defining exactly what a business entity does, who is responsible, how certain activities should be



completed, and when. Once this process is in place, there can be no uncertainty as to the specific steps to be taken in order to accomplish various tasks.

Let's look at how this all fits together

Mr. Bear's company sells computer services to small businesses. The operative word is "sells." In order to do this, Mr. Bear relies on direct mail, email, and Internet marketing. His objective is to catch a prospect's attention through the mail or email message he deploys... and drive them to his website.



So far, so good.

The website has its share of "calls to action." In other words, Mr. Bear prompts prospects to call, to email, and to request a couple of technical papers and a whitepaper or two.

He's still on the right track.

Mr. Bear has three people in the office who deal with requests for information. One is in the customer service department. The two others are the two sales people.

However, there's no plan as to how requests are handled and processed... and who handles them. It's the luck of the draw... depending on when a request comes in, how it comes in, and who has the time to deal with it.



You can guess where this is heading. Obviously, each of these three staff members responds to requests differently. There's no continuity -- and nothing to assure precisely how requests will be handled.

And that's too bad because leads are very expensive to generate.

The ideal process for responding to

an inquiry should move effortlessly from action A to B to C to D to E to F to G... and so on.

It should be the same regardless of who picks up the incoming lead or request.

And it should be fast... and accurate... and complete... because your future depends on it.

Every aspect of your organization's marketing can be turned into a process or system. How your salesperson walks into a prospect's home and says hello... how they talk about the company... how they present your opportunity.

Accountability

When a process is in place that everyone is expected to use, it can be studied... measured... improved (from an efficiency standpoint)... modified... streamlined... and so on.

When a process is planned that well and orchestrated that precisely, our friend Mr. Bear would know that things were being handled the same way every time.

He could hold his staff members to the system... and keep them accountable.

"Yes," you say. "It all sounds good... on paper. But not all inquiries or requests or sales presentations are the same."

How special requests are handled... who makes calls when everyone is out in the field... determining what to do when the prospect has a credit problem... **these exceptions themselves need to become a part of the process.**

It's a funny thing... but business owners, CEOs, and managers will spend hours developing systems and processes for every other department and activity in the company -- from collecting payroll hours to re-shelving returned merchandise.

But for some reason, the act of following up to leads -- and extremely qualified leads in many cases -- falls outside the range of formalized systems, processes, and procedures.

The big picture about the marketing process

Marketing is a process that spans and includes everything it takes to move a buyer along a continuum from barely-in-sight to a satisfied, lifetime client.

Conclusion

Naturally, there are many more than 5 critical mistakes that can choke and doom a business' marketing efforts before they touch a prospect or buyer.

And, certainly, no two situations or businesses are alike.

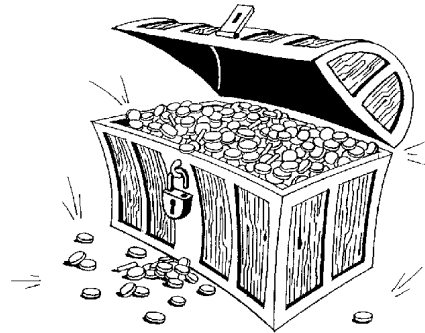
But it stands to reason that GAPS anywhere in an organization's marketing process can destroy what the business has worked long and hard to achieve.

Making major improvements, creating a true marketing process, and implementing new strategies can be achieved without a mammoth dollar investment.

The key is to identify experienced advisors and resources that understand that marketing is more than a new website or a fancy brochure... that it is a blending of creative thinking, strategic thinking, process development, planning, organization, and the precise implementation of all the above!

I invite you to learn more about how you can eliminate GAPS in your marketing process (or lack of marketing process) and replace them with a viable and effective marketing strategy and action plan by visiting our website at <http://www.10DayMarketingMakeover.com/>.

Or call **800-226-2428** for a candid conversation about your marketing process and how easy it is to turn the corner and take a new course with more consistent results.



About Gil Efron

Gil Efron is a business and marketing consultant and advisor. As president/CEO of Strategies For Growth and head of 10-Day Marketing Makeover, he blends his creative problem solving with exacting implementation tactics as he guides business owners and professionals on how best to "ELIMINATE THE GAPS" that are inhibiting their growth and success.

Dealing with owners of small to medium sized businesses – from startups to those with years under their belts that now find themselves stalled – Gil tackles a broad range of challenges from how to maximize marketing return on investment to surviving and thriving in a turbulent economy.

Gil has over 35 years of experience in business and marketing. During the past 17 years, he owned and operated a successful publishing business serving the marketing and promotional needs of over 100 companies that provide direct mail and fulfillment services. Prior to that, he owned and operated his own marketing advisory company where he worked as an independent consultant with numerous businesses that were too small to have their own marketing director on staff.

A highly skilled marketing strategist, and proficient direct-response copywriter, Gil has written hundreds of articles on direct marketing and published a book entitled *Direct Mail Success*.

Gil holds a bachelors degree from the University of Cincinnati, a masters from Michigan State University, and pursued post-graduate studies at Ohio State University.