

# **THE WINNING CEO's MARKETING HANDBOOK**

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## 1. WHAT IS MARKETING?

For most of my career, I have owned, operated, served and consulted with small to mid-size businesses. I don't pretend to know how Fortune 500 executives think about marketing, but I have a pretty good idea about the other folks.

Most of the owners, presidents and CEOs I've worked with over the years have talked about marketing as all the things they do to support the sales process. I like that. It's not an academic answer, but it makes sense in the real world.

Marketing is all the meetings we have to discuss our products and how to make them better. It is advertising — online, offline, wherever. It is brochures, mailers, websites, podcasts, trade shows and press releases. It is great support — excellent service — so customers will give us another chance the next time they want what we have to sell.

## 2. ENERGIZE YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

All too often, sales and marketing people have different objectives. If they do, they can spend more time bickering than creating bottom-line results. Or worse, they just go their separate ways.

### **Ask one very important question.**

If you want to find out if your sales and marketing people are working together, ask them a simple question. Ask every sales rep, manager and executive.

Send it to every person in the marketing department and each person who works on your account at your ad agency, design studio or public relations firm.

Ask them this: “Who is our ideal customer?”

Their answers will be revealing.

## Redefine Your Target Markets

I'll hazard a guess that there is a "mission statement" proudly displayed in your lobby or in a prominent position on your office wall.

Great! Everybody needs a mission. Now, how about putting a "market statement" right up there beside it.

A market statement should clearly describe your ideal customer or Class A prospect: the 20% of customers who account for 80% of your sales.

Every member of your sales and marketing team must know what your ideal customer looks like. If they don't, how will they know when they find one?

Equally important: Every element of your marketing program must target Class A prospects if you expect to see tangible results.

Share your vision.

## Build An Integrated Marketing Team

One way to get people working together is to create a marketing team. Select representatives from sales, marketing and customer service.

Have them get together with account executives from any outside agencies at least once a month. Stress cooperation and teamwork. Encourage them to share ideas.

If an outside agency is uncomfortable sharing ideas, get a new one. Turf battles will kill an integrated marketing program.

Sit in on all committee meetings. Ask questions, but don't take control. You will demonstrate confidence in the team and learn a great deal by listening.

## Find An Outside Marketing Advisor

Your marketing team may be outstanding, but it's hard to judge performance until sales results are in. Sometimes you need a fresh pair of eyes.

Suggestion: Seek out an independent marketing executive to act as your advisor. Someone with zero stake in company politics. Someone who can tell you what works, what doesn't, and what you have to do to get profitable results. Find someone who knows how to get the most from ad agencies, graphic designers, and PR firms.

Have your advisor review your marketing plan, suggest new strategies, and help evaluate program results. Invite your advisor to sit in on meetings with your marketing team and outside vendors.

Downsizing has made a lot of experienced people available for consulting roles. You can add a key player to your team without a lot of overhead.

## Don't Waste a Penny

If you are planning to spend anything on marketing this year, stop. Save the money until you have an advisor and an integrated marketing team in place.

Make them justify every brochure, ad campaign, direct mail program, website upgrade, social media effort, or marketing piece.

- What will it accomplish?
- How will it support our selling process?
- Does the message speak to our target market?
- How will we measure results?

### 3. INCREASE SALES PRODUCTIVITY

Let me start by saying that I have tremendous respect for sales people. They have an extremely difficult and vitally important job. When they are successful, everyone benefits — customers, owners, managers, widget makers, code writers, support staff, consultants.

Therefore, it is in everyone's interests that sales people are given the support, encouragement, and tools they need to succeed. To that end, I offer the following strategies for increasing sales productivity. When they are successfully implemented, your customers and everyone in your organization will benefit.

#### **Integrate Sales & Marketing**

Sales people are different from marketers. Outgoing, gregarious and aggressive vs. quiet, analytical and introspective. It is important for management to understand these differences and provide leadership to get marketers and sales people working toward a single goal.

Productivity is increased when marketers generate high-quality leads and sales people are better equipped to close them.

## **Generate high-quality leads.**

Redefine the role of marketing in your organization. Use marketers to identify, qualify and track leads throughout the selling process. Ask sales people to evaluate leads and work with marketers to continually improve the process.

Set a goal of reducing unproductive sales calls and eliminate “prospecting” from your sales team’s vocabulary. Productivity will increase as sales people gain more time for productive selling.

## **Identify sales opportunities.**

Research has shown that 95% of all sales leads generated by websites, print advertising and trade show attendance are ignored by sales people.

Why? They are unqualified leads, ones that did not necessarily represent sales opportunities. Finding warm bodies isn’t enough.

Sales calls are too expensive to waste on unproductive efforts. Refine your marketing techniques to identify genuine opportunities before the first sales call.

## **Develop your sales team's professionalism.**

It takes more than a winning smile to be successful. It's time to get beyond the old-fashioned "motivational" seminars and focus on developing new skills.

Encourage every member of your sales team to read Neil Rackham's excellent books, starting with "SPIN Selling."

Develop a training program based on Rackham's methods and follow it rigorously throughout the year.

SPIN methods are based on careful analysis of 35,000 sales calls.

Rackham gets huge fees from multinational corporations to teach them what he knows.

You can buy all of his books for less than \$100.

## **Reward productivity.**

Making a sale isn't good enough, the sale must be profitable. Use CRM systems that track productivity for each sales rep, each customer, each sale.

Make sure that sales people know how decisions they make in the field will effect your bottom line and their commission checks. Teach them to focus on value before price.

Base incentives on profitability, not just sales.

## **Why?**

It's your bottom-line.

## 4. GRATITUDE MAKES GREAT MARKETING

My wife likes gardening and she likes to bring her garden into the kitchen. Fresh herbs, root vegetables, fruits and berries. I am grateful for these things, but they are not the point of my story.

One day, she received a greeting card in the mail. I recognized the logo on the card, so I assumed it was a “special offer.” It was something far more powerful — a thank you card from Gardener’s Supply Company.

The card thanked my wife for her recent order and welcomed her into the Gardener’s Supply community. No special offers. No hype. Just gratitude. It made an immediate, positive impression.

Think about it. When you check out at the grocery store or your favorite retail shop, the clerk thanks you. Restaurant servers do the same. Online retailers often include a thank you message on their packing list or invoice. It doesn’t make much of an impression, or does it?

My impression: [Gardener’s Supply](#) is a company willing to make an extra effort to deliver extraordinary customer service, and that’s great marketing.

## 5. SOLVE BUSINESS PROBLEMS WITH YOUR WEBSITE

A website works when it solves a problem for the site visitor. Visitors may be prospects, customers, sales reps, distributors, retailers, job hunters, investors or the media.

When you solve a problem for any one of these, you will benefit by increasing sales, satisfying customers, finding new employees or improving investor/media relations. You may also cut costs and expand your business with new product and market opportunities.

I have selected ten business problems as a starting point for discussions about ebusiness strategy. What is the most important problem you can solve online?

During one of my workshops, the CEO of a home building company with a billion dollars in annual revenue asked how he could motivate employees to use the company's newly developed intranet.

My answer: employees will use the site if it solves problems for them. If it doesn't, they won't.

## **OK, here are ten problems you can solve with a website.**

1. Help new and existing customers identify your products and services as solutions they want or need.
2. Simplify your customer's decision-making process with detailed information, multimedia presentations and product demonstrations.
3. Make it easy for customers to do business with you even if they are halfway around the world.
4. Provide a 24-hour help desk for existing customers with information resources, FAQs and priority e-mail.
5. Help customers gain vital product/industry knowledge via newsletters, online forums and e-seminars.
6. Help sales reps, distributors and/or retailers sell more by giving them high quality sales leads.

7. Support sales reps with up-to-the-minute product information and marketing materials.
8. Automate the information flow for sales reps, distributors and/or retailers with a password protected extranet.
9. Help potential employees find out what positions are available and why your company is a great place to work.
10. Simplify media and investor research by publishing company information, financial reports and news releases.

If you and your marketing team can think of different, more important problems you can solve, that's great. If not, pick one of these and give it a shot.

Important: It's OK to solve just one. In fact, websites often fail because they try to solve too many problems at once. Pick a problem. Solve it. Move on to the next.

## 6. MEASURE ONLINE MARKETING SUCCESS

A successful website or social media campaign can help you cut costs, generate income or expand your horizons with new product and market opportunities. An unsuccessful website or social media campaign wastes precious resources... time and money.

### **Identify the business problem(s) you want to solve.**

From generating qualified sales leads to reducing the number of customer service calls. Make a list.

### **Determine an acceptable return on investment.**

Estimate the value of these solutions and determine the level of investment you are willing to make to solve them.

### **Write a bullet-point marketing plan.**

Outline the project's goals & objectives, timeframe and the criteria you will use to measure success.

## **Share the plan with your management team.**

Unless it calls for a stand-alone business unit, the initiative will need their support to succeed.

## **Assign P&L responsibility to an experienced project manager.**

Share the plan. Invite a few changes. Look for common sense, not Internet jargon.

## **Review the project manager's implementation plan.**

It should start small and move quickly, building on success. Expect to revise the plan often.

## **Outsource everything you can.**

It's cheaper and faster than doing things in-house, and it's less disruptive to other departments. It's also the best way to get a fresh perspective on your products, services and markets.

## **Provide adequate resources.**

Plan for design, production, maintenance — and don't forget promotion. Websites are invisible without it.

## **Manage by objective.**

If the project's goals are being met it will be easy to justify an ongoing investment. If not, it will be easy to shut it down.

## **Demand success.**

Start with a plan. Let your project manager worry about the technology. Encourage some risk and tolerate some failures. The online world changes too fast to get everything right the first time. Push the envelope to succeed.

## 7. ADVERTISE, EVEN IN A DOWN ECONOMY

*I wrote this during the “Great Recession” to encourage my CEO friends and clients to focus on the opportunities a recession provides, not just the challenges. My own companies had done very well in previous recessions. Generally, I had been so busy I didn’t even know there was a problem, let alone a recession.*

OK, fine. Nobody likes the "R" word. But like it or not, we’re smack dab in the middle of a recession. The question we all face is what do we do about it?

You want to cut costs, but where? For some companies the decision is easy. The first cut they make is advertising, but you’re not so sure.

Advertising is every message you send out to customers or prospective customers that encourages them to chose your products and services the next time they make a buying decision.

I can think of eight solid reasons to continue advertising during a recession. They might even justify boosting your budget, but only if you are prepared to come out the other end as a market leader!

## **Your sales team needs help.**

Aggressive advertising can help you capture market share while your weaker competitors are slashing ad budgets and waiting out the storm. Your sales team needs help, now more than ever.

## **They need new sales prospects.**

While existing customers are cutting orders, advertising is needed to identify new prospects.

## **Memories are short.**

Buyers can easily forget you. If a competitor continues to advertise, their products are the ones most likely to be remembered.

## **Advertising is an important member of your sales team.**

You probably aren't going to eliminate your sales staff just because business is slow. Why would you cut off the most important element of sales support?

## **It takes time to make a sale.**

Advertising has a cumulative effect. If you cut your ads today, you'll lose the ground you've gained. Continuity is the single most important factor in effective advertising.

## **Good advertising generates sales.**

If you cut your advertising, the sales slump you experience may be self-inflicted.

## **There is more to advertising than immediate sales.**

It is an inexpensive way to keep in touch with customers, to let them know that you are alive and well in spite of the slow-down.

## **New conditions create new needs.**

A recession may create new prospects for your products or services, and advertising will help you find them.

## 8. A CLASSY WAY TO SAY GOODBYE

When marketing works perfectly, it is a closed loop.

Product Introduction > Sales Process > Customer Service > Repeat

When the relationship is humming along, the elements overlap and everybody wins. Customers are “loyal” and suppliers are fat and happy — but stuff happens.

A few years ago, my wife and I realized that we hadn't watched the Netflix DVDs in our media cabinet. They had been sitting there for 3-4 months, maybe longer. We also realized that we weren't likely to watch them anytime soon. What to do?

Sure, we could return the movies we had and get the next titles in the queue, but we weren't all that excited by them either. Movie boredom, it happens.

We liked Netflix — convenient, easy to use, reasonably priced — but why pay for a service we're not using?

I went to netflix.com and cancelled our account. Along the way, Netflix offered several options — lower-priced plans, a 90-day “hold” with automatic restart — but one left the best impression.

Cancel the account and feel free to come back anytime. Wow!

That’s implicit in all (most) business relationships. We can always choose not to buy today and come back to buy again whenever we choose — but here’s Netflix.

I just closed my account, shut off the automatic payment of monthly fees, turned my back on folks who consistently delivered great service — and what do they do? They wished me well and let me know that I would be welcome to come back.

Last week, I reopened my Netflix account to access streaming video using my Roku device. It was quick and easy, and the price was right.

## **How do you say goodbye?**

## About the Author

Ken Sethney serves as board president of Accelerate Kitsap, a nonprofit business mentoring program. It's mission is simple: experienced business and professional people volunteer to help entrepreneurs grow their companies. ([AccelerateKitsap.org](http://AccelerateKitsap.org))

Previously, Ken has been a marketing coach, consultant, and ad agency creative director. He has helped hundreds of owners, presidents and CEOs of small to midsize companies make profitable marketing decisions. ([Linkedin](#))

He speaks to a wide variety of business audiences on marketing topics and facilitates strategic planning workshops for trade organizations, CEO groups, and management teams. Get in touch via Twitter ([@CEO\\_coach](#)).

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