

# 7 Deadly marketing sins (and the solutions)

There are plenty of mistakes a marketer can make, but these seven are the most destructive...

An eagle has hundreds of feathers, but if you pluck the seven primary feathers from its wings it won't be able to fly. Likewise, in a hypercompetitive world, if your company is committing any of these seven deadly marketing sins, it will fail to take off.

Drawing on Effective Brands' *Marketing2020* study, one of the most comprehensive marketing leadership studies ever undertaken, neuroscience and my 20 years of marketing experience, I've identified the following marketing sins:

## 1 Lack of leadership

“Woe to the company whose marketing is still siloed”

**Marc de Swaan Arons, global marketing consultant and brand expert.**

Over the past 20 years, marketing has become an even more crucial function and far too important to be left to a single department. Marketing leadership needs to be aligned across the entire company.

**SOLUTION:** Connect your marketing to your overall business strategy. All departments must be motivated to align their activities to achieve this overarching marketing strategy. All staff must also know and understand your key strategic objectives.

Three key leadership elements are trust, engagement and collaborative actions across all functions. In bigger companies

this means ensuring a strong relationship between the chief information officer (CIO) and chief human capital officer (CHCO). Companies like Visa and Unilever have HR and IT report directly to the chief marketing officer (CMO). A four-year study by Accenture (2014) concluded: "The debate is no longer about whether CMOs and CIOs should align. It is *how*."

Service marketing is quite simple; happy service people generate happy customers. Happy customers then re-infect the original service providers. Humans are emotional creatures who buy in to feelings and vivid images rather than numbers. As a marketer you need to 'sell' your vision to your service team in an exciting and strategically-meaningful way. For example, Adidas' overarching marketing objective "let's hurt Nike" helped the struggling company to outstrip its rival in the profit stakes. Stakeholders became emotionally engaged at work because they knew what to do; design, produce, market and sell shoes to hurt a specific competitor. Compare this to: "Let's grow at 10% this year." Or the equally apathetic: "The CEO thinks we can do 15% growth next year".

## 2 Insufficient research

“Results are gained by exploiting opportunities, not by solving problems”

**Marc de Swaan Arons, global marketing consultant and brand expert.**

One definition of marketing is finding out what your customers want (research) and then giving it to them at a fair profit (i.e. value-exchange). Most companies fail to do this and instead sit on a goldmine of data, which they have collected over time and not done anything with.

**SOLUTION:** Sifting through and really examining the data you already have on hand about your customers is a great way to start your research and find out what your customers value and why; their needs and wants. A great exercise is to list your top 10 key buying factors (KBFs), then rate them versus your nearest three competitors.

Environmental scanning is also important. Your company, customers, channel-to-market and competitors (the 4Cs of marketing) are continually in flux, which means you need to keep a finger on the pulse, weekly. Most major threats and opportunities emerge out of the macro-economic environment or PESTGEL – political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, global, economic and legal – factors, and these all need to be tracked.

## 3 Lack of positioning

Neuroscience has proven that the rational human being does not exist. In fact, our pre-frontal cortex – or consciously thinking human brain – weighs in at only 4% of our total brain mass. For marketers this brings the realisation that a multitude of irrational and unconscious forces motivate customers to buy things. The colour and finish of a gadget, the sound of an exhaust pipe, that new car smell, shape and status are just some of the triggers.

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**SOLUTION:** You need to market using a combination of functional, emotional and societal positioning approaches. Dulux's 'Let's Colour' campaign is a good example of this. We see the brand's employees paint rundown neighbourhoods and then celebrate their achievement, thereby boosting both employee and customer engagement with the brand. Cemex doesn't just sell bags of cement. Instead the company positions cement as a 'bag of dreams' and holds street parties once building is finished.

Through strong brand positioning, you can engage customers and inspire (lead) employees. Strong brand positioning also helps to bust silos from developing between departments.

## 4 Failure to manage the customer experience

Your customers have total control of your firm's destiny. They have astonishing power, and their expectations just keep rising. With more touch-points (think online moments-of-truth) than ever before, how do you gain a competitive advantage?

**SOLUTION:** Map out the total customer experience. Shopping has become customer-driven. The most important marketing metric is 'share of experience' not 'share of voice'. Using great research, psychological positioning must now happen. Humans have five senses, which should be seen as channels, to access customers. These channels have both rational (left brain) and psychological (right brain) receptors. To peak your customers' psychological or emotional receptors put some thought into your physical facilities. So introduce appealing décor (sight) in your reception area, infuse it with the aroma of fresh coffee brewing (smell), invite customers to settle into a leather couch which gently squeaks as they sit (touch and sound), and offer them world-class coffee and choc-chip cookies. Make sure your well-groomed receptionist has the warmest smile, tone of voice and handshake. In the retail space, downstream activities (i.e. the store experience) have emerged as the main sources of competitive advantage.

## 5 Sales and marketing clash

In their *Harvard Review* article *Ending the War between Sales & Marketing*, P Kotler, N Rackham and S Krishnaswamy

(2006) address the classic dilemma between sales and marketing. To avoid mud-slinging matches between the two, they separate out the responsibilities of the two. You should do something similar.

**SOLUTION:** The AIDCAS (awareness, interest, desire, conviction, push for action, servicing) Model is a powerful tool to communicate the pecking order of what marketing and sales needs to accomplish. Marketing does AID (awareness, interest, desire), while sales does the crucial CAS (conviction, push for action, servicing).

## 6 Recruiting the wrong people

Research by performance measurement company HR Chally cites that about 50% of salespeople are not suited to sell. This is because sales managers are not trained to hire.

**SOLUTION:** Look for the top-two characteristics of empathy and an intense ego drive to win when hiring. Interviewing sales staff is a specialised function, and should be left to experts, or at least the sales manager.

Don't be impatient when looking to hire. A hotel chain in the US developed its sustainable competitive advantage by interviewing a minimum of 40 candidates for any position. We're not saying you need to do the same, but a good hire requires time and effort. Remember, if you're looking for a hunter or a farmer, there is about a 20% chance that a hunter can farm and a farmer hunt.

## 7 Incorrect segmentation, targeting and positioning

Imagine spending years 'dating' a specific segment, only to find out after years of servicing this market that it's been a complete waste of time.

### TOP TIPS

- Add more touch-points across numerous digital and physical touch-points, including packaging, retail stores, interactive media, and
- Personalise the offering to meet the needs of each customer segment.

**SOLUTION:** All businesses need to focus their energy on the customers that generate the best returns. Research and target attractive segments and consider withdrawing from weak segments where your product isn't valued. During a recession this risk is exacerbated – so get your STP (segmenting, targeting, positioning) strategy right in a disciplined attempt to protect your bottom line.

The restaurant and entertainment concept Madame Zingara was incredibly well received by its South African segment, but at the peak of its popularity here it pitched its tent in London and the business promptly folded.

You'll make mistakes, of that there's no doubt, but learn from them, and watch out for the sins mentioned above. Now get out there and get going. **YB**

## HR CHALLY SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING

- Define the business results expected,
- Identify only five important skills needed to produce those results,
- Look at the candidate's background and experience,
- Use a structured interview and know what the ideal answers should be,
- Write a test, and
- Also listen to your gut-feel.

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