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Got the Marketer's Blues?

7 tips to cure what ails you.

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Finally! A slew of new tools and technologies are empowering marketers to link their programs straight to market share, sales, and profits. The bad news? What these long-awaited metrics reveal: universally dismal results -- from unprecedented new-product failure rates to free-falling customer satisfaction scores. So what's a marketer to do? Seven do-or-die tips for the marketing doldrums:

1. Go to school on nontraditional media. What marketer isn't moving dollars out of conventional choices and into alternative vehicles? The aha: Don't be the one caught without a position on a new channel of communication. Study your options and do some real-world experimentation -- small-scale tests that reveal how a select media impacts specific measures.

2. Love thy sales department. The friction between sales and marketing is predictable -- and palpable. Worse, it squanders resources and spoils bottom-line results. Go ahead -- wave the white flag, and start treating the sales department as your client. Show them the money -- and they'll show you the love.

3. Think tangibly. Contrary to popular belief, intangible positioning is not the ticket to building a brand. Sure, many companies today are in pursuit of a particular feeling or attitude -- the perception of being "hip" or "cool" (or whatever). But that doesn't mean that tangible positioning -- campaigns based on the functional attributes and benefits of a product or service -- should be cast aside. Instead, heed what the latest econometrics are telling you: campaigns rooted in tangible positioning consistently outperform their intangible counterparts -- starting with significantly higher ROIs.

4. Find data you can trust -- then trust it. Granted, there's a lot to distrust in modern research and data. It's a slippery slope, however, to virtually ignore information altogether and make marketing decisions on intuition alone. Commit yourself to finding some unimpeachable data, and then trust that data to inform your work. Your other option? Explain to the higher-ups why you've got nothing but your good name to back up a major program.

5. Get excited about implementation. Implementation is a priority -- not an after-thought. Figure out how to bring your best-laid plans to life in the real world -- or suffer the consequences. Think the entire process through, identify what needs to happen in each area of the business, and do a dry run. Odds are, you don't need a new marketing strategy -- you need a plan to implement your existing strategy.

6. Value customer satisfaction -- to a point. News flash: 100% customer satisfaction is unprofitable. Why? The cost of delighting your customers and delivering a seemingly limitless level of satisfaction rises faster than the payoff in profits. Focus instead on the critical drivers to your critical buyers. You'll satisfy your core customers -- and put your time and budget where they matter most.

7. Target wisely. There may be a lot of people who love your brand, but there are others who hate it -- or, at the very least, have zero interest despite your best efforts to woo them. Why waste your precious energy and resources on them? Be a smart marketer and target your most profitable customers -- period.

About the authors

Kevin Clancy and Peter Krieg are leading experts on marketing trends and technologies. Principals of Copernicus Marketing Consulting, they are co-authors of *Your Gut Is Still Not Smarter Than Your Head: How Disciplined, Fact-Based Marketing Can Drive Extraordinary Growth and Profits* (Wiley, 2007, \$29.95). Contact them on the Web at useyourheadnow.com.

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