

The 10 Commandments of Successful Marketing

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OK these Ten Commandments didn't come from the Mountain. And they're not carved on clay tablets, but on a high-tensile polyfiber instead. Yet any marketer worth his or her salt must follow these commandments in order to find the Promised Land.

I. Thou Shalt Not See Marketing as a Department

When you get right down to it, everyone in your company is a marketer. From the receptionist whose voice is the first thing your buyers hear, to the delivery person whose rear-end may be the last thing they see, every one of your employees plays a pivotal role in the orchestration of your marketing efforts. Good companies imbue every employee with healthy reverence for the customer so that the company, from every point of contact it has with its market, knows how to market.

II. Thou Shalt Follow the Ninety Day Rule

Your customers, prospects and champions (those who refer business your way) should hear from you every 90 days. People are just too busy to remember you otherwise. If you don't follow the 90-day rule, you risk getting shouted down by any competitor of yours who does.

III. Honor the Concept of Tinkering with All your Heart

If you're a 70's child like me, you remember the hugely successful rock group Fleetwood Mac. But I'll bet you didn't know that their seemingly overnight success came only after years of tinkering. That's right, before the release of their monster album *Rumours*, they endured no less than 14 personnel changes across 10 years. In marketing, as in rock and roll, success seldom happens with your original line-up.

IV. Thou Shalt Not Quit

Moses and the Israelites wandered the desert for 40 years without giving up. You owe it to yourself (and maybe Moses too) to try any new marketing initiative at least three times before throwing in the towel. Your prospect could have been out of the country the first time you ran it, and tending to his sick mother the second. Repetition is a marketer's best friend.

V. Thou Shalt Feed Thy Prospecting Funnel

Suspects become prospects, who then become customers. And these customers then generate referrals who create more prospects and the cycle begins anew. For thousands of years, this marketing process (also known as the prospecting funnel) has governed marketing activities for all companies, and I feel safe saying that it will continue this way for another thousand years.

VI. Remember Thine Marketing Time by Keeping it Holy

Successful marketing campaigns don't take the summer off, nor are they created "when I have the time." You must make the time. I've found it's helpful to consistently carve out the same day and time each week to work on marketing tasks. For me, it's Friday afternoons; for you it may be different. But whatever day and time you choose, honor it with all your heart.

VII. Thou Shalt Jettison One Program Every Year

I can't count the number of stressed out marketers I've seen over the last 15 years. As task after task is added to their plates, nothing is ever removed. Stop this madness at once, and identify one marketing task each year to eliminate. Too often, someone keeps doing a task (e.g. issuing a report), yet it's not adding value. Eliminate one marketing task a year; your health depends upon it.

VIII. Thou Shalt Not Cut Marketing Spending During Slow Times

From 1980 to 1985, McGraw-Hill Research analyzed 600 companies and their marketing spending. After 1985, McGraw-Hill concluded that those firms which had maintained or increased their advertising during the recession in '81-'82 boasted an average sales growth of 275% over the next five years. But those companies who cut their advertising saw paltry sales growth over the next five years of just 19%.

When is the right time to market your business? All the time.

IX. Thou Shalt Honor Exiting Employees

I once had a travel industry client run a report that showed where their new referrals came from. The second highest category was ex-employees. It turns out vacation shoppers were asking these ex-employees where they could book a Vegas package just like the neighbor's they'd heard about, and the ex-employees were referring them back to their old employer. When you treat your departing employees with a dose of good will, they may just turn into your unpaid sales force and refer business your way.

X. Thou Shalt Thank Often

Sadly, we live in an age of boorishness. But a savvy marketer can do his part to bring civility into an otherwise uncivilized world. Among the countless ways to thank customers are thank you notes, gift certificates and appreciation lunches to name just a few. These thank you's don't have to be showy. Just make sure the thank you is classy and considerate, and the kindness will eventually be repaid.

Sure, we all break these commandments from time to time and end up seeking forgiveness. But if you consistently break these Ten Commandments of Marketing, you risk an exodus—a customer exodus.

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