

Marketing Mistakes

The five biggest ones & how to avoid them

by: Jenna Miller, Emerald Strategic Marketing

As an experienced digital marketing professional, I am highly attuned to all the marketing happening around me. I have seen ingenious strategies and, conversely, some real head scratchers. And while there is not one right way to market your business, there are common mistakes that just do not work long term. If you find yourself guilty of these mistakes, it is time to change your approach. Let's look at the five biggest marketing mistakes I see and how to avoid them.

Owning Versus Renting

In real estate, it is often a better investment to buy versus rent. It gives you more control of your property and provides a better return on investment (ROI) in the future. The same goes for marketing platforms — and, specifically, social media platforms. Too often I see companies focus too heavily on social media marketing and neglect their website and email strategies — their “owned” real estate.

What do I mean by that? Imagine if you spend all your time promoting and amassing followers on social media and then that platform changes its algorithm (which literally happens all the time), decides to deactivate users, changes user policies or, for all intents and purposes, shuts down (remember MySpace?). You have now lost your followers, reach and ability to connect with them. This is marketing on rented property.

But there is an easy solution: Start collecting email addresses. Use your website forms, in-store sign-ups, physical marketing collateral and even social media to encourage your customers and potential customers to share their email addresses with you. Then consistently keep in contact with them to share company news, sales, industry trends and helpful advice. This is owning your own marketing property. You “own” those email addresses and changes in policy on social media platforms will not affect your efforts. Plus, the financial gain is extraordinary. According to Statista, your ROI for email marketing is anywhere between



\$36 and \$45 per dollar spent — a staggering return compared to social media alone, which stands at roughly \$3 for every dollar spent.

Constantly Selling

Now that you have email addresses, it is time to decide on the content you will be sharing with them. This leads us to mistake number two: constantly selling. If every email, social media post, direct mailer or article is all about selling, your audience will stop listening and unsubscribe. Remember, this is marketing, not sales. Of course, the end goal is to drive sales, but you need to approach it in a different way than your sales reps do.

Marketing is about truly understanding your audience, their likes, dislikes, challenges and goals, then using this information to connect with them and provide incredible value. When customers feel a connection to a brand, 57% are more likely to increase spending with that brand and 76% will buy from them over a competitor, according to Sprout Social.

Yes, you still want to position your product or service as the solution to their problems. However, people do not want to be sold to all the time. They also want a helpful tip, a free download, or something entertaining and relatable. Provide a varied approach to not only lead them to a sale, but also make a connection and keep your brand at the top of their minds.

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high-production videos and content have their place, it is also a good idea to incorporate lo-fi content like candid behind-the-scenes videos and images, employee account takeovers and even relatable memes.

According to recent findings, lo-fi content received 72% more likes and comments on LinkedIn in the past 12 months than hi-fi content. I can attest to this through my experience working

Spreading Resources Too Thin

As I stated earlier, social media should not be your only means of communication, but it is a helpful tool to drive traffic to your website and gain emails for your contact lists. Unfortunately, a lot of companies try to be on every social media platform available. They spread their resources too thin by trying to post everywhere, leading to poor-quality content and a lack of engagement.

The best approach is to look at where your audience members spend most of their time. There are plenty of articles out there outlining the best social media platforms for different demographics, but it comes down to knowing your specific audience members and where they spend their social media time.

This can take some trial and error, but it is essential to learning where to spend your resources effectively. We recommend starting with one platform before adding more. For B2B businesses, a strong LinkedIn profile is non-negotiable, so start there. If you are on multiple platforms, make sure that you are not posting the same content on each one. This is not a strategy.

Your goal should be to post customized content based on the platform. For example, Instagram is highly visual, so consider behind-the-scenes photos to connect with your audience on a human level. LinkedIn is professional so try how-to's, insightful articles and company success stories, both yours and your clients'. In the end, researching each platform and experimenting is vital to understanding what will work and what does not.

Overly Produced Content

While we are on social media content, let's jump into mistake number four: overly produced content. B2B brands are guilty of this. They want to portray a professional, buttoned-up look in all aspects of their business. And who can blame them? Who wants to do business with someone you cannot trust or who seems wildly unprofessional?

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with B2B clients.

Blindly Copying Others

We have made it to the fifth and final marketing mistake: Blindly copying other companies' strategies. Have you heard the saying, "There are no new ideas"? While that may not be entirely accurate, there is a seed of truth in there. It is easy to see the success of another business and think: "I'll just copy what it is doing." However, there are many variables involved. But you can learn from them.

Doing competitive research is important for understanding where you fit in the industry and what is missing. We encourage clients to send us elements they like about other companies' social media, emails and websites. But what we do with those elements is what is important. We take those ideas and give them a twist, add our clients' personalities and uniqueness to them, and then gingerly fit them within their current strategies. At the end of the day, we do not want our clients to be like their competitors; we want them to be better than them. We want them to stand out and be individuals. Ensuring you stay true to your brand and unique selling proposition is paramount, even when pulling inspiration from others.

These five common marketing mistakes keep your business from standing out above the competition. However, implementing the tips provided here is the first step in setting your marketing and your business up for success. Marketing comes down to educated moves, relentless experimenting and perseverance. This quote from Dwayne Johnson captures this sentiment: "Success isn't overnight. It's when everyday you get a little better than the day before. It all adds up." ■

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