

In today's economy, how do we effectively
use today's marketing tools to speak
with our customers?

Marketing in a Downturn

RECESSION-PROOF STRATEGIES FOR SMART MARKETERS



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Doing More (Marketing) With Less

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Marketing in a Downturn

Recession-Proof Strategies for Smart Marketers

Editor:

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Viewpoint

If you've picked up this book, you likely identify with one, more or all of these perspectives:

- ❑ The recession is official, and you're officially depressed and waiting for the next shoe to drop on your already anemic campaign budget for this quarter.
- ❑ Your sales leads funnel just doesn't seem to be big enough to capture all of the business you think your competition is getting, causing you undue frustration because you're at a loss for how to fill up your sales pipeline.
- ❑ You, like Stephanie Chandler who contributed the "I Reject the Recession" button to the right, believe that there's a better way out of this through intelligent and effective marketing!



Marketing in a Downturn

You've all heard the phrase "may you live in interesting times", allegedly first uttered by the Chinese. Well, that's only part of the story. In truth, there's little, if any, historical reference that ties this to the Chinese, or anyone else for that matter. The closest thing that anyone's come across that links this oft quoted phrase to its originators is the real Chinese phrase __, which translates to "heroes' are made in challenging times." Personally, I think that's a more appropriate to focus on the heroes that will be forged during these tough times. The people that lead (and market) the companies that survive and thrive in these and all tough times are the real heroes that we speak of. We all live in interesting times, but the best marketers and leaders are made during times of extraordinary challenges.

"I have good news and bad news. The good news is you will have fewer competitors next year because many of your competitors will be out of business. The bad news is you might be one of those out of business.

- Robert Kiyosaki

This e-book is a collection of wisdom from every day marketing heroes who are making their way in industry day by day. It' also puts forth a framework for giving a boost to your existing marketing plan in a downturn or jumpstarting your marketing plan if you don't already have one.

A History of Recessions

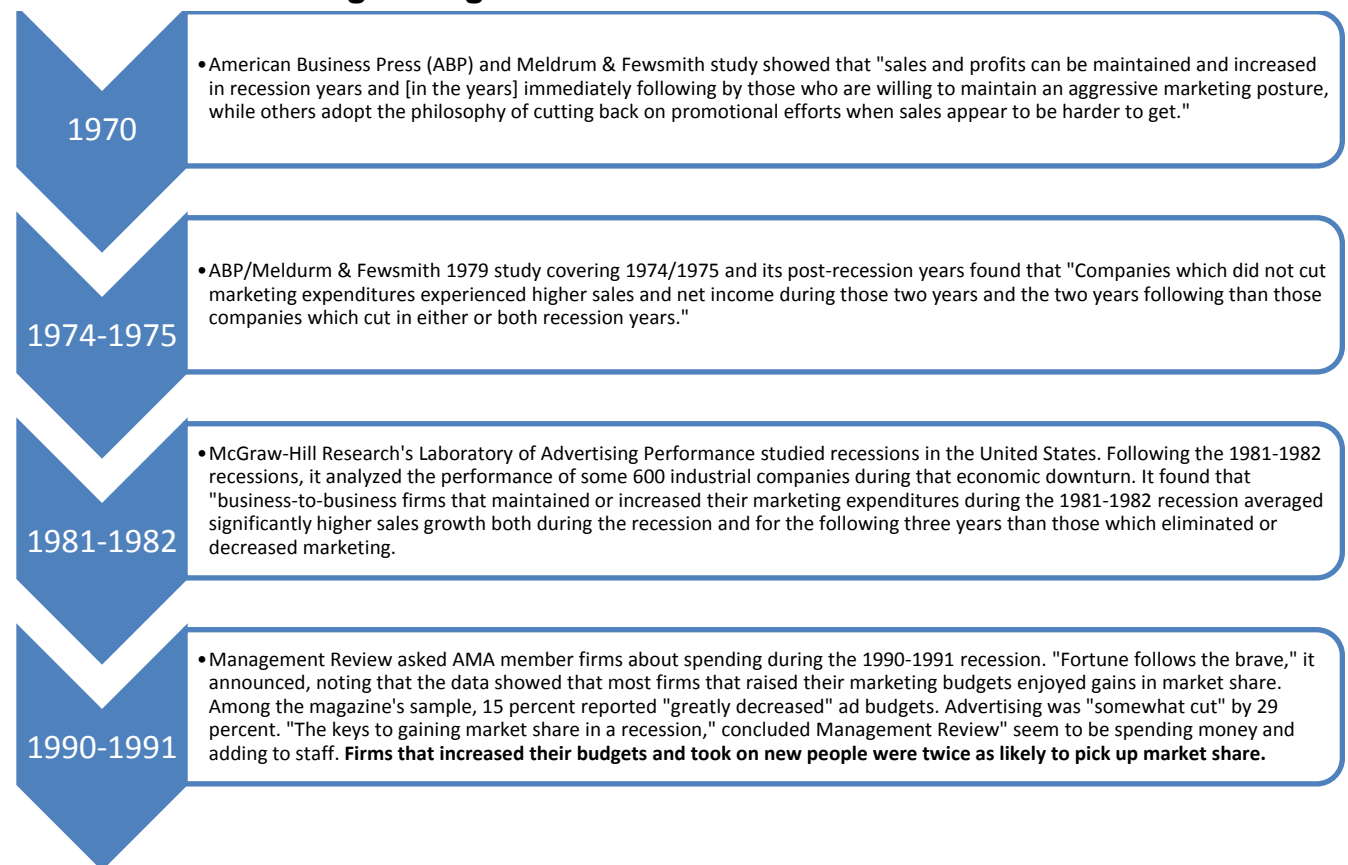
I've long argued that marketers are terrible historians. I know, that's certainly not accurate across the board, but as a general rule, we're "faith in the future" type people and we don't tend to look backward very often with a keen eye on the lessons left for us by our predecessors. It's fitting then that we take a few moments at the begging of this missive to look at the facts and lessons of recessions past for clues on what we need to do today and tomorrow to remain successful.

Did you know that there have been 11 recessions since World War 2 (1939)? Did you also know that they tend to occur, on average, about every 5.5 years? Recessions don't tend to follow precise timing (does anything to do with economics really obey any laws of precision?) but as a matter of course, we can rely on an up or down phase on a pretty regular basis. 11 months is the typical length of a recession, but that too is suspect and hard to predict with pinpoint accuracy. We're already surpassed that figure in this current downturn, so how long we'll be working out recession marketing strategies remains to be seen.

"The list of great brands that have been damaged, even ruined, as they've been milked for growth rather than managed for profit is a long one – and it grows every year.

- Jonah Bloom, AdAge

Timeline of Marketing during Recessions:



Interviews

Economic downturns provide some exciting opportunities for marketers to gain share, grow their share of voice or at least hold their ground. As part of a research project, I set out looking for marketers who have some experience in this area to share great ideas, tactics or a complete strategy for marketing in a downturn. Their feedback was nothing short of amazing! What you see here is the compilation of all of their advice. You're certain to find ideas that you can use in your business.

In responding, we asked each of the marketers to think of the following things:

- What are you doing differently in the downturn?
- How do you see this time as an opportunity vs. being a 'problem'?
- What's the wackiest thing you're willing to try in this economy?
- What's your personal take on how your organization is adapting to the current economy?
- How does your current approach differ from previous 'tough times'?
- What should marketers absolutely NOT do during tough times? (5 things)
- What should marketers ABSOLUTELY DO during tough times? (5 things)

I wish to sincerely thank the following marketers for submitting their contributions:

- Shel Horowitz, Author, 7 books, ethical marketing expert - shel@principledprofit.com, <http://www.frugalmarketing.com>
- Ryan Pitz, New Call Solutions™, <http://www.newcallsolutions.com>
- Greg Linnemanstons, Weidert Group, Inc., <http://www.weidert.com>
- Lorana Price, Holy Cow Branding, Inc, <http://www.holycowbranding.com>
- Jennifer Rodrigues, Thinkink, <http://www.thinkinkpr.com>
- Eric Holmen, Smartreply, <http://www.smartreply.com>
- Tom Marquardt, The Profit Repairman®, <http://www.theprofitrepairman.com>
- Keith Thirgood, Capstone Communications Group, www.capstonecomm.com
- Drew Neisser, Renegade, LLC, <http://www.renegade.com>
- Ron Hayes, Pacific Steel & Recycling, <http://www.pacific-recycling.com>
- Andra Coberly, A-Train Marketing Communications, Inc., <http://www.atrainmarketing.com>
- Jerri Barrett, Anita Borg Institute For Women And Technology <http://www.anitaborg.org>
- Jay Olson, QuadCreative, <http://www.quadcreative.com>
- Jimmy Hovey, MBA, JP Hovey Group
- Mike Crawford, M/C/C, <http://mccom.com>
- Ken Vitto, Xrack Pro, <http://www.xrackpro.com>
- Monique Hayward, Desert Noir Café & Bar. Beaverton, Or, www.desertnoir.com
- Stephanie Chandler, <http://www.stephaniechandler.com>

SHEL HOROWITZ

PRINCIPLED PROFIT

[HTTP://WWW.FRUGALMARKETING.COM](http://www.frugalmarketing.com)

*Shel is a past contributor to another MarketingSavant project and his advice comes with years of experience working on marketing and PR challenges for some of the most innovative companies in America. Shel's approach differs from some of the other interviews in that his perspective is to **always** use frugal, ethical and effective strategies, not something that every company does until that "have to".*

What do you do differently in a downturn?

Nothing; I've always emphasized frugal, ethical, and effective strategies that work equally well in bad times or good, and are respectful of my clients' finances.

How do you see this time as an opportunity vs. being a 'problem'?

This is an opportunity for companies that continue to market actively while others pull back. It's also an opportunity for any kind of business to channel their marketing into more cost-effective and overall effective strategies and methods.

What's the wackiest thing you're willing to try in this economy?

Anything that would gain positive attention not be laughed off as a publicity stunt and remains ethical and cost-effective. The two wackiest things I've done personally to date were:

- Do a graveside reading from Thoreau's Walden (on his birthday), to highlight a book on frugal fun
- Start an international movement around business ethics <<http://www.business-ethics-pledge.org>>, in part to promote my book, Principled Profit: Marketing That Puts People First

What things should marketers absolutely NOT do during tough times?

- Stop marketing
- Run expensive and useless branding/visibility ads
- Focus their marketing on untrackable paid advertising
- Confuse their prospects with cleverness
- Any deceptive practices

What should marketers ABSOLUTELY DO during tough times?

- Build cross-marketing relationships with a variety of partners
- Actively encourage customer referrals
- Take advantage of no-cost media publicity
- Behave, company-wide, according to highly ethical and Green principles
- Use those principles to demonstrate points of difference that cast the company favorably in the eyes of its customers, suppliers, employees, competitors, media, and general public
- Track, measure, and evaluate all paid advertising--looking both at immediate results and at lifetime value

RYAN PITZ

NEW CALL SOLUTIONS™

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Ryan is the founder of New Call Solutions, LLC, a firm that helps businesses increase telephone sales conversion and track the effectiveness of marketing so you can get more qualified leads and get a better ROI from advertising. Here are Ryan's six recession response strategies to help you profit in the current economic climate.

What do you encourage your clients to do differently in a down economy?

Ensure every lead opportunity is being handled and accounted for properly. What many business don't realize they get good leads, everyday, that "slip through the cracks" - and who can blame em - 'ya don't know what ya don't know. If you can identify and "plug up the holes" in your customer acquisition funnel - your lead generation and sales process will become more efficient. An efficient lead gen process will free up cash and give you flexibility to put more resources into advertising and sales initiatives.

How can a firm become more efficient with their lead generation process?

There are a few tips we always recommend for making customer acquisition more efficient.

- Track response from all forms of advertising and marketing - drop the ads that don't produce response and spend more on those that do produce a direct response.
- Hone your sales process at the initial point of contact when people call your office, walk into your business or complete a lead form online.
- Pay closer attention to those factors that result in sales. Most of your competitors will not take the time to measure response, script their sales process and identify which forms of marketing are most effective.
- Don't follow your competitors when most will simply reduce spending money on customer acquisition initiatives (advertising, sales and conversion strategies). In the past you may have been able to get away with sloppy or half-hearted marketing and sales, but tight times expose weaknesses.

What sort of contrarian advice do you give out that you don't hear your competitors saying?

I tell people to employ the "*Glutton at a rainy picnic principle*" - Imagine you're at a picnic BBQ and it starts to rain. All of your friends and family run for their cars, but you stick around. Now you can eat to your heart's content without competition. If you stick it out through the rain and let the storm pass you get first pick of all the vittles you like. The same is true when recession proofing. Most businesses knee jerk reaction is to "hold everything." Tighten the belt - run for the hills. But before you do that, find your "rainy picnic" opportunities. Start using a media outlet or ad source that your competitors have bailed on because of they think it's too expensive. Find the opportunities that come with change and make bold moves to capitalize on the new circumstantial change.

How are marketers to keep a positive mindset in a very negative economic climate?

Leverage adjacent marketing and sales strategies. Because everybody is "feeling the heat" or worried about the changing economy develop relationships with other companies to pool resources and refer internally. Devise a strategy to offer your customers more service, special offers or other incentives to do business with you because of your relationship with fellow business owners. For example: If you sell auto parts, develop a relationship with a service station for discounts on gas (of course only available through your store). Develop a relationship with an oil change station, etc. Workout a mutually beneficial referral system that gives each business a better shot at a customer. I guess you could call this a Co-Op Win-Win.

What are you doing to keep you team upbeat during a downturn?

Don't sing the Recession Blues around any staff what-so-ever. If people feel like they have a reason to fail some of them just might - don't give em the opportunity. It starts at the top...all that stuff. Don't ignore reality, be willing to speak candidly about the changing circumstances that impact your business, but don't emotionally "throw in the towel." With the exception of a handful of businesses...the market still exists for what you sell. Somebody somewhere is buying what you're selling. The question is, are you positioned well enough to be the one to sell it to em' and are you capitalizing on every opportunity? (See tip # 1)

What is the one thing that you believe on above all else when marketing in recession?

Riches in Niches - Specialization allows you to charge premium prices vs. your more generic competitors. And it affords you a stronger position in the minds of your customers. For example Whole Foods specializes in organic groceries. They can charge more, as they build a loyal customer base who continues to buy from their store time and time again. Think of Whole Foods vs. Food Lion or Giant or Harris Teeter or whichever basic grocer is in your area...Whole Foods competes with those stores, but

they don't have the same level of competitive threat the other more generic grocers have with one another because they have a niche. Essentially you can elevate your business out of the competitive mire by developing a niche position in the market - great for recession proofing.

If marketers did nothing else different, what's the one thing you feel they must do in a recession?

Get more from what ya got - focus on your existing client base. According to the late Peter Drucker (these are old ratios, but relevant):

- Your business has a 1:14 chance of doing business with someone with whom you have never done business,
- You have 1:4 chance of doing business with someone with whom you have had a relationship but have stopped and,
- You have a 1:2 chance of doing business with an existing customer.

So, what does this mean? A great recession proofing strategy is to communicate more with your existing customers - focus marketing and sales resources inward. Build a loyal herd of followers and use your client base to drive referrals.

GREG LINNEMANSTONS

WEIDERT GROUP, INC.

[HTTP://WWW.WEIDERT.COM](http://www.weidert.com)

Greg has helped his clients in the Fox Valley area of Wisconsin work through marketing challenges for years and has recently written articles on what marketers should be thinking about in this economy. Greg focuses on conventional marketing thinking, not that there's anything wrong with starting there!

Greg suggests that marketers start with collaboration. Throw away the rule book! Any form of collaboration that's not illegal must be considered if it helps businesses share cost, accelerate speed to market, or find prospects faster. Even if it means working with competitors, finding ways to do this is critical. Think Survivor Island 2009! There will be alliances that surprise people, and better to be in one than scratching your head and wondering why you didn't think of it.

It's just that the more I look at conditions different industries are facing, and the more I talk to leaders about the challenges they're facing the more convinced I become that we need to throw out some old rules and think about completely new solutions that would have been considered heresy a year ago.

Below you'll find Greg's article contribution in its entirety.

When the Going Gets Tough, Tough Marketers Get Going

Back in January, when we were faced with what seemed like a relatively typical recessionary slowdown, I wrote a Market Smart column that advocated taking an aggressive marketing posture as a means of growing market share ("*Hints of Recession Should Not Mean Pulling Back on Marketing*", January 28, 2008).

Today the business world is reeling from a stream of bad news that in the past week included the admission from GM that they'll be out of cash by June of 2009, the announcement last Monday by Circuit City that they're filing for bankruptcy protection, and an earnings advisory two days later from Best Buy that they've observed a "seismic change in consumer purchasing behaviors" that will dramatically impact their same store sales and future earnings.

In this economic environment the most popular question asked online in blogs and forums, in one form or another, is "What marketing advice can anyone offer to defend or grow business in these conditions?"

Here's my top ten list, in order:

- 1) **If you don't have a marketing plan, create one, even if it's really simple**, to keep you focused on what's most important. Having a plan means having a budget, and that can actually help you reduce spending.
- 2) Avoid the knee-jerk reaction of eliminating marketing expenses just because your accountant says they're discretionary.
- 3) **Take extra care of your current customers**, because others will be pursuing them, and it costs less to take care of a current customer than finding a new one. Be creative about finding ways to show appreciation that also reinforce how good you are at what you do for them.
- 4) **Examine your budget with a critical eye** for how you've allocated, looking at the expected payback of competing line items. If you must cut, do a forced ranking and delete whatever falls to the bottom of the list.
- 5) **Sharpen your statements of competitive advantage** ("Why buy from us?" answers), including hard facts and meaningful customer testimonials. Replace "We believe in quality" with "Our customers enjoy 30% less downtime." Use that to modify your messaging for greater relevancy in the current economy.
- 6) **Revisit customer pain points that your business can address**. Refresh your empathy for customers' current situations, and use that in dialogue with customers.
- 7) **Consider incorporating more trigger marketing tactics** in your arsenal, i.e. event, life-stage, or interaction-triggered promotions or offers that hit your customer when they're most inclined to respond (like promoting snow-blowers right after a blizzard)
- 8) **Use social media tools to focus on topics and conversations** about the role your business plays in a difficult economy.
- 9) **If you're a paid advertiser, try to renegotiate more favorable terms** and more added value components from media sellers facing a very soft market.
- 10) **Don't forget to integrate public relations into the total mix**, and don't let tight budgets allow you to lose PR momentum. PR will enhance the credibility of everything else you do. It's a tough world out there right now, with no safe places to hide. If ever there was a time when your decisions can make a critical difference on the vitality of your business, it's now. So what are you waiting for?

LORANA PRICE

HOLY COW BRANDING, INC

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Lorana runs an integrated marketing firm in Cary, North Carolina. She recently presented some strategies for marketing in the reception to small business owners in the Raleigh, NC market. Her feedback to the interview questions was derived from that presentation. Looks like they got their money's worth!

What do you do differently in a downturn?

When there is an economic downturn, it is more important than ever to have a solid marketing strategy. There are a lot of things businesses can do that are affordable. I encourage people to take the time to think creatively and not be afraid to do something different. An example of something different could be going the extra mile to get in front of your prospects. Imagine if you owned a dry cleaners. What could you do to get in front of your customers? How about sponsoring a kid's sports team and having your logo screen printed on their jerseys? That is a good start... but you could take it to the next level by setting up a hot chocolate station (cold drinks in the summer) and serve free hot beverages to the parents on the sidelines and their kids. Don't forget to bring coupons or flyers encouraging people to come to your store. Don't you think Mom or Dad will think of your dry cleaning company when it is time to drop off their clothing? I bet they will... and it only cost you some hot chocolate and your time.

For our own company, we sent cards wishing our prospects Prosperi-tea and a tin of holiday tea. Inside the cards, we offered to deliver cookies to anyone who contacted us, so they could have a tea break.

How do you see this time as an opportunity vs. being a "problem"?

I definitely see this time as an opportunity. It is proven that the companies that consistently market during an economic downturn come out of the recession way ahead of their competitors. Often, one of the first budgets to be cut for a company is marketing (which makes no sense... if you aren't telling people about your products or services, how are they going to be able to think of you when they are ready to buy them?), which means that there is less marketing noise for prospective customers to have to muddle through. Any creative marketing will be recognized and remembered when people are able to make purchases again.

What's the wackiest thing you're willing to try in this economy?

As long as it is ethical and supports our brand mission, they sky is the limit!

What's your personal take on how your organization is adapting to the current economy?

Our company has continued to market and has even increased the amount of marketing we had been doing to really build brand recognition in our marketplace. We have fine tuned internal processes that will make for better experiences for our clients, and we have developed stronger positioning as a marketing firm that emphasizes strategic thinking before creative execution. By strengthening our core, we are better to handle anything that comes our way.

What should marketers absolutely NOT do during tough times?

- Stop marketing
- Cut back the sales department
- Spend marketing dollars frivolously... without a plan
- Cut prices (it's very hard to recover your original prices after slashing)
- Lower your standards, especially in quality or value

What should marketers ABSOLUTELY DO during tough times?

- Devise a strategy for marketing when times are tough, so you can revisit it again in future slow downs
- Evaluate where your marketing dollars are going and only spend in the most effective places
- Create new, meaningful ways to reach out to prospective and existing clients
- Focus on brand awareness
- Increase your networking, including social networking

JENNIFER RODRIGUES

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Jennifer Rodrigues from ThinkInk PR has collaborated on the following responses from Eric Holmen, President of [SmartReply](#), one of North America's leading providers of voice and mobile marketing solutions. Both Jennifer and Eric are on the ball when it comes to positioning their companies for success in the downturn. Jennifer published a guide to PR in the 2009 recession while her client, Eric, is working the mobile marketing angle during a downturn.

What indicators do you have the mobile marketing is still gaining momentum in a recession?

As the close of Q4 rapidly approaches, and as we are experiencing one of the most lackluster earning seasons in recent years, analysts have once again revised their growth estimates for traditional advertising spending – downwards. Unlike traditional advertising mediums, **mobile advertising spend in the US is projected to break \$1 billion for the first time in 2008, and surpass \$7.5 billion by 2013.** For

In a recent CMO survey released by Epsilon, 63% of marketing execs were planning on increasing interactive/digital spend, while 59% reported a decrease in traditional marketing. 29% were interested in mobile and 22% have already added mobile to their marketing mix, recognizing that this tough economic period is precisely the time when highly targeted and more effective marketing channels play a crucial role.

marketers everywhere, this should indicate that in spite of massive industry write-downs, there is one marketing channel that is having the kind of success that perseveres during a downturn.

So much of marketing advice we here during this recession has to do with staying close to your customers, where does mobile fit in?

The main reason that mobile marketing is being widely touted as the future of marketing is its success in reaching consumers. In a July '08 survey by the DMA, *Mobile Marketing: Consumer Perspectives*, SMS campaigns were found to be the most successful mobile ad medium. 70% of those surveyed had responded to a marketing text message, whereas only 41% had responded to a survey

and 30% to email offers. “With mobile marketing, brand recall is very high; I’ve seen survey results where it’s as high as 51%, with 96% remembering the call-to-action from the message. That is unheard of in many marketing channels.”

TOM MARQUARDT, THE PROFIT REPAIRMAN®

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Tom's niche as the "Profit Repairman" is an exceptionally valuable one during challenging times. Tom is also the creator of My Little Black Book to Success®, which is a great read on business building in general. These are Tom's timeless recommendations that he gives to everyone as they make their way through the recession on how to increase their success rates, both professionally and personally.

Tips for Recessionary Marketing:

"Remember the Hook" when marketing for your business

Have you ever been fishing or seen how fishing is done? Without some sort of "hooking" device, very little fish would be caught (most do not just jump into the boat willingly). The same is true in selling your product line. Even when you have the most wanted product around, if you do not inform customers where to buy it (the hook in this example), you will see very little quantity sold.

When you think of a hook, remember, it is to grab the client's attention long enough for the sales process to begin between the buyer and seller. The hook is not meant to make anyone buy on the spot (but it could), rather the hook's goal is to have the clients open up their minds and communicate (verbally and/or non-verbally) to you; "I am interested in potentially buying your product. Can you please inform me about it?" This allows you, the salesperson, the opportunity to move the client into a sales opportunity for a purchase. A hook must be deliberately directed to target the clients that you would like to sell your product line to; there is no "one-size-fits-all" hook, so you want to have multiple hooks designed for your different clients.

By having different hooks in the marketplace, your business unit increases the opportunity to produce sales across a vast number of potential demographics.

Hooks are not only for your new customers; make sure that your product is using hooks for repeat customers as well. With so many products, promotions, and messages out there for a customer to listen to, make sure that you "reel" them in before someone else does.

Share-Shift Marketing For Greater Sales Growth Of Your Business

Share shifting is a term used to describe moving a client base from your competition, to you. Share shifting is not getting new businesses to try your product line; it is taking a current client database (clients already having needs and currently using your competitors) and moving it to your database (they use you). There are “X” dollars spent on any product line at any one time. The objective within share-shift marketing is to move more of those finite dollars spent on any product line into your business unit. You will be going for a bigger slice of the pie, but it is still just one pie that has not gotten any larger, just your portion of it has.

You need one of two things in place to sell any item: the clients either want or need your product line or a combination of both. Without a want or need from the client, you cannot sell much of anything to anyone. So, the advantages of share shifting over getting new customers/clients are:

- The want and need are pre-established
- The client is already buying, so spending habits are historic, thus forecasting can be done for pre-qualifying their future spending consumption
- Having purchased from your competitor in the past, selling strategies on your product line’s advantages over your competition can be highlighted and exploited
- A pre-qualified database for quicker sales effectiveness, ramp up/your “low hanging fruit”
- Builds revenues in a soft or downward trending marketplace
- No wasted time on “uncovering” needs in your sales stage progression. Due to this, you can move the client quicker through the sales pipeline to the purchase phase

With share-shift marketing, your top-line growth will be faster than with most other sales campaigns, due to the fact that you have an accelerated cycle built into this sales effort. So, go on out there and get a bigger piece of that market share pie, before someone else does and then throws it in your face.

KEITH THIRGOOD

CAPSTONE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

WWW.CAPSTONECOMM.COM

Keith and his partner started their business during the recession of 1982. They've survived every recession and downturn since! Capstone Communications Group is a marketing company, and marketing is one of the first areas to be cut during downturns, which harms other marketing companies. Nevertheless, Keith and his team have some sound advice for any company weathering the storm.

Our business thrives during recessions, as do our clients' businesses.

We thrive by becoming more proactive in marketing Capstone. Our clients thrive because we encourage them to do the same.

While your competition is trying to survive the downturn by cutting investment in their business, the smart companies are increasing their investments in marketing. It has two effects.

- 1) They show the world that they're still in business while their competitors seem to have disappeared.
- 2) Their expenditure has way more impact as they don't have to compete for their target market's attention, as their competitors' marketing is absent. So they get twice the bang for the buck.

The brave companies eat their competitors' lunch while their competitors try to save their way to success.

Every one of the companies who followed our advice during previous recessions maintained their sales during those recessions and came out of them stronger than their competition.

What should companies NOT do during a recession?

- 1) Do not fall prey to fear.
- 2) Do not cut advertising budgets.
- 3) Do not cut marketing staff.
- 4) Do not cut customer service staff.
- 5) Do fall into the trap of thinking you can save your way to success.

What should companies do?

- 1) Think like a winner.
- 2) Review their marketing expenditures and be prepared to shift dollars around at short notice.
- 3) As the recession carries on, review their competitors marketing efforts and determine where they are leaving the field open.
- 4) Shift marketing dollars to increase their presence slightly in areas where their competition has backed off.
- 5) Encourage their marketing and customer service staff to see this as an opportunity to shine. Award them for their efforts and communicate with them, so they don't fear for their jobs.

DREW NEISSER

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Drew and his team at Renegade are some of the most forward thinkers in the realm of digital marketing that I know. Having worked personally with their own Noah Brier (<http://www.noahbrier.com/>), I can attest to the level of expertise that they bring to the table. This whole company has got game. What follows is an article that Drew ran on his blog and on iMedia Connection.com. It's worth running here in its entirety. The advice is more relevant now than a year ago when it first ran.

Marketing in a Recession: Be Brave or Be Gone

A memorable moment in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0071853/> is when a galloping minstrel sings of Brave Sir Robin and how “he ran away, he ran away” when faced with adversity. With this recession in full force, my advice is simple: don't be Brave Sir. Robin. As the old saying goes, with each challenge comes opportunity and opportunities abound even in downturns.

1. Don't Kill Your Budget (Yet)

The first thing we marketers must do is save the budget. I have no doubt your CFO is already calling for reductions in head count and spending. Now is the time to be brave. Since all your competitors won't have the chutzpah to say no to their CFO, you must make the case that this is your chance to gain true competitive advantage with a share of voice you've been dreaming about all these years. Remind your CFO that top-of-mind awareness is an asset of the company that will devalue faster than he/she can say ROI. In truth, awareness can decline as fast as 50% a month when you go silent and the cost of buying back that awareness will be horrendous.

2. Cut Wisely

Given that my first point is probably a pipedream and that you will no more be able to avoid cuts than a deer can turn away from oncoming headlights, let's consider where to cut. Traditional advertising has always been the first to go and depending on your media mix, that may make sense now. The one advertising channel that will be harder to cut is online since a steady stream of metrics provide the ROI data that is so often missing in other areas. Promotional dollars are harder to cut because your channel partners may very well depend (like the addicts they are) on the sales boosts coupons and other discounts provide. Events and trade shows should be reviewed on case-by-case basis, saving those that can demonstrate ROI and tossing the ones that have been of questionable worth all along.

3. Stay Focused

Now that you have less money to work with, it is all the more important that you concentrate your spending where it can have the greatest impact. This is not the time to consider new targets or new channels if that means losing focus on your core constituents. But staying focused doesn't mean doing the same old same old. Get out there and talk to your customers and find out how the downturn is affecting their lives and their product choices. Just the mere process of talking to your customers will make them feel special and cement the bond you'll really need to weather the economic storm.

4. New Stuff for the Old Gang

What you hear from your current customers may really surprise you and push your product or service offerings in new directions. With austerity looming like a black cloud on the horizon, some consumers may turn to affordable luxuries even more than usual. While more "value packs" seems like an obvious direction, it is also possible consumers will turn to smaller sizes just to keep their monthly spend down. On the other end, luxury customers may temporarily discard their "if you've got it, flaunt it" attitude choosing to spend their dollars more discretely. For example, furriers might want to think about putting the fur on the inside of the coat, offering the same warmth without the showy statement (animal rights activists would encourage you to put fake fur on the inside!) On the services side, tighter economic times could create all sorts of new opportunities. Those with two jobs might need more help at home, keeping things organized, walking the dogs and/or shopping for groceries (online services like Fresh Direct could indeed thrive in a downturn.)

5. Keep it Light

Just because the economy is sadly wanting doesn't mean consumers want to be reminded of their uneasiness in every communication. A little humor, particularly of the self-deprecating variety, will be most appreciated by your otherwise stressed-out target. If there is humor to be found in your DNA, now is the time to unleash the smiles. Entertainment companies will be wise to breakout the comedies after finding a happy ending to the writer's strike. I'm reminded of the depression era-based movie Sullivan's Travels <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034240/>> in which the protagonist (a movie director played by Joel McCrae <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0566948/>>) searches for a serious theme for his next feature. What he learns is that laughter is the ultimate tonic during tough times.

6. Avoid the Middle

A waning tide may lower all boats but some will surely ride this out better than others. My money is on strong brands with high net promoter scores who are consistently delivering genuine and perceived value. Weaker brands with little customer loyalty will find themselves stuck in the middle, neither cheap enough to overcome their shortcomings or expensive enough to attract the ever-spending affluent crowd. This is a bad time to be Sears and a better time to be Best Buy or Bergdorf's. Sears is stuck in the middle without competitive advantage on price, value or service. Best Buy offers both value and service (via Geek Squad) and Bergdorf's regulars are unlikely to cut back drastically. Mass consumer brands with a wide range of products would be smart to emphasize their high-end and entry-level models again with the goal of avoiding the middle.

7. Partner with Non-Profits

Non-profits will undoubtedly feel the pinch as their supports cut back on donations. This happens in every downturn and is really painful for the non-profits who continue to perform an incredible range of socially beneficial services. Mobilize your employees and your customers behind the non-profits you truly believe in and you will be amazed at the good will and good business you will do as a result. The non-profits will be so grateful for your support that they will bend over backwards to ensure you achieve your business goals not just now but for many years to come. It may seem counterintuitive to increase your CSR (corporate social responsibility) now BUT that is exactly why it is worth considering. Your employees will undoubtedly respond with increased loyalty that will also translate into higher productivity.

8. Hedge your Bets

Market volatility is not a new concept yet many companies are remarkably vulnerable to changes in the weather not to mention the economy. Savvy marketers are turning to sophisticated forecasters who can not only anticipate changes but also offer hedging solutions. With some progressive thinking, marketers can find some means of hedging against the key variables that impact their particular industry. In the field of weather, a new company called Storm (www.stormexchange.com <<http://www.stormexchange.com>>) is helping a variety of companies from makers of outerwear to power companies determine the business cost of variable weather conditions and then helping them hedge against abnormal conditions.

9. Keep your Ear to the Ground

If you don't have a full-time "social media director" on staff, get one quick. This individual needs to be on the internet every day, monitoring the chatter about your brand. Since bad news spreads faster than a blaze in the Malibu hills, active blog monitoring is the first line of defense, offering a firewall between your brand and an image-burning disaster. Your clearly identified (no pseudonyms please Mr. Mackey <<http://myorganicday.com/2007/07/12/whole-foods-ceo-gets-caught-using-psuedonym-on-yahoo-finance/>>) representative can set the record straight, respond to performance complaints and keep you informed when problems aren't being addressed in the field. He/she may even turn a customer into an advocate simply by acknowledging their comments. Given how few companies bother to engage their customers, those that do are frequently met with "wow, I didn't know you cared that much" and vows of eternal loyalty—loyalty that will float your boat long after your competitors succumb to the economic down currents.

RON HAYES

PACIFIC STEEL & RECYCLING

[HTTP://WWW.PACIFIC-RECYCLING.COM/](http://www.pacific-recycling.com/)

Ron is the Director of Marketing for Pacific Steel & Recycling, a firm that has 37 branches spread across 7 northwestern states. His perspective is valuable and unique because it comes directly from a B2B marketer dealing with one of the hardest hit areas of the economy. Ron's mindset and strategy are noteworthy.

How have you been affected by this recession and how does it compare to past downturns?

We have two sides of our business - steel service centers and recycling centers. Both sides have been hit very hard by the recession. However, we have decided to view it as a great opportunity to become even better and regain market share. We compete with many small companies that don't have the cash reserves to last out the downturn. Also, in past recessions, the focus of the industry has always been to hunker down and cut all possible costs, including marketing.

Our organization has weathered so many downturns, this one is just another one will survive and this time, come out of it even more powerful than before.

What are you doing differently this time around?

As stated before, our previous "tough time" strategy was to cut all marketing and just wait it out. This time, we are going to be the leader during the recession and after.

Our marketing strategy focuses on three main areas - superior customer service, community marketing (i.e. being involved in the community whether supporting community events or charitable organizations), and building relationships with customers and community leaders. We feel that these activities will not only keep us in front of customers but will solidify our position in the market so that when things turn around, we will already own the loyalty of most of the people we serve.

What would you tell other marketers NOT to do in this downturn?

- Don't cut the marketing budget
- Don't panic
- Don't stay focused on traditional media
- Don't lose focus on your core business
- Don't try anything and everything - be selective.

What you do recommend marketers strive for in this economy?

- Be creative
- Seek out cheap marketing opportunities such as PR and social media
- Concentrate some time on building exceptional service
- Train your people
- Target, target, target.

ANDRA COBERLY

A-TRAIN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

[HTTP://WWW.ATRINMARKETING.COM](http://www.ATRINMARKETING.COM)

Andra has been thinking a lot about marketing in the recession in recent months and has even written about it in their newsletter (<http://e-marketingpartner.com/clients/ATrain/Nov08/B-Sides/>). Andra's company specialize in working with nonprofits, so it's even more important to focus on marketing strategy during these tough economic times (they not only are getting fewer donations and grants, but the need for their services is skyrocketing).

Andra, what's the best advice you give to your nonprofit clients?

The best advice we can give about marketing in a recession is to stay the course. We suggest that people continue with what they are doing and really focus on marketing to current supporters and clients and pushing forward with their brand and mission (or message). It's a lot about reputation and securing your brand in the minds of your stakeholders and donors; as opposed to going out and looking for new supporters and donors. Plus, more companies or organizations will likely cut their marketing budgets as finances get tighter, so if you stay the course, your message is more likely to reach your target audience. For nonprofits right now, it's really important to focus on your mission and engaging people in that mission. It's about growing your connection with your potential donor or supporter and making more of an emotional appeal to heighten that connection. Focus on bringing people in to your organization and engaging them.

What's the wackiest thing you're recommending to your clients?

As for wacky, I think bold messages are really important, and really relating to your potential customer, donor, supporter, clients through humor or strong message can be an incredibly useful and successful tool. You can pretty much do anything – as long as it parallel with your brand. I think we'll start finding major brands focusing on really unique and wacky marketing efforts (Dr. Pepper's recent Guns N Roses stunt comes to mind).

Anything that you feel nonprofits should not do during these challenging times?

- Don't completely stop marketing
- Don't rebrand if your current brand is strong
- Don't waste money on unfocused advertising or marketing efforts
- Don't ignore current supporters/clients/donors
- Don't ignore the hard financials times (if you are a restaurant, offer a hard times happy hour. If you are a theater, offer a recession special: two-for-one tickets)

JERRI BARRETT

ANITA BORG INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY

[HTTP://WWW.ANITABORG.ORG](http://www.anitaborg.org) AND [HTTP://WWW.GRACEHOPPER.ORG](http://www.gracehopper.org)

Jerri has a unique position among our interviewees as the Director of Marketing for a small Non Profit in Silicon Valley – The Anita Borg Institute for Women and Technology. Corporations are not the only firms charged with changing their game in the downturn. Non Profits and educational institutions traditionally have very lean budgets to begin with. It's critical for Non Profits to get even smarter with their marketing as their budgets are being cut yet again. Here's what Jerri is doing at The Anita Borg Institute for Women and Technology.

What are you doing differently in the downturn?

Rather than doing paid advertising I am now actively recruiting media sponsors and swapping advertising in their publications for publicity with our event. With one publication we provide them display space and free admissions to our events, along with recognition in our program, in exchange for full page ads. The added benefit is that they often cover us in the magazine on one event as we are advertising for the next one. We both benefit with no actual cash expenditures.

How do you see this time as an opportunity vs. being a 'problem'?

I've spent a long time working in startups so I'm used to lean budgets. What I recognize is that the economy worsens our constituency needs us more than ever so I'm trying to find ways to help them. We work with technical women, academia and tech companies on the recruitment, retention and advancement of their technical women. So our work is even more important now when people are facing layoffs.

If you're from a nonprofit, what are you doing differently than corporate marketers?

We focus extensively on web 2.0 and our newsletters which is not really something corporate marketing does. We now publish two newsletters a month that reach about 9000 readers and we have very active Facebook pages, a linked in for good group and also a large active group of bloggers. These all help to promote our programs and connect our community.

What's the wackiest thing you're willing to try in this economy?

At our last conference I decided that to help increase value to our corporate sponsors and attendees that I wanted to try something different. So I created a speed dating type resume workshop. You would come in the room and for 15 minutes have a consultation on your resume. After 15 minutes the bell rings and you are out and the next person comes in. The attendees got great feedback and the recruiters got a chance to meet attendees one on one which would help them meet their recruiting goals.

What's your personal take on how your organization is adapting to the current economy?

I view our changes as necessary though some projects that got cancelled were very near and dear to me.

How does your current approach differ from previous 'tough times'?

This time I am much more focused on web 2.0- and blogging. I've got our CEO doing her own blog which has led to increased press coverage; we secured a blog on Fast Company as part of their expert blogs; and I have also launched my own blog on marketing for a nonprofit.

What should marketers absolutely NOT do during tough times?

- 1) Don't let the tough times get you down.
- 2) Don't turn your back on other people who are laid off – they will help you in turn if the worst happens
- 3) Don't let anyone around you see you panic – keep a positive outlook at the office
- 4) Don't let your vendors down – if you can't pay for something – don't do it.
- 5) Don't forget to keep a work/life balance

What should marketers ABSOLUTELY DO during tough times?

- 1) Keep building your network
- 2) Learn web 2.0/social media.
- 3) Learn something new every day and keep your skills up to date and fresh
- 4) Review all your vendors and renegotiate wherever possible – people are now willing to fight for your business
- 5) Write a realistic plan and implement it.

JAY OLSON

QUADCREATIVE, MILWAUKEE, WIS
[HTTP://WWW.QUADCREATIVE.COM/](http://www.quadcreative.com/)

Jay and QuadCreative are not only marketers themselves but also clients of The MarketingSavant Group. Sitting at the intersection of QuadCreative, QuadDirect and the mother ship, Quad Graphics, Jay's marketing group sees a lot of marketing, direct mail and advertising shifts across a wide variety of clients and industry.

How are your clients reacting to this downturn?

I'm going through this process right now with one of our internal clients. This business unit is cutting its marketing budget by more than 50%. Traditional media (i.e., trade shows, advertising and PR) will naturally take the biggest hit because it represented the lion's share of the budget in 2008. This is forcing us to become highly selective in choosing to spend only in high potential markets and regions.

Are there any strategies that you are finding success with across your client base?

We are locking in on three key strategies to increase effectiveness and efficiency in 2009:

- 1) Personal-level, customer-directed communications and interactive media;
- 2) Knowledge leadership;
- 3) Setting the stage to capitalize on future business opportunities by building relationships and strengthening perceptions of the brand so that we will be the preferred brand when prospective customers are in the market again to invest in new equipment.

For the client mentioned earlier, we're pursuing some very selective recommendations, which will include:

- 1) Personal visits by the executive staff (President, VPs and Directors to "A" customers in key regions to research customer needs, concerns and pains;
- 2) Technology tours to OEMs and top customers just prior to trade shows or in lieu of trade shows;
- 3) Virtual trade shows;
- 4) Think Tank Conversations (a new section on the Web site that will feature company experts discussing in a Q&A conversational format industry challenges and potential solutions to make customers' operations more successful);
- 5) Internal education and training of our product managers and sales staff to sharpen their skills in creating and delivering resonating customer value propositions; and
- 6) Implementation of new feedback procedures to monitor and measure customer satisfaction and other performance metrics, which we are currently defining with the executive team.

Are there any other tools that you're recommending for your clients?

Other opportunities that sound most intriguing to me include covering "new approaches in digital and social media marketing." I think WOM is mission critical for building strong brands. Today, marketers must possess a working knowledge of technologies available to facilitate online conversations and content sharing. I also think it's important to become equally adept at using offline channels (e.g., some of the personal level, customer-directed tactics listed above) to help build relationships and spread WOM. Customer referrals (via traditional phone conversations and direct contact) are still very powerful. The key is to deliver such a compelling brand experience that it drives WOM both online and offline.

JIMMY HOVEY, MBA

JP HOVEY GROUP

Jimmy, what are your clients doing differently in the downturn?

My clients, most after 30 years in business are starting to try to understand what Marketing is and implementing a strategy in their businesses. Often times at this point they are in a panic because their business is declining and they don't know what to do. They know they need to begin Marketing but often confuse Advertising for Marketing. This is their first mistake. They often think that by running a print ad or radio ad that presto, the phones will begin to ring and their problems will be resolved. Their downfall is not realizing the difference between Marketing and Advertising. Marketing is a long term approach to building their name and advertising is one of the methods utilized in achieving that goal. It is difficult for owners who have simply waited for their phones to ring and have always had enough business to grasp and understand the concept and even more difficult to convince is that they need to increase their Marketing budget from \$1500.00 to \$25,000 or even \$45,000 at startup. This usually gets a dirty stare because they cannot imagine spending money at a time when they are struggling.

Even before the downturn, we established a unique system to create leads within a business with the premise of increasing sales and growing a business.

Phase 1 - Lead Generation

Every business has to have lead generation if they are going to grow. The business must be constantly looking for potential buyers for their sale. We do this by identifying who the client's customer is, pulling a database and immediately start utilizing a call center to call and establish leads, working to get information in front of the potential buyer and scheduling appointments along the way. By doing this, we are both marketing as well as working to bring active leads into the pipeline for future sales. We have found that depending on the product or service, the sales cycle required to nurture the sale can be longer than it has been in the past. Once we have made contact with the potential customer we switch to Phase 2, lead nurturing.

Phase 2 -Lead Nurturing

There are 2 parts to the Lead Nurturing;

Part 1 - If the call center identifies a potential prospect, but the prospect does not have an immediate need, we send information to them immediately. We begin to compound a list of those prospects. For example, the lead may get a follow up mailer 2 weeks later, then on 1 month intervals. The list continues to build over time and we manage that list through ACT or other Sales software that tracks all of the sales activity. The contact can be of different varieties, a news release, direct mailer, promotion, newsletter or any other type of marketing materials that keep the potential customer engaged for

future sales. We may also do follow up calls to insure that the prospect received the materials that they requested.

Part 2- If the call center is successful in making an appointment with the potential customer, the lead is then handed over to a sales representative that is now responsible for the relationship building lead nurturing and the call center is responsible for making sure there is constant contact maintained with the potential client. Again, understanding that the time required to initiate a sale is much longer than it has been in the past, the sales representative is

Sales Force

We train the sales force in how to nurture a client. We are not a high pressure, got to have the sale now type of sales force. We are more focused on building the relationship that in time will lead to a sale. Obviously this wouldn't work with a low-priced sales item. Most of our clients are looking for jobs that range from \$10,000 to \$10,000,000 so they can afford a longer sales cycle. We know we have built a relationship when the client refers to us by first name, rather than by our Company. At that point, the relationship has earned the trust and built a relationship that has been nurtured over time. We focus more on the customer, gathering data each time we talk to them, and once the relationship is built, asking for the sale is less offensive. We set goals for phone calls, visits and track the sales cycle for every potential customer.

ROI

We calculate the ROI on every Marketing dollar spent to insure a solid ROI to the owner. We have one client to spent \$30,000 for Lead Generation to close on \$8 Million worth of construction work in one year. Another built their customer base from zero to 1950 customers in one year.

How do you see this time as an opportunity vs. being a 'problem'?

Opportunity- My companies are not sitting back, they are focused on the future and growing their companies. They refuse to participate in the Recession. They are making long term investments into strategies that have been proven to work. BUT, these companies that are doing something are a small minority; therefore numerous businesses will go out of business providing more opportunity for those companies out there asking for the business and putting themselves in the minds of those purchasing from them.

Do you see this recession as a problem or an opportunity?

A problem. Companies doing nothing, just going out of business, being negative listening to the media. These are the companies we are buying up for bargain basement prices. Many may not be able to do anything now to get immediate results other than change their attitude and prepare for the upturn.

What's your personal take on how your organization is adapting to the current economy?

My companies are growing 100-200% per year, buying other companies, becoming more productive through processes and systems thus becoming more profitable than they ever have, and they are picking up new customers.

How does your current approach differ from previous 'tough times'?

My companies would just ride out the downturn, cutting spending, not paying themselves, laying off employees and constantly worrying about when things would turn around. They allowed the down turn to control them, Now, they are managing the downturn and see it as a small problem.

What should marketers absolutely NOT do during tough times?

- 1) DO NOT STOP Marketing Strategy during tough times, instead focus on what is working.
- 2) Not ask customer how they learned about the Company
- 3) Do not be High Pressure.
- 4) Do not let previous customers go without contact via phone, newsletter, letter, etc. for less than every other month.
- 5) Sit back and wait for customers to come to them.

What should marketers ABSOLUTELY DO during tough times? (5 things)"

- 1) Calculate Return on Investment of every Marketing Dollar spent in order to focus on the Marketing that is bringing sales into the company.
- 2) Lead Generation; Call center, Letters.
- 3) Track every lead through software designed for that use.
- 4) Understand your customer and create a Marketing Strategy to attract that customer.
- 5) Have all involved in the organization build relationships via Chamber of Commerce, Business Network International.

MIKE CRAWFORD

M/C/C

[HTTP://MCCOM.COM/](http://mccom.com/)

Since founding M/C/C Communications 22 years ago, Mike Crawford has seen both economic ups and downs. As president of an advertising, public relations and internet marketing agency that specializes in technology and survived the 2001 industry bust, Mike knows a thing or two about developing strategies for maintaining and growing business during a downturn.

What are you doing differently in the downturn?

In an economic downturn, marketing/advertising and public relations budgets are usually the first to get slashed. In order to show our clients that we can continue to provide them with ROI, we shift our focus to more cost effective strategies that still cultivate brand loyalty, like emphasizing social media efforts. These efforts can help minimize hard costs while maximizing effectiveness and agency profits.

How do you see this time as an opportunity vs. being a 'problem'?

The realm of social media is still so new; the kinks are still being worked out. It's also free, which means that marketers are getting the most bang for their buck by testing the waters. The current economic climate puts us in a position where we can try almost anything in the social media department just to see if it works. If something turns out to be not such a good idea for a particular client, then we've lost no money but gained a valuable lesson.

What's the wackiest thing you're willing to try in this economy?

Online media is really expanding what we're willing to try due to its cost-effective nature. We're doing a lot more videos and video case studies as well as podcasts and webinars. I guess, the wackiest thing we're willing to try is maybe purchase traditional print advertising.

What's your personal take on how your organization is adapting to the current economy?

All of our people are looking at this economic period as a way to really grow. On an individual level, everyone is getting an opportunity to diversify their skill set and increase their value as an employee. As a team, everyone has to pull together, wear different hats and really communicate with each other to achieve results.

How does your current approach differ from previous 'tough times'?

Luckily, we can turn to online media this time around. It's an incredible marketing tool that offers a lot of cost-effective solutions for our clients and provides us with a profitable way of generating revenue for little-to-no hard costs to ourselves or our clients.

What should marketers absolutely NOT do during tough times?

Don't give up and wait for the money to roll back in; don't focus heavily on traditional media; don't bypass doing sufficient research on new business prospects; don't sign on for new accounts that aren't really a fit for your agency just to increase revenue; don't spread yourself too thin in hopes of proving your worth.

What should marketers ABSOLUTELY DO during tough times?

Take some of the down time to cultivate your business relationships; get creative; utilize all social media efforts that are appropriate for your client and target audience; go green – printing is expensive; simply ask your team for help when there's too much on your plate.

KEN VITTO

XRACK PRO

[HTTP://WWW.XRACKPRO.COM](http://www.xrackpro.com)

Ken is in the business of selling server racks. This is a tough business when technology infrastructure business drops dramatically like it has the last several months. Here's what Ken and his team are doing to excel in the downturn.

What are you doing differently in the downturn?

- Fewer or no tradeshow this year
- More search based internet marketing

How do you see this time as an opportunity vs. being a 'problem'?

Although companies may slow down their purchases during a weak economy, people are still being influenced for buying decisions. Because a lot of companies cut their marketing budget during weak economies, there will be less competition to grab buyers' attention and influence their buying decisions. Also, companies that continue to market during the tough times should reap even larger rewards when things get better. I doubt there will be a big announcement telling everyone "the economy is better, now start buying"; so I want/need to be on customers' minds when they start researching a purchase so I will be considered. Another thing, the competition could go out of business.

What's the wackiest thing you're willing to try in this economy?

Turn down business. Some of our products have less profit than others, so turning down business on lower profit products and concentrating on higher profit products could help.

Eat a bug (not really, I'm a vegetarian, but some crazy concept like that or "stand on my head to make a deal" like the great Cal Worthington says)

What's your personal take on how your organization is adapting to the current economy?

GizMac Accessories is doing well considering the current economy; management began focusing on internet marketing before the economy became weak and it has helped people to find our products when they are close or ready to buy.

How does your current approach differ from previous 'tough times'?

I am taking a more proactive approach now, not waiting for sales to drop before acting.

What should marketers absolutely NOT do during tough times?

- 1) Listen too much to the negative reports from the media
- 2) Give in to the gloom and doom
- 3) Assume there is no business
- 4) Cut marketing budget
- 5) Abandon ship

What should marketers ABSOLUTELY DO during tough times? (5 things)"

- 1) Don't panic
- 2) Get creative and think out of the box
- 3) Do low cost and no cost marketing
- 4) Develop partnerships to cross promote products that would be a good match
- 5) Take your competitors' market share

MONIQUE HAYWARD

DESSERT NOIR CAFÉ & BAR, BEAVERTON, OR

WWW.DSSERTNOIR.COM

Monique is the owner and operator of Dessert Noir Café & Bar in Beaverton, Oregon, *“the premier dessert destination for middle-to-upper income adults who want great food and beverages in a distinctive, sophisticated place with nice ambiance and “cool factor” that’s close to home.”*

What’s your take on how the small, local business or restaurant is taking the downturn?

Restaurants are on the front line of consumer sentiment, and I saw the first signs of today’s economic troubles in April 2007, well ahead of last summer’s bad news. Back then, I lost customers who teetered on the edge of personal economic failure, living beyond their means in houses they couldn’t afford. Without the “sub-prime audience,” I counted on my core customers who still felt secure in their jobs and investments. However, Wall Street’s meltdown and the resulting impact on the economy and credit markets have changed that picture dramatically. Now even my most affluent, fiscally prudent customers are running for cover. Times are tough for them, too, as white-collar-job losses mount and their investment portfolios dwindle in value.

So, what you are doing about it, from a marketing perspective?

Therefore, I have been implementing a low-cost marketing and PR strategy to stay visible in the absence of budget to launch big promotional campaigns and advertising programs. What we’re doing differently is taking advantage of our focus on desserts, small plates, and cocktails to capitalize on consumers’ moves “down menu,” i.e., buying appetizers, small plates, and desserts at lower prices than high-priced entrees and large meals. When we introduced our fall menu in October, we offered more value-oriented choices, including extending our happy hour to seven days a week, to give our customers more choices at lower price points. In November, we took this strategy another step farther and updated our menu to eliminate all the slow-selling items (“dogs”) so my staff has fewer food and beverage items to manage and can concentrate on delivering the core items extremely well.

We have an opportunity to keep the business in the spotlight, particularly in the press, through this downturn because consumers eventually get weary of all the bad news and want to treat themselves to a night out. PR gives us awareness and credibility, and with so many small businesses on the brink of failure, I must keep the Dessert Noir Café & Bar brand as visible as possible so folks don’t “forget” us. This approach is not different from my marketing strategy under normal business conditions with the exception of me being even more vigilant about finding opportunities. With that said, I have been focused on generating more publicity for my business on both a local and national scale to generate buzz and position myself as an small business expert on the front lines. Highlights include recent

appearances on CNN's "Your World Today with Tony Harris," "Restaurant of the Week" on KATU Channel 2's "AM Northwest" news magazine show, and remote broadcast of a local TV station's evening news program from the restaurant. In January, articles featuring the restaurant will appear in Entrepreneur and Restaurant Startup & Growth magazines.

Are you working with any of your local peers to help develop business collaboratively?

I've been partnering with complementary businesses on special events and other activities to continue to market to our customer base. Here's a case in point: My restaurant is located next to our town's main movie theater, and for the Sex and the City opening in May, we collaborated with a local spa on free chair massages, prize giveaways, and \$5 cosmos and logged our best sales day ever.

Being next to a movie theater strengthens our value proposition as movies are still considered "cheap" entertainment and our customers have always combined an evening at the movies with a visit to the restaurant before and/or after the show. My "wackiest thing" that I'm going to try is a \$15,000 cash prize giveaway for a promotion that I'll do for Academy Awards season. I think I can get a lot of buzz going around this, especially if the economy remains as dour as it is now.

Is there anything else that you're doing to adapt?

As for adapting to these times, business has always been challenging. As I noted, we've been seeing the signs of this recession for more than a year and a half already. With the economy presenting challenges that are beyond my control, I have been forced to concentrate on the things I know I can control – operating efficiencies, labor, food/beverage, relationships with business partners, and marketing.

Five things not to do in tough times:

- 1) Panic.
- 2) Go off the radar.
- 3) Compromise on service and quality and the perception of the brand when cutting spending.
- 4) Lose faith.
- 5) Lose focus.

Five things to do in tough times:

- 1) Evaluate the strategy and course-correct to fit the times.
- 2) Keep the brand visible through low-cost advertising, promotions, and PR.
- 3) Take care of your best customers and engage them in a dialogue about what marketing/promotions work for them to continue to support the business.
- 4) Use your employees as ambassadors to spread goodwill about the business and generate word-of-mouth.
- 5) Use the slow periods to reflect and brainstorm new ideas when the crazy, busy times prevented you from devoting the time and energy.

STEPHANIE CHANDLER

[HTTP://WWW.STEPHANIECHANDLER.COM](http://www.stephaniechandler.com)

Stephanie is author of several business and marketing books and has been on the "Reject the Recession" bandwagon all year (and printed up 1000 buttons with the phrase)! She also maintains a blog where she has written about marketing in the recession several times. Here's an excerpt (post is available here: <http://businessinfoguide.com/blog/?p=193>)

The way I see it, we have two choices. We can watch the news and complain and worry about it OR we can choose to **reject the recession** and look for **new ways to generate business**. Here are a few ideas to help you reject the recession:

1. Marketing, marketing, marketing. Studies show that businesses that continue to market through a recession come out ahead when the economy begins to turn. Though you may be tempted to cut back on business expenses, *this is the worst time to cut back on marketing!* Remember, marketing should be an investment in your business that produces a return, not an expense. If what you're doing isn't producing results, try something else.



2. Reevaluate your products and services. If you sell items or services that rely on your clients having extra disposable income, you need to get creative. Business is about meeting the **needs** of your clients. For example, if you're a travel agent and clients aren't spending on extravagant vacations, you could shift your focus to affordable family get-aways. Or develop a new niche in coordinating family reunions or quick trips for couples.

3. Leverage your existing clients. These are your hottest prospects because they already know and like your business. Offer referral programs, special offers, whatever it takes to get the wheels in motion. Remember to reach out to them repeatedly through direct mail, e-mail, hand-written note cards, events, appreciation programs, etc.

4. Be budget sensitive. Consumers are tightening up their wallets. In order to get their attention right now, you have to give them some incentive. A walk through any department store will show you that sales are abundant. Offering discounts, buy-one-get-one offers, bundled packages and other money-savers can help you attract buyers that might otherwise be holding off from making a purchase.

5. Get everyone on board. Do whatever you can to motivate your staff and to keep yourself focused on the opportunities. Your competitors are struggling too. This is an opportunity to rise above! With the right amount of strategy and effort, it is entirely possible to move forward and even **thrive** in a tough economy.

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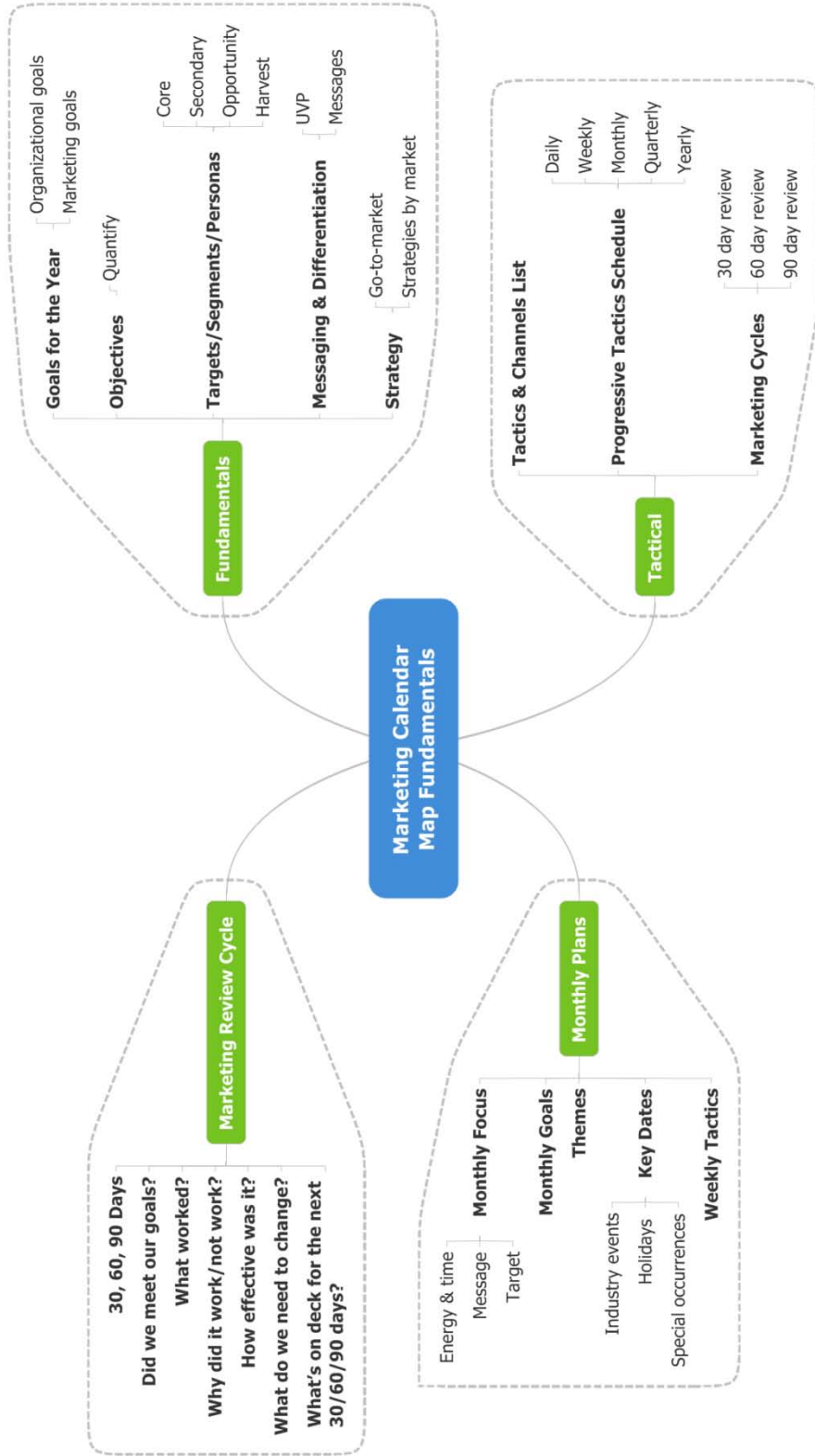
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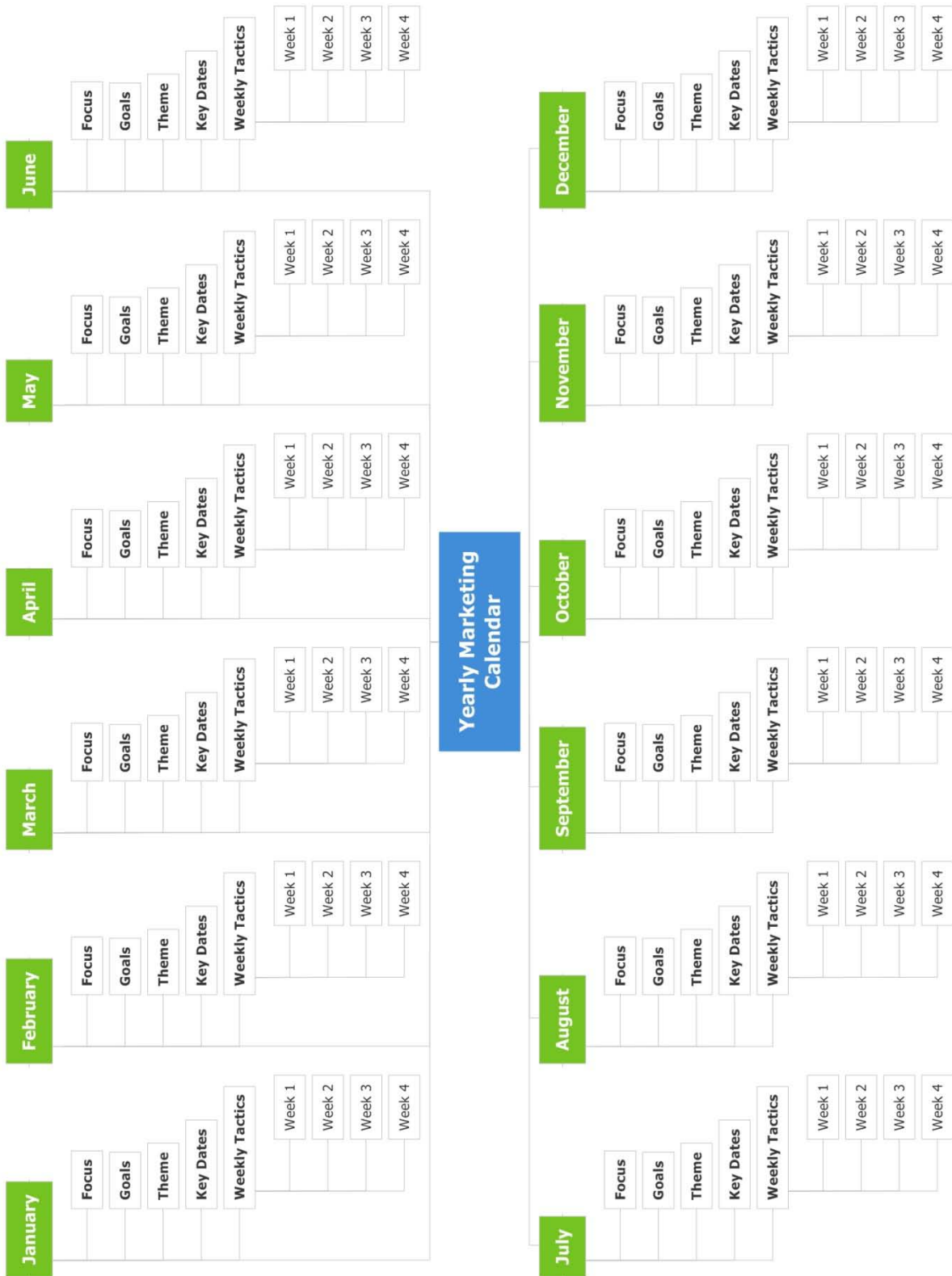
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Marketing Plan and Calendar

You have so many options when it comes to marketing that it's easy to get overwhelmed. Which tools should you use? How often? When is the best time to make phone calls? When's best to email? Should you be blogging? How many networking events should you attend each month? And how the heck will you fit social networking in?

The most successful businesses operate from plans and processes and their marketing efforts are no exception to this rule. You need a plan that is not just in your head, but on paper—a plan that will guide you through a year of marketing, one day at a time, breaking out all the steps to follow. You need a system in place, a process for contacting, mailing, following up with both new and existing customers, clients and donors. It's all about preparation and, as Edna 'E' Mode in Disney's *The Incredibles*, said, "Luck favors the prepared."

Plan Overview

ORGANIZATION GOALS – QUANTIFICATION

MARKETING GOALS – QUANTIFICATION

OBJECTIVES

MARKETING ACTIVITY GOALS (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly)

DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	QUARTERLY	YEARLY

The process of **segmentation** is distinct from **targeting** (choosing which segments to address) and **positioning** (designing an appropriate marketing mix for each segment). The overall intent is to identify groups of similar customers and potential customers; to prioritize the groups to address; to understand their behavior; and to respond with appropriate marketing strategies that satisfy the different preferences of each chosen segment. Revenues are thus improved.

Improved segmentation can lead to significantly improved marketing effectiveness. Distinct segments can have different industry structures and thus have higher or lower attractiveness (Porter). With the

TARGET MARKETS

Core Markets

Secondary Markets

Opportunity Markets

DIFFERENTIATION & MESSAGING (Positioning)

In Marketing Management, Go-to-market strategy encompasses the channels that a company uses to connect with its customers/business and the organizational processes it develops (such as high tech product development) to guide customer interactions from initial contact through fulfillment.

GO TO MARKET STRATEGY

BUDGET

OBSTACLES

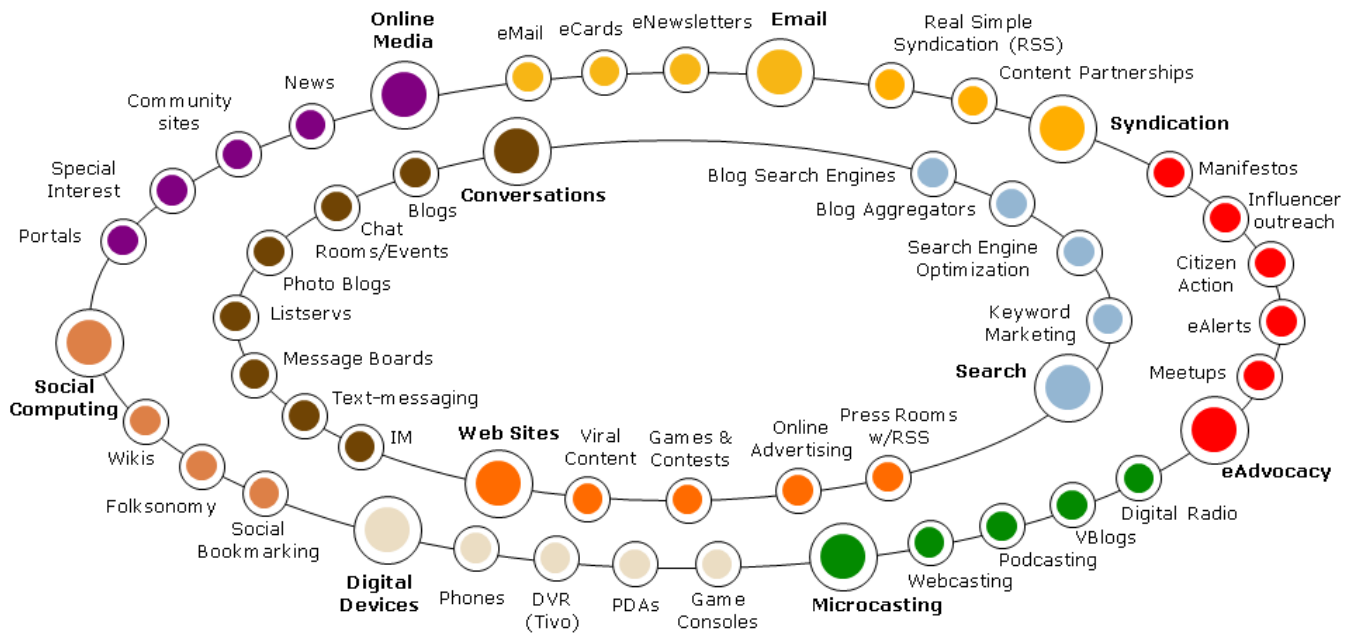
INFLUENCE & STAKEHOLDER MAPPING



TACTICS & TOOLS

There are a variety of tactics and tools that we can use to propel your organization forward. The tools selected below are subject to change.

DIGITAL TACTICS & TOOLS



PROGRESSIVE TACTICS SCHEDULE

Tactics Yearly

Tactics Quarterly

Tactics Monthly

Tactics Semimonthly (2x/Month)

Tactics Weekly

Tactics Daily

MARKETING CYCLES

Keeping a consistent and constant marketing presence is always a challenge for a startup with multiple priorities, all of them valid and equally pressing. It is for this reason that in addition to the calendared components, we run the marketing plan in 60 day segments or cycles. Each 60 segment is designed to build on the previous with the forced 'check in' at the end of 60 days to ensure that we're succeeding and taking time to regroup as necessary.

TACTICAL MARKETING PLAN – BY MONTH

JANUARY	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-31	

FEBRUARY	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-28	

60 DAY CYCLE REGROUP

- Did we meet our goals?
- What worked?
- Why?
- How effective was it?
- What do we need to change?
- What's on deck for the next 60 days?

MARCH	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-31	

APRIL	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-30	

60 DAY CYCLE REGROUP

- Did we meet our goals?
- What worked?
- Why?
- How effective was it?
- What do we need to change?
- What's on deck for the next 60 days?

MAY	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-31	

JUNE	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-30	

60 DAY CYCLE REGROUP

- **Did we meet our goals?**
- **What worked?**
- **Why?**
- **How effective was it?**
- **What do we need to change?**
- **What's on deck for the next 60 days?**

JULY	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-31	

AUGUST	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-31	

60 DAY CYCLE REGROUP

- **Did we meet our goals?**
- **What worked?**
- **Why?**
- **How effective was it?**
- **What do we need to change?**
- **What's on deck for the next 60 days?**

SEPTEMBER	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-30	

OCTOBER	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-31	

60 DAY CYCLE REGROUP

- Did we meet our goals?
- What worked?
- Why?
- How effective was it?
- What do we need to change?
- What's on deck for the next 60 days?

NOVEMBER	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-30	

DECEMBER	TACTICAL PLAN & TASKS
GOALS	
THEMES	
MAJOR EVENTS	
ACTIVITIES DAYS: 1-31	

60 DAY CYCLE REGROUP

- Did we meet our goals?
- What worked?
- Why?
- How effective was it?
- What do we need to change?
- What's on deck for the next 60 days?

There are hundreds of ways to get people talking, but you only need one really good one to propel your word-of-mouth marketing forward! To get started on building your digital word-of-mouth marketing plan, we'll work through the following Five T's worksheet.

The Five T's of Word-of-Mouth Marketing				
Talkers	Topics	Tools	Taking Part	Tracking
Step	What to Do	Examples	Your Plan	
Talkers	Find people who will talk about you	Fans, volunteers, customers, bloggers, influencers	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
Topics	Give people a reason to talk	Special offer, great service, cool product, silliness, neat ad, new feature	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
Tools	Helps the message spread faster and farther	Tell-a-friend form, viral email, blogs, handouts, samples, message boards, online communities	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
Taking Part	Join the conversation	Let staff surf and reply to comments, post on blogs, join discussions, answer email, offer personal service	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
Tracking	Measure and understand what people are saying	Search blogs, read message boards, listen to feedback, use advanced measurement tools	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

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Marketing Goal	Stimulating Marketing Ideas

Stimulating Marketing Ideas