



Marketing Wisdom

for 2008

101 Marketers & Agencies
Share Real-Life Stories &
Lessons Learned

by the Readers of MarketingSherpa



MarketingSherpa's Marketing Wisdom for 2008

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the sixth annual edition of our “Wisdom” report, featuring 101 stories and lessons learned from MarketingSherpa’s readers, all in their own words.

As in previous years, the Editorial team spent many hours poring over the hundreds of submissions, narrowing them down to the ones featured in this report. It wasn’t an easy task because we could tell how much time and effort many marketers put into their quotes. The topics covered in this year’s report touch every aspect in marketing – the old tactics (direct mail, advertising), the new ones (Web 2.0, mobile marketing) and everything in between (email, search, lead generation, customer service).

To serve as inspiration, this year’s report features dozens of real-life test campaign lessons and tips. Not all of them are big-sky ideas. In fact, it’s often the little ones that bring large payoffs. Take a look at this submission from Zane Safrit of Conference Calls Unlimited:

It’s the personal touch that adds meaning for a customer. It’s the almost intimate interactions with a customer where you show you care about them personally that create the wow, the happiness, the loyalty with your company. Our company has tried many splashy, value-added customer loyalty programs. ... However, at the same time, we had been sending a bouquet of flowers to our new customers welcoming them. And we had sent flowers to customers when they referred a prospect to us; inexpensive, easy to administer. They were also personal, flattering, an intimate way to say “welcome” or “thank you.” ... The response rate was nearly 100%. And as important, it inspired and rewarded our staff with the “thank yous” from those customers. The interactions moving forward were on that basis of personal appreciation. Marketing-speak, that means loyalty and referrals and word-of-mouth and evangelism. After comparing the two programs, big and splashy versus intimate and personal, we canceled the first and expanded the latter. The result was a happier, more engaged staff. We’ve seen a 20% increase in leads as compared to last year. Most of these added leads are from referrals.

As the Editorial team looked through the entries, similar themes kept reappearing. Here are three we noticed:

TREND #1. EMAIL – DON’T STOP CHANGING

Marketers continue to segment, customize, personalize, test, dabble with and tweak their emails. No one appears to be standing pat – although keeping emails simple with shorter subject lines continues to be a best practice as marketers work to boost open, clickthrough and conversion rates. Among the areas being dabbled with for emails are type of content, HTML versus text, video, quality of list and offers.

TREND #2. YEAR OF WEB 2.0

The whole story on the effectiveness of social networking is still being written chapter by chapter – despite plenty of successful marketing stories. Facebook and MySpace got the lion’s share of attention. But, with no tried-and-true ways to get involved just yet, just getting started seems to be the way to go for many marketers, with trial and error the best teacher to date.

TREND #3. TEST, TEST, TEST

Tweaking your marketing efforts through testing can make a real difference. Indeed, getting involved in any marketing effort without testing is very risky. Tests on timing, educational information versus sales pitches, and offers are among the top focuses of efforts.

A final note: As you read through your peers’ stories, think about your own campaigns and test results. Do you have a story other marketers could learn from? If so, let us know. We’re always looking for marketers to interview and test campaigns to cover.

We thank all of this year’s contributors. Your stories will serve as inspiration to tens of thousands of other marketers. May you have continued success in the New Year.



Tad Clarke
Editorial Director, MarketingSherpa
TadC@MarketingSherpa.com

PART 1:

Email

KEEP SUBJECT LINES SIMPLE

1 We've done several subject line tests for emails that try to get former subscribers to re-subscribe to our print magazines. They have stressed savings, low price, subscriber benefits, free gifts and even a bit of mystery. The consistent winner: 'We want you back.' Sometimes simple is the best marketing tactic.

Ernie Vickroy, Time Consumer Marketing Inc.

TRY, TRY AGAIN

2 With open rates down on both HTML- and text-based versions of my enewsletters, I decided to try something new. The day after an enewsletter goes out, I immediately segment the list by those who have opened and clicked through. I send a text message to all who didn't open or click to let them know the enewsletter is available to read online if they missed it the first time. This lifts the open rate of the first message by about 4% and adds another 3% to 5% who click from the text message to read the newsletter online.

Harry Hoover, My Creative Team,
<http://www.my-creativeteam.com>

VIRTUAL RAFFLE WORKS

3 In promoting one of our seminars this year, I decided that campaigns might benefit from a boost in the middle and an extra bit of oomph at the end. About midway through a five-week campaign, we sent personalized Event Update emails to those who had registered. They contained relevant information, such as the speaker and the menu, and announced a door prize. In the last phase, we discarded our standard (read: boring) reminder emails and designed a virtual raffle ticket. The ticket was required to enter the raffle; we even printed a small map and event directions directly on the 8.5-by-11 ticket. Open rates on the reminder email were over 90%, and nearly everybody who printed the ticket attended the event. Even better, only about 15% of attendees were current clients.

Will McClain, Network Instruments,
<http://www.networkinstruments.com>

SEGMENT SUBJECT LINES

4 Our house list is pop culture-friendly, and we have pretty deep user data. A client wanted

to send out an email promoting a big music festival they're involved with. This is our sweet spot, so we were confident of open rates and CTR. Still, we obviously wanted the best possible results. We created one big send criteria, then carved off as many segments as possible by associating users with band preferences (either directly or close matches) who were playing the festival. Segments ranged in size from 2,000 to 25,000, and subject lines name-checked the associated band. Content was identical. It will surprise no one that the targeted emails with artist-specific subject lines outperformed the more general send. What pleasantly surprised us was by how much: A couple emails were nominal improvements (and in fact, one under-performed the mass email), but most opens and clicks were two to three times better! Not only that, but un-subscribers were practically nonexistent.

Lisa Jenkins, Fanscape, <http://fanscape.com>

SHORTEN SUBJECT LINES

5 I saw in a MarketingSherpa report that short email subject lines (particularly of fewer than 35 characters) would impact response rates noticeably. So, I figured, 'Well, OK, let's test that.' The next email campaign we ran was a Web-based customer satisfaction survey. We sent identical email invitations (asking recipients to take the survey) to two different groups, selected randomly. The only difference between the emails sent was the subject line — one was shorter, the other was longer. While they had slightly different wording, they communicated the same message. (For reference, this was a B-to-B survey; the email invitations were sent to about 1,000 people, primarily male, all in the US, working in industrial settings; all text was in English.) The results speak for themselves: The shorter subject line had 38 characters and a 12.4% response rate. The longer subject line had 50 characters and a 7.9% response rate.

Andy Mindlin, REALWORLD Marketing Inc.,
<http://www.realworldmarketing.com>

'LAST CALL' EMAIL WORKS

6 Our company ran a campaign that focused around a pre-sale of a top 10 selling product that had gone through a major update. We promoted this product through banner advertisements, text links and landing pages like we usually do. Toward the end of the campaign, we decided to run one more email focusing solely on the expiration of the promotion. Instead of a basic HTML email with copy focusing on the date of the expiration, we decided to use our minds a little bit more. Our idea was to show a bartender with a big smile holding out our product over the bar with the words, 'Last Call.' The design was sharp, and the message was clear. This particular email campaign resulted in an over 20% open rate and an over 12% conversion rate!

Tim Brown, Active Web Group,
<http://www.activewebgroup.com>

LET 'EM CHOOSE CONTENT

7 Before 2007, our email strategy was basically batch, blast and pray. In the early months of 2007, we completely redesigned our email signup and checkout process, which included segmenting our email content into three lists and allowing people to pick and choose which content they wished to receive. We haven't seen too much of a change in our clickthroughs and opens (mainly because of a much-needed list cleaning), but email revenue increased by a whopping 25%, and our conversion rate nearly doubled.

Melanie Coombs, Fabric.com, <http://www.fabric.com>

START WITH HOUSE LIST

8 Use your house list! One of our clients has a house email list of more than 50,000 people. They had never used it. We created an email for that list based on successful landing page campaigns. They saw a 5x increase in sales the next day.

Ian Lurie, Portent Interactive,
<http://www.portentinteractive.com>

QUALITY OF LIST CRITICAL

9 I have learned a simple lesson from one direct email marketing campaign for one of my clients: The quality of lists is crucial to the result of the emailing. We used a very good list back in 2006, and the result was amazing: 86,000 promotional

emails sent and 700 conversions (registrations) were attained. This year, we sent 150,000 emails to a different list and got 100 registrations. Creativity and objectives of the email were identical since the client wanted it to be the same.

Silvia Soave, 34 Art, <http://www.34art.it/>

MAKE EMAILS PERSONAL

10 In 2007, we sent personalized emails directly from the sales account executive instead of a generic email address and received a 40% open rate. We also learned that it is not enough to blast a single message to all of our prospects as if they all had the same wants and needs. Personalizing and segmenting our email messages so our prospects would perceive the email topic as relevant to them individually really maximized the response. One week after the first blast, we increased our clickthroughs 75% when we re-blasted to recipients who had not initially opened or clicked through!

Kathryn Ross, Delta Dental of California

FOCUS ON TIMING

11 One of the bigger challenges that the ARS eCommerce Interactive Team faced in 2007 was convincing a client that timed events for an ecommerce site would be effective. Our client's thought against the event was that the email would not be actionable when it was deployed; therefore, no one would remember to come back to shop. There is a strategy in executing this, as you do not want to deploy too early or too late, so we have found that in doing a late-night type of event, sending on the day of the event within your normal deployment time (ours is 10 a.m. EST) works very well in driving traffic that evening. If the offer is strong enough, your customers will return to shop. We even tested this theory with big-ticket items, as they are high-involved purchase decision products. That email was in the top 10 revenue-generating emails of 2007; it was also the highest revenue generating email outside of a major holiday! While the offer was good (nothing extraordinary), I feel that the messaging mix of: a) exclusive for email customers, b) online only and c) limited-time — combined with the right timing of deployment — is the best formula for executing a late-night event.

Jenny Colon, ARS eCommerce,
<http://www.arsadvertising.com>

INVEST IN TOP RESPONDERS

12 Never underestimate the returns and cost savings to be had by aggressively segmenting out low-response recipients on your email lists. This holiday season we planned to send more email offers at greater intervals than ever before in our email campaigns. Although we regularly clean our lists of non-responsive recipients, we decided to get very aggressive at trimming our active list of low responders as we entered the peak cyber-selling days of the season. Our thinking was to invest in our most responsive recipients to allow us to send a greater number of emails while sticking to our budget versus trying to capture every last sale from the outliers. This approach allowed for a reduction in our master list size by 29%, improved open rate by 79%, improved clickthrough rate by 75% and boosted revenue for the period by 126%. Had we not employed this strategy and kept to our original budget and mailing frequency, we would have lost out on a significant chunk of our holiday email revenue. We now plan to go back and contact the low-response customers who were segmented out with an exclusive offer to see if we can rekindle their interest or purge them permanently from our list.

Steven Lamberti, Creative Labs, <http://www.us.creative.com>

CUSTOMIZE, TRY AGAIN

13 When we launched our redesigned customer newsletter during the tail end of the year, we expected a decent open rate. And we got it — about 40% of the customers opened it (with a 'From' address of Eloqua). So, we decided to add a new wrinkle to the campaign. A week after we sent the original version of the email, we went it with the 'From' address of their account manager, a FWD: added to the subject line and a personal note added to the top of the newsletter: "Firstname, I thought you'd be interested in our newsletter this quarter." We expected a little bit of a lift, but we were shocked and pleased to see that over a quarter of the people who hadn't opened the newsletter the first time (25.10%) now opened the forwarded version.

Steve Gershik, Eloqua, <http://www.eloqua.com>

TEST TARGET AUDIENCE

14 We work with clients from all over the world. Lots of Indian writers sign up at our website, and we have a huge network of writers who work on projects. Earlier this year, we had this brilliant idea. We wanted to expand India-reports to include information about startups in India. And we thought sending a newsletter would be an ideal way to kick off this idea. We decided to have a contest titled 'Ten Hottest Indian Startups.' We figured all we had to do was send out this newsletter announcing the contest, and writers would come in swarms to our website and pick their hottest startup. We could then come up with a list of the hottest Indian startups based on nominations from writers. Didn't we all deserve a pat on the back for dreaming up this idea? Apparently, our writers did not think so. The response to this newsletter was very poor. Our campaign received 10 responses, some of them from entrepreneurs eager to enter their own startup. Why did this happen? We made a huge mistake when we imagined we could motivate freelance writers to nominate Indian startups. Yes, there was a cash prize and all that. But we sent the newsletter to the wrong audience. Perhaps, if the same newsletter had been sent to a different set of people, it would have succeeded. We would never launch another brilliant campaign without a detailed analysis of our target audience.

Nishi Viswanathan, Chillibreeze Solutions Pvt Ltd.,
<http://www.chillibreeze.com>

SWEEPSTAKES MYTH BUSTED

15 We busted a myth that sweepstakes always build bad quality email lists. We learned that a well-targeted and well-executed sweepstakes can still be a great list builder. For one of our discount retail clients who did not have a single email address, we built a high six-figure list of promotion seekers in a few months by promoting the sweepstakes in offline channels, including in-store and NASCAR events. We got minimum opt-outs and above-average consistent clickthrough activity.

Kashif Zaman, ARS, <http://www.ThinkARS.com>

'CONTINUE' TO EDUCATE READER

16 Throughout 2006 and into 2007, we would send targeted campaign emails to thousands of leads in our system advertising new home sales,

financing incentives and more. The response rate, open rate, clickthrough rate and conversion rate remained the same from campaign to campaign. It didn't matter how steep of a discount or the call to action used, we still weren't seeing a significant difference. Then we made two changes that helped:

- Changing the 'Click here link' to read 'Continue.' This enhanced our clickthrough rate by 17%. Using 'continue' provides a teaser that there's more information and it isn't the typical 'Click here' link that you see on everyone's campaign.
- Providing beneficial general information rather than solely advertising our sale/incentive. We developed campaigns based on new area information, hot news topics, etc. rather than bluntly advertising something like 'Save Thousands Now.'

While we did incorporate a sale advertisement, the majority of the article was based on information most of our leads would want to learn more about. We did not provide any links in the general information but, of course, provided links to our sale campaigns. Our open rates increased by 33%, and our clickthrough rates increased by 18%.

Marissa Buckley, ICI Homes, <http://www.ICIHomes.com>

CONTENT MAKES DIFFERENCE

17 We looked at data from 50,000 emails we sent between July and December — recipients of our weekly marketing and fundraising tips newsletter for nonprofits. During that period, the average open rate was 35%, clickthrough rate was 12% and unsubscribe was 0.21%. We tested sending on different days (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday); single- and dual-column layouts and different calls-to-action: 'click here,' 'details here,' 'continue reading,' etc. What our data showed was that none of these variables had a significant impact on open and clickthrough rates. The single most important factor that contributed to higher open and clickthrough rates was content. The only weeks where unsubscribes were above average or open and clickthrough rates were below average were weeks where our content and calls-to-action were weak. So, for everyone who spends too much time worrying about the technical side of email marketing that will matter very little if your content is outstanding. We also learned a similar lesson from our landing pages. Landing

pages that offered content in return (i.e., a white paper, a newsletter subscription or a webinar), had an average completion rate of 35%, whereas landing pages related to product promotions had a conversion rate of 12%.

Jono Smith, Network for Good,
<http://www.fundraising123.org>

READERS LIKE HTML

18 During the summer of 2007, we had the best intentions when we created a text-only version of the newsletter. We took a page from some of our favorite newsletters, which feature simple designs and no images and drive readers to click through to get to the good stuff. We segmented our list and chose a portion to receive a very simple text newsletter. Our theory was that delivery and clickthrough rates would benefit. Turns out we were wrong. Our subscribers really like their HTML version. The metrics from the text-only test were dismal: the open rate was something like 1%, not even close to what we typically accomplish. We even got a letter of protest from one subscriber demanding we bring back her HTML. We did.

Amy Bills, Bulldog Solutions Inc.,
<http://www.bulldogsolutions.com>

ALWAYS RUN A TEST

19 The in-house version of CommuniGator's email marketing platform is always upgraded and tested before upgrades are rolled out to customers. As the marketing manager for the company, I use the in-house version and am the 'guinea pig' and test center as I use the software extensively on a daily basis. After one of our email marketing seminars, I sent out the feedback survey that had been previously used more than a dozen times. As I knew it had worked seamlessly before, I didn't test it. What I didn't realize was that there was a bug in the upgrade, and the personalization sent the feedback email to the name that was top of the alphabet in the campaign audience. Thus, for one day only, everyone in my audience was called 'Adam'! As you would expect, I received a lot of emails criticizing the personalization and our claims to be 'best practice.' I now ALWAYS test a campaign just prior to send, regardless of whether the email/survey/landing zone has been used before!

Amanda Clifford, CommuniGator,
<http://www.communigator.co.uk>

GIVE VIDEO A CHANCE

20 In 2007, we came up with the idea of adding video for our client — the Latin Builders Association newsletter. Loop Consulting Group recorded and produced the videos of their events. We then incorporated videos into their monthly enewsletter program. The results in clickthrough and organic search engine optimization have been phenomenal. Increases in clickthrough of 66% from one newsletter issue to another and first-page results for key words like 'LBATV' and 'Latin Builders Association' under Google Video search. We are always looking for ways to enhance enewsletter programs and incorporating video proved to be a great tactic.

Marcos J. Menendez, Loop Consulting Group,
<http://www.loopconsulting.com/>

DON'T BRIBE YOUR LEADS

21 We send regular eblasts to our lead list to encourage our leads to take 30 minutes for an online demonstration of our software application. We had a decent conversion ratio of the people who took the demo who signed up for our software. We wanted to try a new approach and sent out an A/B email to our lead list that included an offer of either a free \$20 coffee gift card or a complimentary spa visit. We found that our conversion ratio dropped when we offered a giveaway versus just offering our products. In a B-to-B situation, it would seem that business owners don't want a bribe.

Deb Lambert, MerchantAdvantage,
<http://www.merchantadvantage.com>

PART 2:

Web 2.0

MYSPACE GREAT SPACE

22 In January 2007 I decided to activate a MySpace account for our retail stores (my son runs this small chain and I provide marketing services to him). I wanted to see if we could increase the number of “friends” from 100 that were on the site created by an employee. We hired Brandon Sutton, a youth marketer, to redesign the site and work MySpace. Within three months, the friends were up to 1,200. By December, they were close to 2,200. We use MySpace to communicate with our customers promoting events, sales and products. For a small business, this is a great number. It took three years to grow our email list to 2,000. With the decline in email open rates and effectiveness, it is important to find additional inexpensive methods for getting the word out. Now we are looking into other social networks.

Harry Hallman, Bill Hallman Inc.,
<http://www.myspace.com/billhallman>

LETYOURSELF GO

23 2007 has been the year of the enhanced social networking sites. For some, these are seen as a threat to the carefully preened and protected business persona or a potential risk to security. The reality is that if you are making waves in your particular field, the interested external observer can track you through Google and has already started to piece a mental picture of the real you. The time is right to harness the communicative power of the social network sites like Facebook and Linked-In and unleash a real helping of the real you. The real you in the round is much more interesting than what we call in Scotland, the Hudun Doon business you – you know the held back, constipated junior lawyer or immigration ober-fuehrer! When you make contact in business, you are sized up in milliseconds by the sharp, savvy observer. Next you get to know each other as rounded people and often the coloration of your hobbies and life beyond work adds value to a relationship. I have played in rock bands since I was 14 and still do at 40 years on. I make no effort to hide it and this year the president of one the largest US conglomerates flew my band down to Spain to play at his wedding. We have done business since 1982! See, no harm done but much deep bonding made.

Ash Gupta, The Gupta Partnership,
<http://www.guptapartnership.com>

JUST GET STARTED

24 What to do with Facebook? That was the question our team of very pragmatic marketers had been working on for several weeks and months. Perhaps we are the “wrong generation” or the “wrong demographic,” but we were taking a wait-and-see approach. As a B-to-B services company, no one else was making a splash either, so time was on our side. The answer would come to us eventually, we just needed to be ready for when it did. And then we got an email from our recruiting team in Washington, DC: ‘Do you have any corporate-approved images we can use for our Facebook pages?’ We were stunned that it was so obvious to us that, of course, this was the PERFECT use of Facebook for our company. Timing was such that several of us were planning on being in DC the following week, and we met the team in person. These two recent college grads had been testing out the medium, had built networks, had tapped into a group of people in 20+ languages, such as Romani, and begun finding people, all in the time it took us to merely research what we should be doing in Facebook. I then asked our somewhat older HR recruiting leader if they had explored recruiting on Facebook, and the answer was a more than predictable ‘We are looking at it, but haven’t done anything yet.’ With these new emerging channels, sometimes you just have to get started and learn as you go. We had a corporate Facebook page up and running inside of 48 hours from that defining moment. It’s still not great and is really a placeholder while we figure it out. But we learned more in that 48 hours than we had in six+ weeks of research and planning.

Aaron Dun, Lionbridge, <http://www.lionbridge.com>

HANDS-ON APPROACH

25 My biggest lesson of 2007 was that hands-on is still the best way to learn marketing tactics. I had grumbled my way through 2006 about Web 2.0., blogs and podcasts. It was not until our agency created our own podcast, I worked on my social networking that I truly saw realistically the benefits, pitfalls and advantages they could have in certain customer discussions for my clients. It also makes recommending and/or explaining these technologies in layman’s terms to my clients so much easier.

Jeny Dowlin, amp branding, <http://www.ampbranding.com>

IT’S NOT FOR EVERYONE

26 I learned that Web 2.0 marketing (aka social media) is not appropriate for most of my clients. A web 1.0 marketing and advertising plan (search PPC, SEO, and display ads), effectively executed, will beat a social media effort 90% of the time in terms of driving visitors that convert.

David Culbertson, LightBulb Interactive,
<http://www.lightbulbinteractive.com>

TAKE BABY STEPS FIRST

27 I can tell you from experience that creating a corporate blog for a Fortune 500 company is one part big idea and nine parts down in the trenches, parsing the words of each entry for tone, content, nuance, legal ramifications, etc. Don’t let anyone tell you that executing social media strategies is easy because the tools are low-cost or free and user-friendly. Yes, blogs are creating a revolution in corporate communications, but it’s a revolution Corporate America is taking in baby steps.

Debbie Weil, Consultant & Author,
<http://www.debbieweil.com>

KEEP PITCHES RELEVANT

28 It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. There are few industries that value the quality and depth of a Rolodex as much as the public relations industry. But in the last year, I found out that the famous adage about who you know just isn’t so true anymore. In the span of a year, I managed to secure quality coverage for several clients in a range of leading vertical and business publications, most notably The Wall Street Journal, without the aid of a strong Rolodex. Instead, I relied on a strategy of pitching relevant and targeted news content to a select group of journalists and bloggers that define my clients’ industries. Although I have had cases where coverage was secured with the help of a previous relationship, I have also had cases where the existence of the relationship failed to produce the desired coverage. However, a consistent strategy of intelligently pitching relevant news to targeted journalists and bloggers always resulted in press coverage that kept my clients happy this year.

Uriah Av-Ron, Oasis Public Relations,
<http://www.oasis-pr.com>

PART 3:

Search Marketing

KEEP YOURSELF CURRENT

29 We found three things worked best for us, bringing us more than 1 million page views per year:

- Working the keywords, customizing them for every one of our 900 pages.
- Keeping up to date and accurate so that people in the industry as well as people interested in travel came to us as a source of information.
- Sending out news releases and articles which not only picked up clients directly but also got picked up by the search engines.

Well, maybe a fourth thing — responding promptly and sincerely to all emails. A smile and good service are good PR no matter what your business.

Shirley Linde, Small Ship Cruises,
<http://www.SmallShipCruises.com>

REFERRALS A GODSEND

30 One of my goals at the beginning of the year was to increase traffic and, thus, subscribers. I had noticed that many of my colleagues were focusing on search engine traffic. Assuming this would also be a good strategy for me, I spent months learning and applying SEO tactics. And my results were pretty successful — traffic increased 80% over a six-month period. Then, I figured out how to track my conversions (visitors that actually subscribe) using Google Analytics. And I discovered that my conversion rate was abysmal! I made some changes to my site that made it easier and more enticing to subscribe — and upped my conversion rate 400%. It was just a month ago that I looked more closely at the source of my conversions. I discovered that my conversion rate with traffic referred from other sites was five times the conversion rate from search engine traffic. So, although my total search engine traffic was more than double my referral traffic — the latter was contributing twice as many subscribers! In the new year, I'll be focusing on increasing referral traffic. I don't regret the time and energy I spent on SEO, but I have learned a lesson about basing my strategy on conventional wisdom or what is the hot new thing (think YouTube, social networking, Twitter, etc.) From now on, I'll be testing on a small scale and measuring results first, before committing a big chunk of my time and budget to a particular strategy!

Terri Zwierzynski, Solo Entrepreneur, <http://www.solo-e.com>

SEO MAXIMIZES LITTLE THINGS

31 SEO isn't doing one thing perfectly; it's doing 200 little things well.

Dan Perry, <http://www.danperry.com>

OPTIMIZE EVERYTHING

32 We were faced with a B-to-B client who handles a large number of products on a wholesale basis. The problem was that these were technical products and their website had more than 10,000 PDF documents that were scans of CAD files — images rather than text. The issue was that these weren't indexable by the search engines. In addition, we discovered that potential customers were downloading the PDFs as reference materials, which was fine except that once they were downloaded, a direct connection to our client's site was lost. The solution was two-pronged: For each PDF, use Adobe Acrobat to access the metadata for the file and add appropriate keywords. Then embed a live link into each that includes an email link, a phone number and a link back to the website. We trained an administrative assistant to make these changes, which took a few months of extra time. The result? A steady \$1 million per year ecommerce site jumped to \$250,000 a month, nearly tripling sales. The PDFs added a huge search presence for very specific product numbers and descriptions. And those embedded links were a significant source of traffic. To supplement this, we did a long-tail PPC campaign on all of the product stock keeping units. Moral to this? Optimize everything including PDF image files.

Martin Edic, Supernatural Agency Inc.,
<http://blog.supernaturalagency.com>

PPC PAYS WITH TEXT

33 Flash-only landing pages killed our Google AdWords Quality Score. As soon as we sent the pay-per-click traffic to text-rich content pages within the site, the client's minimum cost per click was reduced by 85% as the AdWords Quality Score shot up!

Omar Al-Hajjar, Cossette, <http://www.Cossette.com>

PATIENCE PAYS OFF

34 When you're starting out, don't expect flicking the switch on Google AdWords will open the floodgates. It takes time and effort to

hone your ads and build credibility with your ad quality and relevance. It also takes time to build your ranking on Google organic search (obviously), but it's always more time than you'd like it to be.

Jeni Oye, Oye Modern, <http://www.oyemodern.com>

PICK YOUR SPOTS

35 Dynamic keyword insertion was a powerful tool, giving marketers the ability to serve a single ad for hundreds or thousands of keywords. While working on a pay-per-click campaign for an Internet retailer in the fourth quarter of 2007, I heard from a Yahoo! Search Marketing account executive that dynamic keyword insertion helped the clickthrough rate and 'Quality Ranking' of ads when used in the copy. Taking the advice straight from Yahoo! (and at the urging of my client), I quickly added ad copy to the active campaigns using dynamic keyword insertion in the body of my ad texts. The resulting figures from Yahoo! supported the claim: clickthrough rates and average positions had improved. It seemed obvious that the more references to the exact keyword in the ad, the more likely a user is to perceive it as relevant, but now it seemed I had evidence that Yahoo! favored it as well by elevating 'Quality Rankings.' Pleased with the results, my client insisted that we repeat this process in Google. Knowing how much activity Google accounts can receive in comparison I was hesitant, but at the urging of my client and armed with my evidence from Yahoo! I proceeded with the adoption of the strategy to our AdWords accounts. What happened next was unbelievable. The ads performed very well for the first 48 hours after the new copy was uploaded using the dynamic keyword insertion in the ad body. Clickthrough rates were higher than ever. Cost per sale dropped as a result, and things were looking great. Then, on the third day, the daily numbers plummeted. I called the AdWords Account Executive and inquired about the recent drop, wondering what happened to our recent trend of success. A week passed with each day consistently returning below-average results from AdWords. In a last-ditch effort, with no hard evidence to go on, we reversed the change we had made to the ad copy and restored the account to its previous state. In the following weeks, the account trended back to normal. Along with the recovery in ad performance, we also eventually had answer from Google. The AdWords account executive told me that the engineers

had isolated the problem: Once we uploaded the ads, they were live for 48 hours while undergoing editorial review. It is during this probation period that AdWords uses performance data to determine your ads quality score. Turns out, dynamic keyword insertion can make your ads extremely irrelevant on the Content Network, regardless of whether or not you use it. Our ads were pushed down in ranking and, as a result, we witness a drop in clickthrough rate, ranking and clicks. The moral of my story: What's good for Yahoo! is not necessarily good for Google.

Aaron Smith, Brulant, <http://www.Brulant.com>

SET UP SITE FOR ANALYSIS

36 In 2007, I found my company was getting lots of leads for us to fix their pay-per-click efforts. Some businesses were using Google's quick launch (not recommended), others were started by employees or business owners who knew nothing about spending their dollars in a volatile environment such as pay per click. It was not surprising to see how easy it was for them to get burned by not being aware of the pitfalls of starting off campaigns, not knowing where their clicks came from or how to manage the intricate details necessary for a successful campaign. The best advice I have for companies wanting to start with PPC is to initially get the campaign designed by a PPC professional as well as monitoring it for a few months to get the account up to speed. The next piece of advice/lesson is to set the site up for effective ongoing analysis using analytics programs and conversion tracking. It was amazing to see many companies not using any type of analytics or lead analysis. I can't understand how some companies would even consider making blind decisions about their website traffic when they know nothing of the goings on within their site.

Pauline Pageau, SearchWerx, <http://www.searchwerx.com>

PPC GIVES GREAT ROI

37 As technology continues to play a pivotal role in marketing today, we spent the majority of our 2007 marketing budget on pay-per-click advertising. Although paying up to \$15 per keyword and spending thousands of dollars a month on Google and Yahoo! is hard to swallow, we traced back about \$450,000 in revenue attributed to these campaigns. With a 1,285% return on investment,

we will continue to spend the majority of our 2008 marketing budget on pay-per-click advertising.

Emily Seagren, Ticomix Inc., <http://www.ticomix.com>

BID SMARTER ON ADS

38 We manage one of our client's paid search initiatives and, as part of that management, we conduct multiple tests per month. One such test was to test the bidding of their branded terms versus non-branded terms. What this means is our client was paying for key phrases that included their company name and a more generic key phrase, (i.e., Country Wide home loans versus home loans or first-time buyer mortgage). We removed their company name for the key phrases and increased the bids for the generic key phrases and ran a one-month test. Results: increased customer acquisition rate of 138.1% and a decrease in customer acquisition cost of 57.9%

Clark, eNautics, <http://www.eNautics.com>

CONCENTRATE ON KEYWORDS

39 We rely on pay per click in Google and Yahoo! to drive the majority of our e-commerce business. We started 2007 bidding on more than 150 keywords. At that time Yahoo! changed their platform. It became clear we were not getting the ROI we needed in either Yahoo! or Google. We could no longer afford to maintain higher positions on that many keywords. So, we began testing and modifying our keywords, descriptions and ad copy. We also created a list of more than 250 negative keywords. At the end of 2007, we are bidding on just 21 keywords. Our clickthrough rates have more than doubled, and the quality of our clicks has greatly improved. Gone are the days of casting the wide net.

Jeff Taxdahl, Thread Logic, <http://www.thread-logic.com>

TIE KEYWORDS TO SALES

40 Branded terms seemed to show the greatest amount of return for one of our clients. However, the client wondered how many people actually searched a non-branded keyword first and then actually converted on a branded keyword. With our proprietary technology platform, we were able to track the full conversion path of a client. Using those results, we are now able to determine that a certain percentage of people

actually search on a non-branded keyword and then return to the site on a branded keyword resulting in a sale. This is invaluable information since we now know what keyword to associate the sale with.

Anonymous

OPTIMIZE KEYWORD SEARCH

41 For a credit repair provider, we were very dominant in the search space and had a huge keyword portfolio with most keywords in positions 1 or 2. When we racked our brains about where else we could get more sales, we went back to the core product — the website. Since Google launched its Website Optimizer, we have been adamantly using it on many of our pages. We tested different strategies on different areas of the keyword portfolio until we found winning pages for each area. This has resulted in a 12.35% lift in overall site conversions and a happy client.

Charlene Iniguez, WebMetro, <http://www.webmetro.com>

TRACK ASSIST CONVERSIONS

42 I learned to give significant value to keywords that assist conversions. I used to always just optimize keywords on conversions and not give any value to other keywords that the customers came in on but did not convert. A home appliance provider was one of the first sites that we tracked assist data for all the venues. Currently, in the venues we track, assist keywords for Yahoo! only. Our proprietary system allows us to track assist keywords in all the venues. By tracking assist conversions, we determined that customers take about two days from the first time they click on a paid search ad to the time they convert. Aside from that, many of our conversions consist of customers that have searched using two to seven different keywords. Customers are doing their research!

Anonymous

BUILD ONE KEYWORD AT A TIME

43 The issue we faced in 2007 was a continual process of client education. No silver bullets, magic dust or large checkbook can make that much of a difference especially if following practical, safe and measured guidelines. Case in point, a client who has been holding at #3 for the past three years asked why they have been paying SEO fees and they hadn't moved up to #2 or magical #1? In

a high SERP term and others scrambling to notch up, in essence, they are paying SEO fees to have us maintain their position. Although this sounds like we're doing nothing, we're active and closely monitoring to make sure nothing does change! Short gain or a long fall, we chose to keep tight. We stopped stirring the stew on this one page 100% since the results we wanted have been achieved. Others might be tempted to tweak one last bit; we've chosen to educate the client that being #3 is as good as #1 and allow us to go after additional terms ranking 30+. Or put another way, in SEO math terms, five 8s equal one 1. The client now understanding this allows us to broaden our keyword selections versus focusing on one term alone — that one magic bullet to success. Building the website one brick at a time, once the brick is firmly in place, it's then OK to choose another from the pile and get that in one place and stop adjusting the first one. Build for the long term, educate the client and not tweak yourself into a pile of rubble.

David Hallmark, CrystalVision, <http://www.cvwip.com>

LINK KEYWORD TO PHONE ORDER

44 In 2007, I learned how to measure telephone orders generated by Internet marketing. One of our customers does a lot of pay-per-click advertising, but the sale often takes place over the phone. To capture the referrer/keyword associated with those telephone sales, we made a small, unobtrusive word in the bottom of every page into an html link. It links to a 'Thank you for your telephone order' page. We also set up that page as a goal in our analytics. Now when the customer service reps take a telephone order, they ask the customer to please click on that link (if the customer is sitting in front of a computer) and, suddenly, we are able to measure search engines and keywords and referrers for most telephone orders.

Robbin Steif, LunaMetrics, <http://www.lunametrics.com>

PART 4:

Mobile Marketing

REALITY TRUMPS REVOLUTION

45 If you believe the hype in 2006 and early 2007 about mobile marketing, you might have been brainwashed into believing that 2007 was the year of the mobile marketing revolution. Real lessons come from testing the hype against reality, and we ran a brief survey on tween sensitivity to mobile marketing and advertising. The answers were a severe grounding in reality and a popping of the hype bubble. Time and time again, users preferred no advertising at all, or opt-in advertising only for services where there was a clear benefit much greater than the perceived cost of the interruption or invasion of privacy/personal space. The reason? Data plans cost money, receiving MMS or SMS messages imply costs to the user, which are added to the interruption costs of the distraction of the message.

Duane Kuroda, EJM Wireless Research,
<http://ejlwireless.com>

PART 5:

Landing Page & Website Design

IMAGESTOPTEXT

46 Our initial mission was to drive consumers to our website, actualme.com, to convert a minimum of 200,000 consumers to complete our MindSet Assessment (personality test) and opt in to our Privacy Statement. The initial landing page featured a new actualme logo, an image of Sigmund Freud and a long description. The initial landing page converted the search traffic at 16.52%. A second, similar landing page was tested with less copy. The second landing page converted traffic at 26.81%. A third landing page was tested featuring four consumer images to resemble the four key personality types (Interactor, Concluder, Synthesizer and Analyzer) derived from the MindSet Assessment. This third landing page converted the search traffic at 29.25%.

Dennis Damio, ThinkingCraft, <http://www.thinkingcraft.com>

BEWARE OF HUNCHES

47 We'll describe this client as a retailer of budget-priced toys. The retailer depends on sales driven by searches on their vendor brands (think Hasbro, Mattel). The retailer asked RKG for help optimizing a primary landing page for key vendor brands. RKG reviewed the page and mined site analytics to identify several elements that appeared to be sabotaging conversion. Lengthy copy, generic benefits and sparse links made it difficult to find specific products and a reason to buy here. We offered a simple hypothesis: Improving access to purchasable product and emphasizing retailer-specific benefits would increase page conversion. Next, we helped the retailer design a new page with revised copy, headlines, and increased product link density. Google's Website Optimizer tool was used to create and serve four combinations of the page elements to more than 1,200 unique visitors. The winning combination of tested elements delivered a whopping 55% increase in conversion! One of the most interesting aspects of this test was seeing exactly which elements helped conversion and which hurt. (Did we build a more successful page? Yep. Was our hunch about which element of the new design would contribute most to conversion right? Nope!) These discoveries are only possible with testing.

Larry Becker, The Rimm-Kaufman Group,
<http://www.rimmkaufman.com>

LITTLE CHANGES, BIG DIFFERENCE

48 Nonprofits are always flying by the seat of their pants. We decided last year to shelve the cleverness to pursue rigorous testing of our donation landing pages in advance of the busy year-end fundraising season. We hired the folks at Interwoven who provided us with software that could run multivariate tests on almost anything and net statistically valid results. We were amazed how tiny changes could make a huge impact. Some of our lessons learned:

- Use a vivid, high-contrast submit or donate button instead of the typical gray button.
- Remove as many fields as possible from the form. We found that removing the title and suffix yielded almost a 30% bump in completion rates.
- Use a Verisign logo next to the submit button.

Some of these may seem obvious, but for a nonprofit, it was an eye-opening experience to see how significant these little changes were. Of more importance, how important it is for us to test, test, test!

Steve Daigneault, Amnesty International USA,
<http://www.amnestyusa.org>

SHORT IS SWEETER

49 When we decided to try Google's Website Optimizer for the first time, we picked our registration page, which contained a blurb about the benefits of membership, a graphic, and the form. Our website is for sports fans, and the copy listed six benefits in bullet form. In our test, we came up with a test copy with six somewhat different bullet points and then another one with three points. Turned out our very short copy with three points converted 40% higher than the original and the alternative six-point copy tanked. We had thought that people would've liked to know all the benefits but I guess they prefer short and sweet!

Jenny

'CLICK TO PLAY' A WINNER

50 We tested product videos on our top 10 revenue-generating products. After several rounds of iteration improving the load experience, we settled on a three-level test: no video, autoplay and click to play. Both video conditions resulted in

conversion gains, but the click-to-play version was dramatically superior. In addition to a 35% increase in conversion for the products with videos, the transaction funnel became much straighter. In other words, users who chose to click to play a video and then added it to cart were much more likely to complete the checkout.

Andy Edmonds, My Wedding Favors,
<http://www.myweddingfavors.com>

TRACK SPECIAL OFFERS

51 I suggest continually tracking and measuring the effectiveness of a special offer. We had a special offer that was only accessible via a landing page. After a period of time, we reviewed the number of completions and noticed that we were not receiving as many contact names as we had anticipated. By adding the special offer to our standard website, we improved our completion rate by 50%. Since we added a unique promotional code to the special offer link on our standard site, we are now able to compare whether the completions are generated via the landing page or the standard website.

Sarah Kulas, Yaskawa Electric America Inc.,
<http://www.yaskawa.com>

STRESS SITE SEARCH

52 In 2007, we foundetailers who focus on site navigation capabilities, particularly site search, can grow revenues and build brand more successfully than even we initially thought. Through an international consumer survey we conducted, we learned:

- Almost all online shoppers (96%) find a site's search function of importance. This is supported by the fact that 73% of shoppers will leave a site within a minute or two of not finding the product(s) they seek.
- 40% said they would never return to that site.
- 56% said they would only come back if the site offered completely unique items.

While we knew site search was critical to the ecommerce experience, we were still surprised at how high the numbers were. The lesson learned is that consumers have become more adept at shopping on the Web and expect a seamless ecommerce experience from the sites they visit. Thus, retail sites must present shoppers with what

they're looking for in a matter of seconds or risk losing a sale and, even worse, losing a customer for good. According to the more than 800 online shoppers we polled, the sites that do will increase customer loyalty, compete more effectively and experience greater prosperity throughout the year.

Geoff Brash, SLI Systems, <http://www.sli-systems.com>

paid for the testing several times over. In 2008, the testing period will be extended to allow an optimal solution to be ready right before this spike in traffic happens!

Frans Keylard, Widemile Inc., <http://www.widemile.com>

OPTIMIZE AROUND HOLIDAYS

53 A common myth in all Web marketing, particularly etail, is that you should freeze all Web page optimization efforts around the holiday season, since this potentially displays lower-performing page versions to a number of visitors and, also, any change to the site is seen as a risk of something going terribly wrong during the most crucial part of the year. This thinking cannot be farther from the truth, and actually there is much more risk and likelihood of leaving substantial revenue and margin on the table by going with the status quo and not optimizing. The keys: Have an optimal page in place just in time for the bulk of the shopping traffic, and use that optimal page as a baseline the next year. The traffic in the weeks leading up to holiday events such as Thanksgiving and Christmas can be excellent indicators of the motivations and intentions of your customers. Optimize during this lead-in period so you can have an optimal page in place as the bulk of the traffic ramps up. Analyze the previous year's traffic data by day and week to better understand this bell-shaped shopping pattern and plan around this period for every significant yearly buying event for your product. Optimize around customer segments and holiday-specific messaging instead of the generic messaging you might use the rest of the year and you will be able to see distinct lifts between the original pages and the optimal pages. We recently performed a multivariate test on a page that advertised recipes, and the recipe that performed best in the summer was outperformed by Thanksgiving-specific messaging by more than 50%. The traffic peak occurred on the two days before Thanksgiving and on Thanksgiving Day itself; this peak resulted in over 10-fold daily traffic volumes compared to the period leading up to Thanksgiving. The optimal page performed even better against the baseline when buyer motivation was at its highest during these spikes. The numbers of potentially lost conversions on Thanksgiving day alone, had the standard page been left in place,

PART 6:

Top Tests

TEST YOUR TIMING

54 We had a B-to-B client who was sending out email campaigns very early in the morning (4 a.m. Pacific). Based on intuition and virtually all industry best practices, we thought sending the emails later in the morning would improve results. However, when we tested, we found the early morning email performed about 20% better. It confirmed that no matter what your gut or best practices say, you should still test, test, test.

Tim Bay, Shay Digital, <http://www.shaydigital.com>

TEST TIMING TO TARGETS

55 Forget what you've heard about best days to send an email blast and test it yourself. We recently moved our email blast day from a weekday to the weekend. While our open rate did not fluctuate much, our conversions went up. Our audience of Web Photo School members are made up of creative people – most who have rigorous schedules during the week and enjoy pursuing their photography hobby on the weekends. Communicating with this demographic on the weekends when they have the time and are more receptive to the offer makes sense for us.

Tracey, Web Photo School, <http://www.webphotoschool.com>

EDUCATION TOPS PROMOTION

56 I knew I had a great campaign; the right message and the right offer at the right time targeted to the right audience. All of my research, from analyst briefings to industry publications, said that this was a topic for which my audience was hungry. So, why four weeks after my direct mail drop and email follow-up were my results languishing? Instead of simply counting my campaign out, I decided to follow my gut and test the message by changing the focus of my communications from promotional to educational. Beginning seven weeks after my initial campaign drop, I began sending a series of relevant news articles from newspapers and industry publications about the dangers of security breaches when using a specific open-protocol technology to my audience. Each email used a variation of "In the News" followed by the name of the publication in the subject line. The very first email in this new strategy had a 13% open rate compared with the 5% open rate for the promotional version. Every three weeks after that first educational email, I

sent a new email highlighting yet another breach incident reporting. All of the emails, which were typically no more than three paragraphs long, included a link to the article as well as two links to my campaign microsite. Over the course of three months, I saw a 15% improvement in the number of registrations on the campaign site. By changing the focus from promotional to educational, I was able to salvage my campaign, increase its overall effectiveness and begin an ongoing dialogue with my target audience.

Tracy Bramlet, Sterling Commerce

TWEAKYOURTIMING

57 Sometimes it just takes a small tweak to your strategy to increase results. As a sole trader/entrepreneur, I had committed to making five cold calls a day regardless, to network and develop new business. I used to make them in the morning from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and was getting to speak to who I wanted to about 50% of the time. But my conversion rate, whether for my free intro, was very poor, less than 5%. Simply changing to between 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. as indicated by a MarketingSherpa report, increased my conversion rate to 25%.

Nick Kettles, Brand Beautiful, <http://www.brandbeautiful.com>

KEEP OFFERS SIMPLE

58 Simple offers are working for us. Whenever we tested premiums for response or order, it didn't affect response — or drove it down.

Todd Petracek, RISI, <http://www.risiinfo.com>

PART 7:

Business-to-Business

USE TRIED AND TRUE

59 Don't give up on a marketing message or a topic just because you're personally tired of it. It might seem old to you, but it still might be fresh and relevant to your audience. In 2006, IndustryWeek produced a webcast featuring a noted speaker on the topic of Six Sigma. The event got more than 1,800 registrants and 800 attendees — a huge webcast. The sponsor was thrilled. Almost exactly a year later in 2007, the same sponsor approached IndustryWeek again and wanted to do another webcast with the same speaker, same sponsor and very similar content. Going into this event, I was expecting the audience's reaction to be lukewarm. I knew the content was still good, but I predicted the results would be weaker because we had done such a similar event before. I was wrong. We got 1,800 registrants and 800 attendees again — and the overlap between the two audiences was only 13%.

Michael Madej, IndustryWeek (Penton Media Inc.)
<http://www.industryweek.com>

KEEP FORMS SIMPLE

60 In B-to-B, keeping the web forms simple and inviting by not requiring (or showing) the address information generated 19% more conversions.

Anonymous

RECORD WEBINARS

61 Recording our webinars yielded valuable marketing content that we've included in marketing communications, such as emails, website, etc.

Marc Sobul, eFax Corporate - j2 Global Communications,
<http://www.efaxcorporate.com>

LET CONSULTANT TELEMARKET, TOO

62 My marketing and communications firm does quite a lot of direct marketing for our clients. The campaign is a five-step process, with telemarketing the final step. Because the last step is also the most expensive, clients argue that they can do the telemarketing in-house. Here is what we have learned: When we manage and execute on the entire five-step campaign, ROI averages 20% or more. When a client takes on the telemarketing, ROI drops to 5% or less. Like everything else in marketing, execution matters.

Lewis Green, L&G Business Solutions,
<http://lgbusinesssolutions.typepad.com>

PART 8:

Lead Generation

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

63 The critical importance of aligning sales with marketing was never more apparent to me than at this fall's DMA show. I found it ironic that a conference dedicated to the practice of delivering focused messages to targeted audiences had so few exhibitors actually practicing this concept. In row after row, I saw booths that made it difficult to identify the company or brand. They either had so little copy you had no idea what the company did, or so much text it resembled a 20-page brochure ... and those that were so nondescript, you passed by without a glance. Most disturbing was the lack of interaction and salesmanship by the booth personnel. My colleagues and I estimated that less than 10% of the booth staff tried to make eye contact. Many were standing talking to one another ignoring potential leads, talking on cell phones or simply looking bored and disinterested. We entered booth after booth and exited without sales personnel ever speaking to us. When we attempted to interact with the staff, a surprising number of booth personnel gave us startled looks and had to scramble for a response to the basic question: 'So, what do you folks do?' Lesson learned? You can't sell what you don't know. To maximize the ROI from your trade show investment, make sure your booth personnel know what they are supposed to accomplish when there, understand and can deliver your marketing message and have been trained on how to engage and qualify a potential lead.

Barbara Reed, Terra3 Communications.
<http://www.terra3communications.com>

FISH IN FRESH WATERS

64 The biggest lesson learned in 2007 was simple and seems obvious but made a big impact regarding lead generation. Our company has an excellent marketing machine and delivers high-quality work. They understand the goal of marketing is to deliver new leads that result in new business. As Manager of the Demand Generation and Inside Sales Team, my goal is to convert those leads into pipeline or closed business. We began to look at the numbers and concluded we were fishing from the same pond over and over again. We did not have a large, organic database. And, since 90% of our marketing is online, we really needed that email database to be complete. We at least needed to understand its level of completeness. With a budget of \$2,000, we conducted a test.

We purchased an email list for our target audience from Jigsaw (they are not the only provider but a good one). We targeted the West Coast, bumped that list against our existing database to compare how large our database was versus our target universe, and executed an email test, followed by targeted calling. We found we only had about 20% of the universe we could go after. We had deliverability and clickthrough rates that equaled our opt-in database, and we were reaching the right audience. This campaign cost less than \$2,000 and generated three new opportunities representing \$150,000+ in annual incremental revenue.

Michele Houde McMahon, Procuri Inc.,
<http://www.procuri.com>

DON'T MAKE THEM QUALIFY

65 This year, we learned that customers will opt in or register for raffle campaigns if the prizes are lucrative enough, but registration could potentially be very low if they have to do something to qualify. As an example, we attempted to tie a 15-minute online product training certification requirement into a raffle, including the same types of prizes as a raffle that didn't have a certification requirement. The response rate was one-fourth of that received when certification wasn't required.

Beth Barone, Sony Electronics Inc.

DETAILS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

66 I won two significant new consulting clients with two principles that I will always remember. First: KISS, as in Keep It Simple, Stupid. When pitching a new business idea to the CEO of a \$100 million distribution company, I first made the mistake of getting too technical and detailed in my presentation. You could see the eyes glaze over! I quickly realized that, as CEO, he has an overall understanding of hundreds of issues, but not a detailed understanding. So, some lessons learned:

- Avoid jargon. It makes you sound stupid.
- Use analogies or easy to follow examples to prove your point.
- Speak in high levels, with enough details to let the CEO know that you know what you're doing, but not too many details that you convey an attitude.

Rather than trying to show off my detailed knowledge of a subject, I changed course by

keeping the pitch free of jargon and fine detail. I got the account. The second point is DARK: Don't Assume the Reader Knows, a phrase handed down to me by the great Gene Bylinsky of Fortune Magazine. In speaking to a client on a difficult Web project, we glossed over some key details about order entry and order confirmation. While the client had a terrific Web-based order-entry system, he had his own ideas about how orders needed to be collected and processed. Big mistake! We ended up spending several thousand dollars of extra programming time to redo our mistake. The lesson here: We assumed we were on the same page because we got a cursory approval instead of a detailed explanation!

David Brooks, SPS Group Inc., <http://www.spsgc.com>

FINE-TUNE CONTACT TOUCHES

67 Carefully managed multimedia, multitouch campaigns contributed to a 35% increase in leads for clients in 2007. The use of carefully scripted voicemails and well-written emails (watch subject lines!) as well as monitoring the number of touches per contact based on the type and size of the company and the level of decision-maker, substantially increased lead yields!

Dan McDade, PointClear, <http://www.pointclear.com>

INBOUND LEADS ARE AWESOME

68 I am always amazed at the quality of the leads from inbound marketing – our close rate is five times higher for the leads that find us on the Web. We're still doing some outbound marketing like direct mail, email and tradeshows, but for next year we're going to spend as much as possible on inbound marketing and then anything left over will go to other outbound programs.

Mike Volpe, HubSpot, <http://www.HubSpot.com>

CAN'T BEAT CUSTOMIZED WEBCASTS

69 Most of our early leads had a keen interest in seeing our product in action. Being a relatively new solution, people just wanted to quickly know if we could solve their problems. So, we came up with a weekly, 15-minute webinar where we just played a pre-recorded product demo and then answered questions live. We promoted the webinars via our website and some industry pubs. The first week had a few people (three or four),

and then attendance quickly fell to zero before we pulled the plug after five or six weeks. The lesson I learned was that it's hard enough to get people to commit to a one-time webinar, let alone one that they know will be shown again next week as well. Without any urgent need to see it now, they just probably got busy and figured that they would tune in next week and then finally forgot. With the low volume of attendees, our time would have been better spent in one-on-one sessions versus canned, flat recordings. Next time, I'll put the effort into something more creative.

Jason R.

MAKE INVITATIONS SPECIAL

70 I was able to increase the number of visitors to my booth by sending a postcard invitation to the pre-registration list two weeks before the show. The increase occurred when the invitation also doubled as an entry into a special drawing for something more valuable than the average fish bowl drawing. The fish bowl drawing was for a \$50 gift card. The invitation drawing was for an iPod. I have received as many as 20% of the postcard invitation/entries returned to me. But, more importantly, attendees are searching me out and have been to the website I listed on the postcard and I get to present more information to them as opposed to the drive-bys who drop their card in the fish bowl and quickly move on.

William Porter, Ansaphone Service Inc.,
<http://www.ansaphone.com>

LINK PHONE NUMBERS, CHANNELS

71 We are an interactive agency based in London and New York. One of our clients is a major secured loan provider and, for the past 24 months, we've been running display advertising across a variety of sites with mixed results measured by clickthrough and cost per conversion. The resultant loan applications were never high (as a direct result of the banners themselves) but we did know that they were having an impact on brand awareness and Google searches. With a new site being developed for the client, we decided to create a dynamic, traceable telephone number that changed depending on what channel delivered you to the site. For example, a different telephone number would show if you arrived via a Google pay-per-click campaign then it would

if you clicked through from a banner. After three months of testing, the results were collated. To our surprise (and to the client's delight), it appeared that a massive number of people who clicked on a banner and arrived at the site didn't bother with the online application form but instead used the telephone number to make the application. The results showed a 20-fold lift in applications if measured directly against the previous clicks-to-applications from banners. Now banners show a far more positive cost per acquisition when measured against other media. Lesson learned? Banners ARE a great way to deliver results as long as your site has a quick-fix call to action (i.e., a phone number that can be tracked to the campaign).

Fadi Shuman, Pod1, <http://www.pod1.com>

DON'T IGNORE OLD LEADS

72 Most salespeople tend to focus on the high-probability, 'hot leads' who recently came in the door. They don't have time to stop and sweep through a list of aged leads on a regular basis. SoftVu recently completed a meta-study, compiling four years worth of data across 38 clients to quantify what we already knew: When you ignore aged leads, you're throwing away money. Here's a quick look at results for a typical lender. In general, our findings show the following: 58% to 76% of aged leads remain viable for a significant period of time after initial contact. The typical sales team misses somewhere between 600 to 800 aged-lead opportunities for every 1,000 initial leads. Most respondents still want to be contacted with follow-up information, offers, etc. The simple message is, 'stop ignoring aged leads!'

Jason Kort, SoftVu, <http://www.softvu.com>

FOLLOW UPTO QUALIFY LEADS

73 After analyzing the actual outcome of the Smart Landing Page data produced, we found:

- 25% of the "qualified leads," as determined by the agency, that came from the Smart Landing Page were clearly invalid. They included some with bad data such as wrong phone numbers, and inquiries from competitors and channel partners.
- 4% of the inquiries came from outside the target geographical market from other countries.

- 22% were just looking for information or expressed no need of the product at this time. Others indicated that our client did not have the solution they needed.
- 15% of all the inquiries did actually turn into sales opportunities after our business developer called and spoke to them. This in itself is a great result, but because of the significant cost of weeding through all the chaff, the cost per qualified lead was actually higher than it would have been using our traditional approach.
- The remaining inquiries were kept in the prospect pipeline, being regarded as having longer term potential, or had not yet been fully through the qualification regimen. There was also no difference in the proportion of inquiries judged to be qualified based upon the selection of time frame entered by the prospect on the smart landing page.

Conclusions: Prospects have a tendency to answer questions online in the manner they feel will get them better attention and quicker response. Many just wanted the download or offer and did not hesitate to provide false information to obtain them. The landing page may be quite effective as a source of generating inquiries from potential prospects, but it is the professional follow-up that will determine whether the inquiry is qualified.

Michael Falkson, eti Sales Support, <http://www.etisales.com>

COURT UNCONVERTED LEADS

74 Lesson #1: Don't forget your unconverted leads. It can be so easy to get wrapped up in and consumed by lead generation and chasing new clients that you completely forget to court your unconverted leads. After an exciting year of record lead generation and increasing conversion for one of our clients, we decided (almost on a whim) to run a mini-campaign for a holiday promotion for unconverted leads. We worked on the promotion for less than one hour. It consisted of a text-only email sent to 1,200 unconverted leads from 2007. The email almost wrote itself because it stemmed from a single, clever idea. Which leads to Lesson #2: Don't be afraid to use personality in your communication. We cooked up the idea to run a Christmas special – even though our client was Jewish – and make the irony part of the message. Results? A slew of emails from delighted people chuckling about the message (and reminded of our

client); 15 calls for more information; 8 appointments set; 4 new patients at an average gross of \$6,000. Total revenue: \$24,000 from one text-based email. Not a bad Christmas bonus.

Jimmy Vee & Travis Miller, Gravitational Marketing,
<http://www.gravitationalmarketing.com>

SPONSOR CONFERENCES, MAKE FRIENDS

75 We've found that one of the most effective ways to grow our consultancy is conference sponsorships. Sponsorships provide us with two important opportunities: a way to introduce ourselves through our ideas; a chance to talk shop with our audience and gather information about how we might better serve their needs. A golden rule for us as a luxury brand consulting firm (especially at a conference where attendees pay thousands of dollars to attend) is to always lead with our ideas and goodwill and leave the sales pitch at home. For example, as part of one of our sponsorships, the organizer agreed to distribute an exclusive white paper in the conference materials. This gave participants a chance to get to know what we were about before we introduced ourselves. We've found that attendees are more likely to read your paper while at the conference (while they're thinking about the subject matter) than if you distribute it yourself earlier or later. Another strategy that has proved effective: Before the conference, our team agrees on two conversation starter topics to help draw new contacts out and shape our research plans for the next year. Plus, this gives us a great starting point for post-conference follow-ups: 'Just wanted to let you know, since we talked about X topic at the conference, we'll be doing research on that very topic and we'd like to invite you to participate.' Our response rate from individually developed contacts has consistently been more than 50%, compared to single-digit responses from mailings to industry lists.

Suzanne Hader, 400twin, <http://www.400twin.com>

PART 9:

Direct Mail

NOT JUST ANY HOLIDAY CARD

76 My challenge was to coordinate the design and production of our holiday greeting project for clients and prospects. Since we are a marketing company, I wanted to give our clients something more than just sending them a card. I created a unique concept: Add a personalized URL to the card and offer the recipients the option to order two personalized cards to be sent to people of their choice. These cards also had a u-image with the recipient's name and the sender's choice of one of three holiday messages. My team got approval from upper management, who liked the idea so much they requested that we also include the clients from one of our sister companies, and all employees from five companies within our organization. The project just tripled in size! The effort was worth it. We received a total response rate of 8.86%; clients/prospects response rate alone was 4.85%. One major client has already contacted us for a proposal on a similar project. The Holiday Card project achieved its original objectives, plus it presented clients and prospects with several products/services we offer in a very subtle way.

Mayra Donate, First Marketing,
<http://www.first-marketing.com>

BUILD ON PREDICTIVE MODELS

77 Results of direct mail campaigns can improve dramatically with predictive analytics models that account for regional differences. A national fitness chain had been doing direct mail campaigns for years but always used occupant data addressed to "Resident." Occupant data costs less than modeled data but resulted in flat response rates. The chain wanted a more targeted approach. Working with its agency, the chain decided to make use of predictive modeling applying over 500 variables to data on more than 120 million US households – from which highly-targeted mailing lists were generated for 65 facilities. The plan was to mail to 8,000 names per location per month for three

months. However, the success of the modeled campaign was apparent after just one month. The fitness company's member acquisition cost was lowered by 42% to \$29 per member, despite the higher cost of the data versus the previously used occupant data. The first mail drop yielded 134% more members than earlier mailings. With the astounding results, the agency recommended that the majority of the marketing budget be spent on direct mail for the remainder of the year.

Ray Kingman, Genalytics, <http://www.genalytics.com/>

RENEWAL RATES SKYROCKET

78 Over the years as a direct marketer, I've seen loyalty programs deliver good results, but it usually takes several touches. In a recent customer retention test for a wireless phone company, we saw contract renewal rates nearly double with just one mailing. It was a personalized card with handwritten name/address, salutation and closing, signed by each recipient's nearby wireless store manager. Messaging communicated gratitude for loyalty, and an offer of a one-on-one consultation to find ways to get more value from your plan. Renewal rates among card recipients averaged nearly 200% the normal rate.

Pamela Lockard, DMN3, <http://www.dmn3.com>

Customer Service

KEEP THEM HAPPY

79 For our software products, we have an uninstall feedback page. It's simple. When unregistered people uninstall the program, a Web page is opened that allows users to send us the reason they did that. One of the products is free, and on the uninstall page, we had a 'Check this to receive an answer from us.' Of course, more and more emails with required answers came in, so I was kind of getting bored of answering and in one email (after a long day, let's say this is the excuse) someone said their computer broke after installing [our program name] 6.x. I answered in a hurry that we don't have version 6.x and maybe he confused the program with a different one. Next day I received an email about how my reply was so rude because he meant '6 times' and went on and on about how he's contacting other media sites and giving us bad reviews about the offered support. Conclusion is this: After this incident, we removed the required answer thing for this product, and I always read emails that I want to answer twice. It's better to simply let go of a user than to anger him even more.

Claudiu Spulber, Softland, <http://www.novapdf.com>

SYSTEM GRADES CUSTOMERS

80 In 2007, we took a closer look at how we communicate with our customers and how we might bring them greater value — without spending any additional marketing dollars. In collaboration with key stakeholders within the organization, we decided to develop a customer lifecycle. The goal was to identify the various stages of our customers' relationship with our company (a high-tech, subscription-based network security company) so that we may better understand where and when to provide value. Within each stage, we identified the various touchpoints that our customer has (or that we would like them to have) with our company. We also formalized a customer grading system (aka customer tiers), which considered the customer's relative value to the company over their lifetime. Working with the front-line sales team, we identified the level of engagement each of them would have with our different tiers of customers within each stage. We developed call and email templates and data collection systems to ensure our ability to improve service over time. We also developed specific marketing communications to coincide with the customer tier and stage. Taking

a closer look at the customer's lifecycle, their relative value and various touchpoints allowed us to improve our marketing communications and to better prepare our front-line sales team. These changes paid off! Enabling more effective and timely interactions grew the revenue generated from our existing customers by more than 30% in the last year.

Tracie Hebert, Sophos Inc., <http://www.sophos.com>

ALWAYS MAKE IT PERSONAL

81 It's the personal touch that adds meaning for a customer. It's the almost intimate interactions with a customer where you show you care about them personally that create the wow, the happiness, the loyalty with your company. Our company has tried many splashy, value-add customer loyalty programs. We've sponsored customers to attend daylong events with business experts in marketing and leadership and management. And we've awarded them anniversary discounts of 10% for each year of their service with our company. It was big, bold and flashy. And expensive. And gaudy, really. However, at the same time, we had been sending a bouquet of flowers to our new customers welcoming them. And we had sent flowers to customers when they referred a prospect to us; inexpensive, easy to administer. They were also personal, flattering, an intimate way to say "welcome" or "thank you." The responses to the flowers were overwhelming and consistent. The response rate was nearly 100%. And as important, it inspired and rewarded our staff with the "thank yous" from those customers. The interactions moving forward were on that basis of personal appreciation. Marketing-speak, that means loyalty and referrals and word-of-mouth and evangelism. After comparing the two programs, big and splashy versus intimate and personal, we canceled the first and expanded the latter. The result was a happier, more engaged staff. We've seen a 20% increase in leads as compared to last year. Most of these added leads are from referrals. Our sales conversion has continued to grow this year as compared to last year.

Zane Safrit, Conference Calls Unlimited,
<http://www.conferencecallsunlimited.com>

GIFTS WORK WONDERS

82 Product/Client Service surveys are always tricky. How do you give enough incentive for clients to not only open your survey but also respond with honest feedback? For Bronto's most recent survey, the results blew away our expectations. After about a week of iteration (and a company-wide subject line contest), we agreed upon a subject line that was simple and to the point with a clear incentive to entice the recipient to read further to get their \$5. 'Give Bronto your feedback – earn five dollars!' To encourage responses, we created an opening paragraph that was above the fold, had appropriate image/text balance, was viewable with images off and provided enough encouragement to complete the survey. 'How would you like five extra dollars? Because that is exactly what you're going to get if you are one of the first 100 respondents to our Customer Satisfaction Survey! That's right, a \$5 Amazon.com gift card could be yours if you act quickly'(included a picture of sample gift card). We gave away the 100 gift cards in the first three hours.

DJ Waldow, Bronto Software,
http://blog.bronto.com/bronto_updates/2007/12/surveys-with-so.html

TAKE TIME TO LISTEN

83 If you take the time to listen, customers will provide very valuable insight. The key is to ask the right questions and provide an easily accessible channel for customers to communicate. Last year, we posted an ongoing survey that addressed motivations for unsubscribe requests from our online newsletters. We are amazed that it consistently pulls 10,000 survey completions per month. These subscribers not only appreciate being heard, but they also have identified holes in the subscriber experience.

Scott Wolf, ArcaMax Publishing Inc.,
<http://www.ArcaMax.com>

Metrics

TACKLE BIG CHANGES FIRST

84 My results from 2007 only served to reinforce what I practiced in 2006 — if you are going to test then start by testing big! This year I met with new clients to talk about testing on their website (higher price, technical niche product), and they started by saying how they would like to test this button versus that button and that picture against this picture etc., etc. At this point, I told them that all they're talking about is the final tweaking. First, we needed to make sure that their fundamental marketing message/product is right for the market, and start from there. It can take a bit of persuading, but I always get the biggest leaps in conversion when we tackle the big changes first. We discovered that by asking for a sale from the start, they were scaring off lots of potential customers. This was a product that needed researching before buying, due to its technical nature and higher price. So, our first test was a radical A/B split between their control versus a new lead-generation page with relationship building follow-ups to educate new customers about the market first. The result: They jumped from a 1.4% conversion rate to a 5.2% conversion rate. Once we got this fundamental change in place, we were able to tweak the details, like the buttons, pictures, calls to action and so on, but only for a minimal conversion increase compared to the first test. If they had gone with the small changes first, they would still only be getting a small increase out of a flawed marketing plan.

Michael Furniss,
<http://www.conversion-rate-copywriting.com>

ROI TIED TO REVENUE

85 Measuring marketing ROI was the buzzword of the year for 2007. Some companies understood what this meant, others did not. For my team, we took on this challenge with a vengeance. One of our guiding principles for the year became: We will measure everything we do. In the end, through the multiple areas of measurement that were instituted through the year, I was able to directly map a correlation of spending on marketing to new opportunities created and the ability to forecast corresponding revenue projections. It was used successfully with my favorite controller for him to understand our "discretionary" spending does impact the top line and business growth.

Robert DeRobertis, Analog Devices

DATE MINING DONE IN-HOUSE

86 In ancient Greece, the Oracle of Apollo was known for its mystical predictions of the future. Today, data mining, at least when it comes to better targeting of an email marketing campaign, is strikingly similar. No one wants to doubt the Oracle, but arcane messages from the statisticians about theories and algorithms too often create confusion, so the idea of data mining just falls by the wayside. What is so overlooked is that data mining is a complex tool that just needs to be used wisely. We don't need to be statisticians to use data mining tools any more so than we need to be engineers to drive a car. To illustrate that point, our database marketing team built a new prospects CART model using popular data mining software. How did it do? It generated a 400% lift in response, 81% of the revenue was incremental. Sure, we needed to know what we were doing and watch out for things like cheating and over-fitting, but we didn't have PhDs either. With that success we've started building many other models.

Anonymous

QUALITY BESTS QUANTITY

87 I don't care how many people visit my website! Analyzing the results of our website, I realized number of visitors (or website traffic) is a misleading metric. The situation: A lot of visitors in September. Sales didn't rise as much. Less visitors in November. Sales were high. My conclusion: Number of visitors of a website is a misleading metric. I'd rather have less visitors that all turn into customers than many more visitors that do not buy anything. This could be an important fact for SEO firms. Extra traffic is one thing; high-quality traffic is everything!

Commvillage

Advertising

LOOK AT WHAT WORKS

88 The company I work for has a catchy jingle that has been around for over three decades. It faded away for a good number of years though guests that are now in their 30s remember the jingle fondly and always wondered what had happened to it. For the first time in five years, we ran TV ads this holiday season and they contained the jingle with a bit of a jazzy update. People immediately identified with it and nearly everyone I know who's seen the ad has said how happy there were to hear its return. Just goes to show, while progress and freshness are necessary, paying homage to what worked in the past to build customer loyalty is equally as important.

Christa, <http://www.christainnewyork.blogspot.com>

DON'T RELY ON BIG NAME

89 Don't rely on a big name alone to carry a testimonial or advertising piece. Each year we prepare a new advertorial as an insert in multiple vertical and horizontal trade publications. Some years they take the form of a testimonial from users. In 2007, we created two versions of testimonial advertorial, both with three individual users' comments, but one user always being a well known national client and industry leader. Though more plain-Jane than what we might design internally, we felt that surely the big headline name in each version would carry market recognition and, by being less flashy, carry an air of editorial integrity and noteworthiness. Wrong. We found the plain-Jane but big-name design advertorial to score lower in standard ad tests than our normal advertorial — designs that employed the typical advertising hooks, freestanding side-heads, pull-quotes, captions, graphs, tables, sidebars, photography and an advertising approach to layout and design. The lesson learned? Even if you have the big name, don't rely upon it, and it alone, to carry the day. Do all the little things you normally would do as a professional advertiser to attract attention, build in 'scannability,' and hit the various diverse hot buttons of your own client base.

Tony Kadysewski, Trion Industries Inc.,
<http://www.triononline.com>

PART 13:

Business-to-Consumer

DISCOUNT BEATS FREE SHIPPING

90 It seems to be often believed that free shipping is an important motivator for online consumers when shopping Internet retail websites. For niche retailers, as we are, we've found that it's not overly relevant. Our shopping cart tabulates shipping costs specifically to what is in the cart (weight and size) and the distance it will travel. Delivery options include a total of five choices, two with U.S. Postal Service and three with FedEx. The default method is USPS Parcel Post and, here's the interesting part, more than 50% of the time customers don't bother to hit the 'Check Shipping Rates' button. They just let the default option go through. It's mystifying to us that with a simple click a customer could make an informed and, often, cheaper choice. But, it seems about half of our shoppers don't care. Also noteworthy, when we've conducted email campaigns offering free shipping or 15% - 20% off an order, the percentage discount garners more orders than the free shipping. But, if the discount is only 10%, the free shipping wins.

Deborah Busch, Hello Traveler, <http://www.hellotraveler.com>

EXTEND COUPON EXPIRATION DATES

91 If coupons are part of your strategic mix, it's time to do some re-thinking. Coupons are a tried-and-true marketing tool. So it may surprise some that overall redemption rates are actually declining. Here's what we learned from a database study in 2007: In today's economy, coupon face value alone isn't enough. Most consumers need more than value, they need time to redeem — more time than an increasing number of brands are giving. A short expiration deadline often cuts redemption far more than any increase in value can make up. In fact, an expiration deadline of less than six months misses the 34% of redemption that occurs between six and 12 months. American lifestyles are changing. Consumers are time-starved and multitasked to death. Be patient, try longer coupon expiration durations and give consumers more time to respond.

Peter Meyers, ICOM Information & Communications, <http://www.i-com.com>

PART 14:

Office Politics

AGENDA NEEDS CONFLICT

92 Regularly scheduled meetings of permanent teams frequently go stale after some period of time. The meetings may be important, but when a level of routineness sets in, participant interest and attention begin to lessen at similar rates — greatly reducing the effectiveness of the meeting and the team. One antidote is to add conflict to the agenda. This can be done by asking participants to present one item about the company, the task, the project, etc., that really bothers them. Make it mandatory regardless of the degree of dissatisfaction. Attention will increase and so will openness and candor — key ingredients for team building.

Mark Akerley, Sigma Resource Group Inc.,
<http://www.sigmanow.com>

ADD MESSAGES TO MIX

93 We were conducting positioning and messaging-testing focus groups earlier this year on behalf of one of our clients. Two of the focus group participants in one session mentioned they were interested in just one aspect of the client's offering. After hearing the new messaging, one of the participants mentioned: 'Boy, are you not being served well by the sales representative who visited me. What he spoke to me about, and the benefits you are providing, are two worlds apart in my mind.' The other participant immediately concurred. The upshot ... both participants become full customers just a few weeks after the focus group, and we learned a valuable lesson about enabling field sales with honed messaging that sells.

Bruce Scheer, FutureSight Consulting,
<http://www.futuresightconsulting.com>

CULTIVATE YOUR SALES REPS

94 The key to gaining cooperation from sales reps is to simplify your process, let them know exactly what they need to do and keep it short. And, oh, yeah ... take the sales managers out to dinner once in a while.

David Goad, Cisco WebEx

CLARIFY RELATIONSHIPS

95 I operate a small business consultancy practice and sometimes collaborate with other professionals on a project. I'm currently the project manager for a website for a financial

service company. I had recommended one designer who was a friend, but when the bid came in, it contained elements that will likely lessen my choosing them. At first, I was upset (worried about how to deal with my friend) since I didn't want to get into a big thing with him. What I soon realized is that it's really about serving the client and getting them what they need. Even my friend understood that the client may not want their approach, but it was a lesson in being clear about who I'm working for and the need to be clear with any collaborator about the parameters of the relationship.

Alan Siege, Small Business Management Consulting,
<http://www.sbmc.biz>

GET CEO ON BOARD

96 I've learned that you can plan, strategize and budget down to the finest detail, but if the CEO got out of bed on the left side, instead of the right, you may as well have pulled your marketing plan out of a hat along with your rabbit.

Shelley Campbell

MARKETERS KNOW BEST

97 Big Executive Mistake: Do not let your senior management team's advice affect your marketing strategy or execution. Most execs have limited marketing experience and exposure and misinterpret past success/failure of marketing initiatives.

Anonymous

PLAY TO TEAM'S STRENGTHS

98 I have worked in small and large agencies as well as on the client side, and the reality is that everywhere you go there are office politics. For me, I like to take the honest approach. I am one who likes to execute and execute well. The trick to maneuvering around office politics is to manage up. I am still learning, but have been taking a crash course over the past few years. As for team building, at the end of the day the people you work with and around are all human. Part of team building is knowing when to let those that bring the team, company, or productivity down go. Whether you feel someone is doing a poor job or not they deserve the respect to be told – who knows, perhaps it will serve as a learning experience and you can help them grow. In terms of management,

you have to know the strengths and weaknesses of your team. If you try to force a weaker skill set on an employee and they are unsuccessful – you hurt the business and you make the employee feel incompetent. If you structure your team so that you play to people's strengths and focus a smaller percent of their time on their weaker skills, then you get higher productivity, happier employees, and the ability for the employees to grow.

Sarah Chambers, The maniaTV Network,
<http://www.maniaTV.com>

HIRE TECHIE FOR YOUR STAFF

99 My lesson from 2007 was actually a MarketingSherpa recommendation: Get a Marketing Technologist on staff. As a Web czar working for a small marketing department, I was often forced to go to external agencies or freelancers to do relatively simple tech upgrades to my website. The results were often less than stellar. I recently lobbied for and got an in-house front-end Web developer who is dedicated to nothing but marketing technology, and it has really changed the game and made me excited about future enhancements. My advice to folks who want to go this route: Get a Web Developer, not a Web Designer who knows a bit of code. Look for a Web Developer who's worked at small companies or firms, because s/he will be more likely to understand technology and design. Administer a coding test, make it timed, and design it to be nearly impossible to finish in the allotted time. You'll learn a lot about potential candidates.

Brendan, Entellium: Powerfully Simple CRM,
<http://www.entellium.com/>

LEAVE A PAPER TRAIL

100 Get it in writing! As a young PR professional, if something goes wrong, it is automatically your fault ... unless you have thorough documentation to prove otherwise. Example: I was asked to write a press release detailing a national campaign for one of the clients of the agency I was working for at the time. I sent an email to my supervisor noting that I needed a quote from our client (I was not authorized to communicate directly with our client), and he replied with go without it. To me (and to most anyone else in the universe), that meant distribute the release without the quote. That is what I did.

The next day, we got a call from the client noting that we should not have distributed the release at that point, and, of course, the blame fell on me. That is, until I shared the email that had been sent to me by my supervisor authorizing the distribution of the press release. Moral of the story: Get everything in writing. It will save you every time.

Ginny Wiedower

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION KEY

101 Poor communication of our goals, thoughts and ideas is one of the leading causes of any project failure. As professional communicators, you would think we'd be better at this, but sometimes we are so focused on the audience we are marketing to, that we forget to properly communicate with those working beside us. Hectic days and a million things to do are our main excuses, but I've found that if you stop to think you'll improve success. Ask one more question or clarify one more statement and your end result is going to be much better and the end arrived at more quickly. Teamwork is so important in today's workplace, but it won't work if you can't properly communicate with the team. Whether it be fellow coworkers or your clients, spending that extra time to seek understanding or fully explain your vision will go miles toward improving your work.

Mike Santoro, Walker Sands Communications,
<http://www.walkersands.com>

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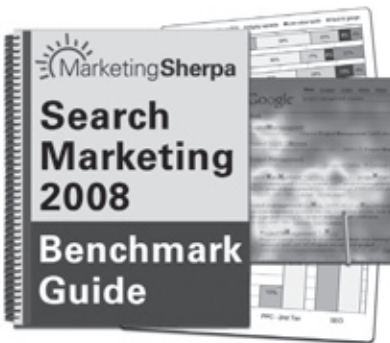
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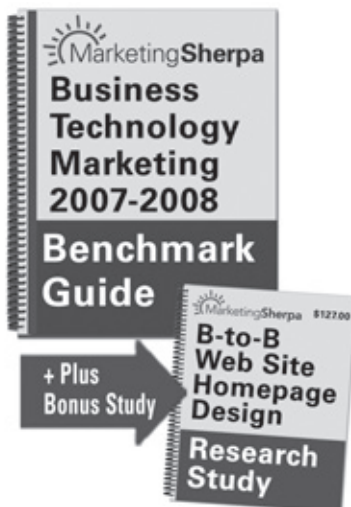
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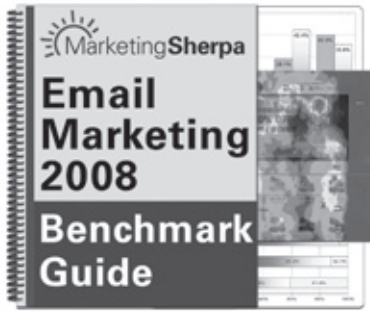
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