

# The problem with knee-jerk marketing

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When times get tough and business slows down, or when brands are faced with new competition, we start pulling out the stops with our marketing. Grasping at straws, we reach for lifelines in the hope that one standalone marketing tactic will get customers pouring through the doors.



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## Who are you talking to?

The reality is that effective marketing needs to be a planned and consistent strategy, derived from knowledge about who your target market are, and where to reach them. A brilliant advertising brain, Raffaele Mc Creadie, MD and founder of Decimal Agency, accurately noted that “you need to go spearfishing, not trawler fishing”.

To fish where the fish are, will need a thorough understanding of exactly who your customers are – what they think, where they shop, what their values are. Once you’ve identified this critical data, you’ll be able to work out how to talk to your target audience in a manner which they’ll hear.

## What exactly is marketing, anyway?

Irrespective of your chosen method of delivery, marketing is about getting the right message to the right person, at the right time. It’s about consistently creating a brand identity which intersects with the beliefs of your customers.

People naturally associate with brands that resonate with them – brands they respect, trust and believe in. By developing a personality for your brand, customers, in turn, develop an understanding of what your brand stands for, and what they can expect from your products. They'll come to feel that using your products or services contributes to their lives in a meaningful way. Enter recurring revenue and business sustainability.

This brand building and management is a process. It's an essential element of your business, which needs to be created, nurtured and cultivated continuously, in order to reflect the depth of your identity.

## **Survival of those who do marketing**

When revenues are under pressure, costs must be reduced. Rightly so. But it's vital for the survival of your business to know which costs can be paused or cut with an adverse effect, and which directly or indirectly contribute to your income. Marketing costs are often the martyrs for the cause, being misunderstood as a cost centre rather than an income generator.

When you stop telling people who are you and what you have to offer, how will they know that you have something they want or need? When your customer numbers dwindle, that's when you need to ensure you're promoting your brand, not shrinking into the corner.

## **Agility equals growth**

Adapting your team structure or your budget is key to getting through tough, recessionary times. Analysing the resources you have to hand and employing them smartly requires a flexible approach, which will ultimately lead to growth. Maintaining historic processes simply because they exist is not a good reason to continue to do so.

If overheads are under pressure, rather than cutting your marketing team, consider working out fixed hour contract agreements with your full-time staff, to retain their expertise while allowing them to supplement their income by farming out their extra hours.

Rather than bumbling along without skilled team members because you're trying to save costs, talk to staffing experts for permanent or project-based resources, which will give you access to the expertise you need, at a cost you can afford.

Alternatively, discuss your needs with a marketing and brand management consultant – these experienced entrepreneurs exist for exactly that reason: providing professional services for a fixed cost.

Creating an agile workforce allows you to maintain your momentum and manage your overheads simultaneously. Win-win.

## **Knee-jerk is the enemy of efficacy**

Reacting to a need without proper planning could cause you to overspend while achieving little in the way of results.

Consistent, planned activity based on market intelligence yields more effective results which ultimately benefit your business health and longevity.

Rather than diving into the first marketing activity you can think of when a competitor releases a new product that kicks yours into touch, or when business seems to be slowing down, start today by working with an experienced marketer, who will help you understand exactly who you want to be talking to, and how to do it.

Kirsten is an experienced marketer, brand manager and content writer. She is the owner-manager of Source Marketing Solutions, a boutique marketing and branding consultancy. Included in her skill set is brand and marketing management, lecturing and training, content creation, formulation of strategic marketing plans as well as social media management.

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