

Marketing & Sales for the Market Research Firm:

PART 3–12 REASONS WHY YOUR MARKETING & SALES MIGHT NOT BE WORKING AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

A PUBLICATION BROUGHT TO YOU BY



HARPETH
MARKETING

THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.



INTRODUCTION:

a publication of



HARPETH
MARKETING
THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

First of all, thank you for downloading our third in a series of eBooks on marketing & sales for firms in the market research industry. We hope you find some ideas, how-to's and maybe even a little inspiration in these pages.

Secondly... in regards to the title of this eBook, I'm not saying that your marketing and sales are *not* working... but there isn't a firm out there – anywhere – that, at times, has not experienced one or more of the following:

- ✓ Flat or declining revenue
- ✓ Diminishing number of bid opportunities... or a lower conversion rate
- ✓ Disappointing response to marketing activities
- ✓ Few, if any, leads generated
- ✓ An inability to articulate your competitive advantage
- ✓ Operating in an environment of feast or famine
- ✓ Missed new business opportunities
- ✓ Not knowing if your marketing & sales are working
- ✓ Relying too much on one or two big clients
- ✓ Not really understanding marketing & sales
- ✓ Relying on repeat business and word-of-mouth

Here's the bottom line... *if you keep doin' what you're doin'... you'll keep gettin' what you're gettin'*. The purpose of this eBook is to help you look at your business development efforts through a fresh set of eyes... and in doing so, think about doing some things a bit differently.

Finally, if nothing else, I hope this ebook sparks some conversations inside your firm about focusing on and re-committing to your marketing & sales effort.

Good luck and good marketing,

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Marketing & Sales for the Market Research Firm:



PART 3 - 12 Reasons why your marketing & sales might not be working and what you can do about it.

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PROBLEM

#1

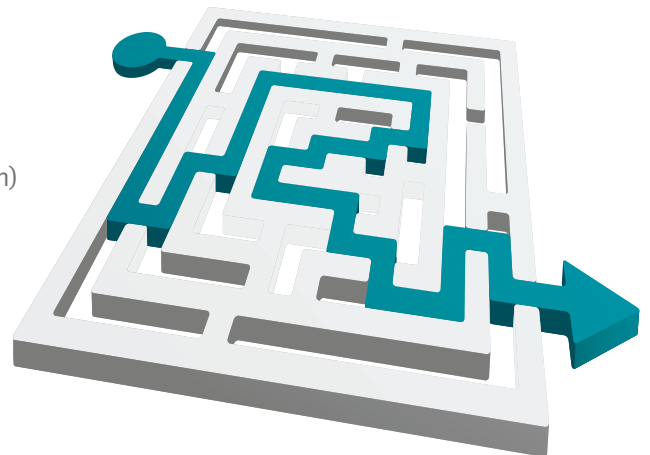
You're not thinking... you're just doing.

Answer the following question...

“Do you have a written, functional marketing & sales plan?”

If the answer is ‘no’ (and it often is in our industry), then you’re just sort of makin’ it up and reacting to whatever comes along – never a good thing. And while the plan itself is critical for detailing every step of the process – it’s the *thinking* on the front end of the planning process that’s the most valuable... discussing and arguing about ideas... bouncing the what-ifs off of each other... thinking through campaigns and calendars... and so on. Finally, if you’re not thinking about marketing & sales, then you’re skipping over things like:

- › Strategy
- › Target audience(s)
- › Your brand
- › PODs (Points of Differentiation)
- › Key Account Plans
- › Goal setting
- › Messaging
- › Tactics & Budgets
- › And much more



No one said that this would be easy and that it wouldn’t take time... but thinking about and planning for marketing & sales success is critical for the health of your business. Do it right... and stick with it... and you’re on your way to building a strong competitive advantage.

PROBLEM

#2

You can't manage what you don't measure.

"You can't manage what you don't measure!" is one of the great business truisms of all time. And it applies to marketing & sales as much as any other discipline in business.

So, why measure in the first place? It's simple... to determine if what you're doing is working. If it is, do more of it... and if it's not, stop it! Or figure out a way to fix it.

To develop a realistic way to measure your marketing & sales, start by thinking about KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)... that is, those things that you will monitor on a consistent basis as a way to manage your business development efforts.

YOUR MARKETING MEASUREABLES MIGHT INCLUDE:

- › Website visits (unique visitors, time on site, top referring sites, etc.)
- › Social media activity (followers, level of interaction, click-thrus, etc.)
- › Email response (sent, received, opens, click-thrus, etc.)
- › Online ad effectiveness (A/B test results, eyeballs, click-thrus, etc.)
- › Content marketing (page views, downloads, etc.)

FOR SALES, YOUR LIST MIGHT INCLUDE:

- › Daily/Weekly sales activity (calls, presentations, proposals, etc.)
- › Pipeline counts (suspects, prospects, presentations, bids, conversions, etc.)
- › Lead generation (# leads daily/weekly, source of leads, etc.)
- › And of course, Revenue (new revenue booked, potential revenue in pipeline, revenue vs. goal, revenue by product line, revenue by vertical, etc.)

You get the idea... take a look at your specific marketing & sales efforts and determine what's most important to you. Don't overdo it... pick a few key ones at first and get into the habit of tracking them. You can always add more later.

The idea behind KPI monitoring is not to be so granular that you get "paralysis from analysis," but to give you, as a senior manager or owner, that 30,000-foot view. Then, when you see something that interests or concerns you, you can drill down and find out the root cause.

However, if measuring all of your marketing tactics becomes a bit too much to handle, there is an easy way to "cover your bases."

Try this... every time someone calls to request information or an RFP, ask, "How'd you hear about us?" That's it! That's the magic question! Then make sure to track the responses. It's not nearly as accurate as other measurement methods, but it will give you a general idea of what's working for you.

PROBLEM

#3

You have a minimal or poorly managed direct sales effort.

In our industry, from a sales standpoint, you're likely to fall into one of three camps:

1.

"We've got a strong, well-trained sales team."

2.

"We've got one rep who's selling for us... when she isn't handling her other responsibilities."

3.

"Our Principal(s) is the one closing deals."

If you're in Group 1, skip to the next chapter. But, if you're in Group 2 or 3... listen up. With limited or no dedicated sales effort in place, there's a real possibility that you're lacking in several areas:

- › No sales plans in place
- › No key account plans in place
- › No sales metrics or reporting in place
- › No lead generation or nurturing

And all of that means that your sales efforts are re-active, not pro-active. By pro-active, we're not referring to used-car-salesman/in-your-face selling... but a professional approach with dedicated sales reps who effectively and efficiently manage your business development efforts. Create a functional, well-thought-out sales plan and you can count on improved results because now you're thinking about key business development actions like:

- › Responding quickly to inquiries and RFPs
- › Following-up on leads gathered at an industry conference
- › Re-engaging old names from your database
- › Following a defined plan for working with your biggest clients
- › Delivering your message to the marketplace in exactly the way you need it to be delivered
- › Tracking on-going activities because your sales team is using the CRM the way it was intended

Even if you work for a small firm that's not quite ready to invest in a professional sales effort, those that are currently responsible for business development (usually the owner) can still benefit greatly by spending some time thinking and planning their sales efforts.

Hope is not a strategy... and without a solid sales plan in place, that's exactly what you're doing with the growth of your firm – hoping!

PROBLEM
#4

No lead nurturing in place.

Do any of these sound familiar?

- › You come home from a conference with a pocketful of business cards from potential clients... what happens with those names?
- › A prospective client downloads a white paper from your website, giving you their contact information in the process...what do you do with that data?
- › You’ve been in business for several years and built a database of hundreds of potential client contacts... what are you doing to stay on their radar?

One of the biggest “lost opportunities” in our industry is not proactively staying in touch over time with those potential clients that you come in contact with almost every day. Because you can never know when a prospective client is going to be ready to buy from you, you want to have recurring contact with them so that you’re always top of mind. And that’s the goal of lead nurturing.

In addition to helping to drive revenue growth, Lead Nurturing:

- ✓ Increases awareness & exposure of your firm
- ✓ Delivers a broader and deeper reach in targeted organizations
- ✓ Enhances the perception of your firm
- ✓ Helps you to establish a desired position in the marketplace
- ✓ Puts you in control of your marketing
- ✓ Establishes and maintains relationships with targeted contacts
- ✓ Moves prospects through the sales funnel
- ✓ Reignites old contacts that have gone cold

Good news! There are four relatively inexpensive tools at your disposal that provide the backbone of a lead nurturing initiative.

Phone Calls:	Schedule regular calls with your leads – not so much to ‘sell’ but to build relationships... to keep your company top-of-mind.
Email:	Yes, that old standby. And still one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to keep in touch, build awareness, position your firm and soft-sell your leads.
Social Media:	OK, not exactly targeted to a defined list of leads, but make sure you’re sharing your message and engaging in dialogue in those places where your leads would gather online.
Your Content:	As alluded to above, one of the best ways to engage leads or re-engage old contacts is to provide them something of value... something that can help them to do their job better. That is, great content – articles, white papers, case studies, etc.

So, don’t let your leads grow cold or the contacts in your database even colder... put in place a plan and a process for engaging them and starting a business relationship.

PROBLEM
#5

You're not doing the *little* things necessary to be successful.

On the surface, marketing looks to be a pretty complicated discipline. Just think about it: marketing plans, strategy, branding, positioning, social media, advertising, e-mail, direct mail, analytics, content, SEO, CRM, MAS, etc., etc. Whew!

Unfortunately, because it looks difficult, many firms just sort of “play” at marketing. They’ll throw up a website, maybe make a few posts to their blog, tweet occasionally, take out an ad in a directory and call it a day. And then they complain that their marketing isn’t working!

The fact is, effective marketing is not all that complex. It’s about creating a good plan and then executing it. But execution requires discipline, persistence and focus. In short, it requires a little hard work. And that is why many companies fail at marketing: They won’t do the little day-to-day things necessary to be successful.

Here is a real-world example that shows how marketing should be managed... Let’s say that your plan calls for a little banner ad to be posted in a Quirk’s e-newsletter. Simple, right? Yes, but not easy. Take a look at the checklist of the steps necessary to do it right:

- Understand the deadlines from Quirk’s.
- Understand the ad specs from Quirk’s.
- What’s the content of the ad? Who’s writing it? Who’s approving it?
- What’s the design? Who’s designing it? Is the design consistent with your other marketing?
- If the designer is outside your firm, do they have the ad specs and deadline?
- What does the ad link to? Is that page updated?
- Will Web site visitors have the chance to download something? Is that prepared?
- How are you measuring the ad?
- What’s the follow-up plan for any leads generated?

And a dozen other things you need to think about.



Where it breaks down for most firms is in two areas:

- › Not thinking through and planning for all those details
- › Not having the discipline to follow the plan every day

The bottom line is this: Success in marketing is in the execution of the details – in doing the little things day-in, day-out and in thinking through all that needs to be done and making sure it happens.

PROBLEM

#6

Skipping old-school marketing.

Thanks to technology, many firms have abandoned the old-school ways of building their brand and positioning their firm in the minds of their clients and prospects. Firms have stopped using prints ads, exhibiting in live events, sending direct mail, posting online banner ads and so on.

And their reasoning sounds logical...

- › “They can be expensive.” True.
- › “They can be hard to measure.” True.
- › “I’m not sure they work.” True.
- › “I’d rather have a good website and do social media... it’s free (mostly), I can track it in Google Analytics – so I know that it’s working.” Again, all true.

But here’s the problem with that. With a website/social-focused plan, you’re relying on prospective clients to find YOU. Your website and blog have no value if prospects don’t visit them... Tweeting falls on deaf ears if prospects aren’t ‘following’ you... search engines only point to your website if you take advantage of the keywords that the searchers use... even emails only go out to those already in your database. With that kind of plan in place – you’re in danger of talking to the same people over and over.



By building in some old-school marketing, you can expand your reach dramatically.

- › Take out a series of ads in a trade magazine and they WILL be seen by thousands of fresh eyes.
- › Exhibit at a conference and you get to interact – in person – with people you’ve never touched before.
- › Post banner ads on key industry websites or inside of others’ e-newsletter... giving you access to their client list.

Why go old school?

First, it helps to build awareness about your firm and its services; prospects won’t go to your website or Facebook page if they don’t know you exist; old-school can help with that.

Second, it helps to position your firm and to help prospects understand who you are, what you do and how you’re different than your competitors.

Finally... old school can help to support other business and marketing initiatives... launching new products/services lines, opening a new office, supporting your presence at a major conference and so on.

So, take a look at your marketing strategy and your marketing budget... and find a way to, at least, test some old school initiatives. You’ll be glad you did.

PROBLEM
#7

You don't have the money.

I talk to a lot of research business owners who tell me that they still are not back to pre-recession business levels, that it's "still a little tough out there," that profit margins aren't what they used to be. Fair enough. Can't argue with the facts.

However, they also use that data as an excuse not to invest in business development efforts of any kind. OK, they might not have the dollars to spend on big, fancy marketing campaigns... but they decide to stop there and don't spend any time thinking about other options. Then complain that business is bad.

It doesn't have to be like that. Even without large marketing budgets, you can still put in place effective marketing initiatives. It just requires a little thought, a little planning and little creativity. To help get you thinking in that direction, here are several low-cost/no-cost ways to help increase awareness, generate leads, position your firm and increase revenue:

Email campaigns:	There are some really excellent, inexpensive platforms out there for staying top-of-mind with clients and prospects; they'll help you create attractive, branded emails then measure their effectiveness.
Internal communications:	Make sure to include your marketing message on your invoices, email signatures, etc.
Press releases:	A little old school, but many of the magazines and websites in our industry are happy to post your news... all you need to do is get it to them in an appropriate format.
Social media sites:	There's no reason you shouldn't have [at least] a blog, as well as a corporate and individual LinkedIn pages. Then think about Twitter, FaceBook, Google+ and the others.
Social media engagement:	Don't just post to your own social media sites (see above), but participate in industry dialogue – on other's blogs, in LinkedIn group discussions and in Twitter chats.
LinkedIn connections:	Spend a couple of minutes every day reaching out to industry contacts and building up your LinkedIn connections. Then communicate with them via LinkedIn's built-in email function.
Presenting webinars:	Like email, there are also several fine, low-cost platforms available for delivering webinars to your target audience. Two hints: 1) practice and 2) don't sell – educate.
Awesome PPT:	Our industry just loves to put up PowerPoint slides with lots of words... then read the words. BORING! Minimize the words, use compelling imagery and put on a "show."
Networking at conferences:	If you're going to invest in conferences for your education, make sure to set some networking goals and then achieve them! And follow-up, follow-up, follow-up...
Great elevator pitch:	When networking (see above), you've got about 15 seconds to tell someone what you do, why it's different and why they should care. Can you do that?

Problem #7 Continued...

Handwritten notes:	Sending handwritten notes after a meeting, presentation, referral or just out of gratitude for their business will stand out more than almost anything you can do – because no one does it these days.
Content marketing:	Enhance your credibility, position your firm and improve your SEO with the continuous creation of useful content – articles, white papers, case studies, eBooks, and so on. And remember, no selling.
Sharing articles (1-to-1):	Not everything you do has to be targeted to large groups. If you come across an interesting article that you think one of your clients will appreciate, send it to them with the short note, “Thought this might interest you...”
Testimonials / client lists:	Very few of us show our clients’ logos on our website or post testimonials from them. Why not? That kind of information is “proof” that you can deliver on your promises.
Great business cards:	Spend a couple of extra bucks on really nice business cards – often the only tangible thing a prospective client will see from you. Good design, good printing, good paper... it’s worth a few extra dollars. And don’t forget to use the back side of the card, too.
POP:	Do you get many visitors to your offices? If so, create some attractive point-of-purchase displays to scatter around. Promote your services, website, webinars, etc.
Adjust your writing:	Become more client-focused. Write from your clients’ perspective... write about benefits, not just features... address their pain points. This applies to your website, PPT presentations, collateral, etc.
SEO:	Optimize your website and blog for Search Engine Optimization. Focus on continually adding new content and the effective use of key words and phrases.
Remote sales:	The same platform you use for webinars (above) can be used to deliver remote sales presentations. It’s an effective way to present information without having to hop on a plane.
Excellent website:	Maybe the most expensive of these recommendations... but also the most important. Your website will be the first impression you make with almost every new client and prospect. And you only get one chance to make a first impression. Not sure how your site stacks up... get a bunch of friends and neighbors (or better yet, some clients) to surf your site and give you their ‘honest’ feedback.

And if you think about it for a few more minutes, you could probably come up with another dozen or more. But they’re just ideas – their execution also requires additional commitments:

- 】 Execute your ideas by following a strategy and a plan. If not, you’re just wingin’ it.
- 】 Results will not come overnight. Stick with it and be patient.
- 】 Remember, though these ideas might not cost a lot of money... they do take time.

PROBLEM

#8

Your messaging doesn't resonate with your audience.

Here's an exercise that will help you to more effectively communicate with prospective clients and why they should do business with your firm...

When you write (email or proposal) or deliver presentations, you're probably pretty good at espousing what you do – call it the *features* of your firm. For example:

- › “We are a full-service shop.”
- › “We have a large team of experienced analysts on staff.”
- › “We are qualitative research specialists.”

- › “We have 20 years of experience in the automotive industry.”
- › “We do product testing, market segmentation, focus group moderating, blah, blah, blah...”

Guess what? The people you're telling this to already know it. They've been to your website and downloaded your collateral. And besides... it's essentially the same thing that every other firm is telling them, too.



So, the first step in this exercise (and this is not that easy) is to start thinking about and communicating in terms of *benefits*, not just features. That is, what your prospective client will *gain* from a feature. For example, let's look at a few of the statements above, this time with a simple benefit phrase added on:

- ✓ “We are a full-service shop... *which means we can handle all of your research needs.*”
- ✓ “We have a large team of experienced analysts on staff... *which means we provide very fast turnaround.*”
- ✓ “We are qualitative research specialists... *we have hands-on experience with more than 10 different qualitative methodologies.*”
- ✓ “We have 20 years of experience in the automotive industry... *we walk the walk and talk the talk.*”

Continued....

PROBLEM #8: YOUR MESSAGING

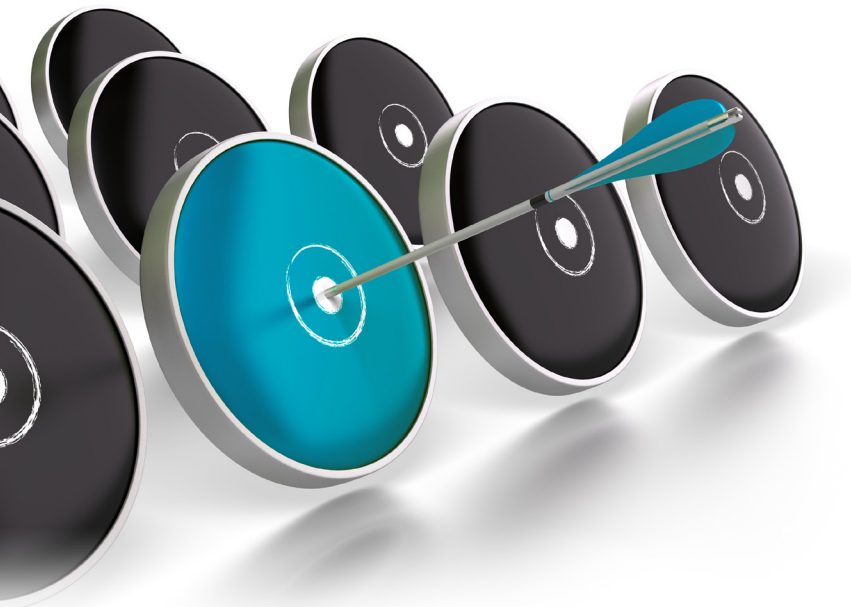


Make sense? Communicating with benefits is a good start... but to really make an impact, add on one more component – the *advantage* (this is even harder than the last part). So if the benefit is defined as “what they gain”... the advantage is defined as “why they should care.” For example:

- ✓ “We are a full-service shop... which means we can handle all of your research needs. *The advantage for you is one project director, one number to call and one invoice for the entire project!*”
- ✓ “We have a large team of experienced analysts on staff... which means we provide very fast turnaround. *So, even on high-priority, fast-track projects, we will meet or exceed your deadline every time... guaranteed.*”
- ✓ “We are qualitative research specialists... we have hands-on experience with more than 10 different qualitative methodologies. *That means we can recommend and deliver the absolute best qual method for your project and not pigeon-hole you into a limited choice.*”
- ✓ “We have 20 years of experience in the automotive industry... we walk the walk and talk the talk. *And because of that, we can hit the ground running on your project – there’s no time wasted getting us up to speed.*”



To wrap up this exercise, look through all of your marketing communications materials and begin applying the feature – benefit – advantage strategy to them. If you do that, you’ll have a competitive advantage over most other firms who simply don’t understand the value of a better marketing & sales message.



PROBLEM

#9

Not differentiating your firm in a crowded marketplace.

When we were doing our ‘due diligence’ before starting Harpeth Marketing, we spoke with scores of research firms across the U. S. to understand their perception and use of marketing and sales inside their organizations.

One of the questions we asked during that process was, “How do you differentiate your firm?”

Almost to a man (or woman), the response was something like, “We do great work... we have great people... and we really take care of our clients.”

Sound familiar?! Is that how you would respond to that question? And if everyone is saying that – then no one really stands out! Which, for the most part, is the case.

Don’t believe me? Try this little exercise... take a look at the website of your top three

or four direct competitors.

Read through their pages titled “About Us”, “How We’re Different” or “Why Hire Us”. I’d be willing to bet that their words read an awful lot like the words on your website. Sort of depressing, isn’t it?

And if that’s the case... how can research buyers make a decision? How do you stand out? Why should customers choose you over your competitors?

While there is no magic bullet, following are 13 ideas to jump-start your thinking about how you might differentiate your firm:

The Big 3:

- 1. INDUSTRY FOCUS:** Establish and build an expertise in certain vertical industries (e.g. automotive, healthcare, technology, etc.). Start where you already do a lot of your work.
- 2. METHODOLOGY FOCUS:** Become the go-to firm for certain types of work – e.g. online qualitative, ethnographies, mobile surveys, etc.
- 3. APPLICATION FOCUS:** Get even more targeted and specialize in certain research applications, like new product research, patient satisfaction surveys, website usability, etc.

Other Ideas:

- 4. TECHNOLOGY ADVANTAGE:** Are you an “early adopter?” Comfortable with new technology? Be the first one on the block to get and use it – positioning your firm as very innovative. But be careful... not all of your customers feel the same way about technology.

Continued....

Differentiate continued...

5. **WITH YOUR MARKETING:** Flip through the pages of any research industry publication. Notice anything? Most of the ads are pretty much the same and are pretty boring. Stand out from the crowd with unique, interesting, thought-provoking and (most importantly) consistent marketing. Note: this doesn't just apply to your advertising but also your exhibit booth, your website and blog, your social media, your presentations, etc.
6. **WITH YOUR CONTENT:** Produce articles, white papers, eBooks, webinars and so on to position your firm as experts in your given area. Note: if you happen to decide to focus on a particular industry, methodology or application – your content becomes even more targeted and more powerful.
7. **WITH UNIQUE OPERATIONAL PROCESSES:** A survey is a survey is a survey... but if you can recruit to it, distribute it, process it or report on it an interesting and unique way, you'll stand out from the thousands of other survey providers. The same applies to focus groups and other popular research services.
8. **WITH YOUR SIZE & SCOPE:** Take a look at the top of the Honomichl 50. Many of those firms don't necessarily have a 'speciality' or 'focus.' But what they do have is size and scope... they can do pretty much anything for anybody anywhere in the world. And that's impressive.
9. **BY BEING CONTRARIAN:** Want to really stand out? Swim against the tide... take the position opposite what's popular. Be a contrarian with your blog, your articles, your presentations, etc. Note: Do this only if you really believe it. Do it as a marketing ploy and everyone will see right through you.
10. **BY YOUR 'FIRST TOUCH':** How do you respond when a new, prospective client submits an RFP? Probably like everyone else... a nice 'thank you' email, maybe a brief follow-up phone call and then a fairly standard bid package. But what if you could blow them away at this phase? What if your responsiveness, professionalism and deliverables were so different that your competitors didn't stand a chance?
11. **WITH SPEED:** Of the three components of business (better, faster, cheaper), which is most important in our industry? Everyone I've spoken with over the years immediately points to 'speed.' Can you re-engineer your processes to be the "fast" research firm – in all aspects of the client engagement? Those that don't or can't change their processes will not be able to compete with you.
12. **WHO YOU TARGET:** Everybody wants to work with P&G, Coca-Cola, 3M and the like. Not only are you competing with hundreds of other firms who want that business, it's incredibly price competitive and the nod usually goes to one of the "big boys." But who's calling on the mid-tier buyers, not the Fortune 50, but the Fortune 5000. It's not nearly as competitive and much easier to build 'relationships.'
13. **WITH YOUR PRODUCTS:** Have you developed a new research process? A new piece of technology? Or are reselling something brand new to the marketplace? Great – leverage the heck out of it. But be careful, as soon as someone comes along with "a better mousetrap," your product becomes obsolete.

I hope this list triggers some ideas in your mind. Not a single one of them is easy... which is why so few firms do it. And here's the key... once you've decided on your point(s) of differentiation... then you need to live it. Build your marketing around it, adjust your operations to support it, train new employees on it, etc. Then once you do that, you'll no longer be swimming in a crowded ocean... you'll have a clear, blue pool all to yourself.

PROBLEM
#10

You don't really know your clients.

WHO THEY ARE

If you were asked, “Do you know who your clients are?”, you could probably list your top 10 pretty easily. Fair enough. But could you define them? Provide a profile of them? And even if you could categorize them to some extent (e.g. “they’re mostly tech companies”), could you paint the picture any more clearly?

It’s important to be as clear as possible... with the goal of defining your “ideal” client. Here’s why... if you can define your ideal client, you can create a marketing & sales plan to find more of them. What if your description was, “Our ideal client is a technology manufacturing firm with between 250 and 1,000 employees, in a 100 mile radius of San Francisco that regularly launches new products and has an on-going need for new product development research.” See the difference?

Here’s a pretty easy way to help you get there... take a look at the top 20% of your clients (based on revenue) for the past 18 or 24 months. Now, look through that group of clients and start digging for consistencies and commonalities across the group – size, location, industry served, favorite research methodology, common research application, etc. Those things that show up the most help to define your ideal client. Then leverage that data in your marketing & sales plan.



WHAT THEY WANT

As important as *who* your clients are... is what they *want*. Do you know what they want? Yeah, I know – research services of some kind. But beyond that, do you know what they really want? What issues cause them frustration? What keeps them up at night?

By having that kind of insight... you can talk to them and provide services to them in a way that others can't. But how do you “get inside their heads?” Here are several ways to get started...

- › Conduct ad hoc or post-project surveys (it’s amazing how many research firms don’t do this!)
- › Pick up the phone and just call them
- › Hop on a plane or in your car and go visit them
- › Talk to your ex-clients... what you hear will be eye-opening
- › Create an Advisory Board of clients to provide insight and direction
- › Listen to your sales team... they’re out there every day talking to your clients
- › Listen in on project discussions with your operations team
- › Visit their blogs of your clients... see what they’re talking about

Don’t assume you know what’s going on with your client and prospects... get the information straight from the horse’s mouth. Their input just might change the way you do business.

PROBLEM

#11

Not all marketing is marketing.

Here's how Harpeth Marketing defines marketing...

“Marketing encompasses every aspect of a business (its people, products and processes) that touches a client or prospective client and in doing so, has an impact on their buying decision.”

That fairly broad definition includes – and is purposely not limited to – the kinds of traditional marketing you generally think about (e.g. advertising, websites, social media, etc.).

Now think about how, when and where your firm touches a client, that's NOT traditional marketing. Here are a few...

- › How your phone is answered
- › Interaction with your PDs
- › Your billing processes
- › The look of your offices
- › Your day-to-day emails
- › How you respond to problems
- › Post project measurement

NON-TRADITIONAL WAYS
YOU MARKET YOURSELF

Look in any marketing textbook and you won't find those kinds of things anywhere! But they can – and do – have an impact on client buying decisions.

Imagine that your stellar marketing and sales efforts help you to land your first project with a Fortune 100 client! But midway through the first project, there's a snag.

SCENARIO

#1. Imagine that no one at your firm takes ownership of the problem, that the client gets limited, if any, communication from your firm and that the snag days takes couple of days – instead of a couple of hours – to get resolved.

#2. Your senior PD takes responsibility, immediately and continuously communicates with the client, gets it resolved quickly and then follows up with the client again to bring closure.

In which of those scenarios do you think the client will come back for a second project (or more)? No brainer, right? But no part of either those scenarios is generally considered marketing or sales... but they both will have an impact on that client's decision to come back to your firm – or not.

A great way to think about this is to begin to map out (yes, literally diagram it) the touch points between your firm and clients in a typical relationships – from the bid process through invoicing – and then to make sure that you're buttoned-up at every step.

PROBLEM
#12

Giving up to soon.

I found the following piece online a while back about the value of *patience* when it comes to marketing. Very interesting...

1. The first time a man looks at an advertisement, he does not see it.
2. The second time, he does not notice it.
3. The third time, he is conscious of its existence.
4. The fourth time, he faintly remembers having seen it before.
5. The fifth time, he reads it.
6. The sixth time, he turns up his nose at it.
7. The seventh time, he reads it through and says, "Oh brother!"
8. The eighth time, he says, "Here's that confounded thing again!"
9. The ninth time, he wonders if it amounts to anything.
10. The tenth time, he asks his neighbor if he has tried it.
11. The eleventh time, he wonders how the advertiser makes it pay.
12. The twelfth time, he thinks it must be a good thing.
13. The thirteenth time, he thinks perhaps it might be worth something.
14. The fourteenth time, he remembers wanting such a thing a long time.
15. The fifteenth time, he is tantalized because he cannot afford to buy it.
16. The sixteenth time, he thinks he will buy it someday.
17. The seventeenth time, he makes a memorandum to buy it.
18. The eighteenth time, he swears at his poverty.
19. The nineteenth time, he counts his money carefully.
20. The twentieth time he sees the ad, he buys what it is offering.

OK, what's really interesting about this is that it was written in 1885 by Thomas Smith in his guide called *Successful Advertising*. And while the term 'advertising' might not be appropriate in the new millennium, the idea that your marketing message takes time to sink in – via advertising, a website, social media, email or salespeople – still holds true.

What you need to guard against is a knee-jerk reaction to a low response rate. For example... "I broke down and finally ran an ad in Quirk's last month and didn't get a single lead. I knew it – print advertising doesn't work!" or "I started blogging two months ago and nothing's happened. This is a waste of time."

Yes, it's frustrating and can feel like a waste of time and money, but listen to ol' Tom Smith and give your marketing some time to work. It will be worth it.





HARPETH MARKETING

THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

ABOUT HARPETH MARKETING

Harpeth Marketing works exclusively with firms in the market research industry to put in place marketing & sales programs and systems that improve outcomes and increase revenues. We do this through a variety of consulting engagements and the delivery of hands-on marketing services.

To learn more about what we do, go to:

www.harpethmarketing.com/what-we-do/overview/

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