

How Not to Market

By *Larry Chambers*

Imagine marketing shifting from “interrupting” individuals to delivering something that prospects are interested in or even request. Let your competition continue to interrupt strangers with poor results, while you use an innovative marketing strategy that is designed to turn strangers into friends and friends into customers.

The new rules of marketing focus on being found by your target market!

The New Rules of Marketing Success

The old rules of conventional marketing focused on finding prospective customers or clients. The new rules of marketing focus on prospective customers and clients finding you!

As we adjust to the economic downturn, businesses are seeking efficiency. They're shifting money out of expensive paid advertising, and into optimization, content and social media that help potential customers find them in organic search results. These changes are laying the foundation for a new set of marketing rules.

The Marketing Challenge

Technology has made conventional marketing techniques less effective and more expensive. Caller ID blocks cold calls, TiVo makes TV advertising less effective, spam filters block mass emails and tools like RSS are making print and display advertising less effective. It's still possible to get a message out via these channels, but it costs more. If you were to ask 1,000 people to describe the differences between one advertised product or service and another, the probability of anyone identifying even one notable difference is just about zero. To the public, nearly all marketed claims are largely *unbelievable*.

Attraction can change that perception and when used as a marketing strategy it flips traditional marketing on its head. Instead of interrupting people with television ads, those who use attraction marketing create videos that potential customers want to see. Instead of buying display ads in print publications, they create their own blogs that people subscribe to and look forward to reading. Instead of cold calling, they create useful content and tools so that people call them looking for more information. Instead of driving their message into a crowd over and over again like a sledgehammer, they attract highly qualified customers to their businesses like a magnet.

Consumers have unlimited choices about products and services, and before deciding to move ahead, they can find out almost anything and everything about anyone, any firm, any product, and any service. The pathway to success is no longer spending your time and money on knowing everything about your market; the fastest path to success is finding ways to let *your marketplace know about you!*

The New Rules of Marketing - focus on getting found by customers. The new rules of marketing also shift the *perception* of value to *evidence* of value, from focusing on the *sender* to focusing on the *receiver*, from being the *invisible* to *visible*, and from *pursuing* to *attracting*.

The new rules of marketing focus on presenting solutions to real problems, thus giving you the foundation for a new, and more efficient period of growth.

The core of an effective strategy is to create a marketing system that can effectively deliver a message to which your target market will respond. To the extent that you do this, you will build an increasingly successful business. Hit-or-miss sales are replaced with predictable results that will constantly move you up to the next level of success. The objective is to design a marketing plan based on your customers' real needs. You have to step back to observe and analyze.

The following are nine steps designed to help you upgrade your marketing:

- Step One: Establish A Theme
- Step Two: Create Great Content
- Step Three: Target More Effectively
- Step Four: Identify Opportunities
- Step Five: Define Your Message
- Step Six: Position Yourself
- Step Seven: Give People A Way To Find You
- Step Eight: Network to Success
- Step Nine: Create a Measurement System

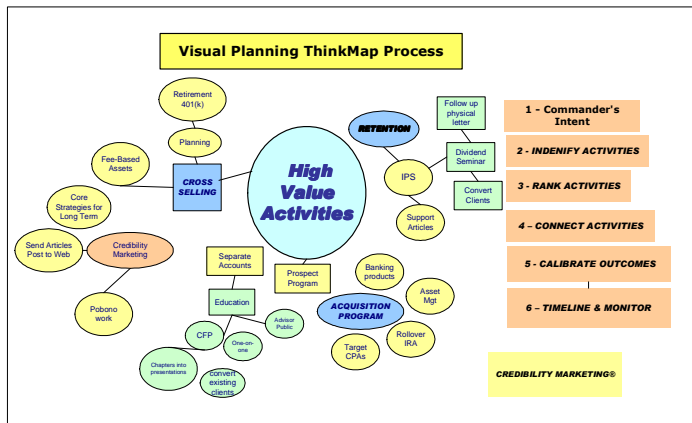
Step One: Establish A Theme

Your central theme should be to focus on getting found by customers. The more you shape your actions around one clear idea, the better the chances for success. Your theme helps establish the criteria—an algorithm for the steps needed to solve a complex problem or task. Your theme becomes a touchstone for what information to keep, combine or discard. Discard anything that doesn't support your central theme. Having a central theme allows you to step back periodically to evaluate whether the information remains valid and forms a coherent plan.

Your marketing plan should include a clear picture of the image you want to impress on your market, the services you provide, and how best to present your image and services to the public. Study how your service can best be used in various scenarios and under different situations. Continually ask yourself: *Why would a prospect buy my services or my products?* You need to answer this question before you begin your marketing plan because the answer will have a huge effect on how you market yourself and your services. You should always be in touch with the needs and desires of your clients and investors, and what motivates them.

Next, determine why your clients choose your service or products over your competitors'. This will help you determine just how to inform clients about your services and what will motivate them to find you.

Create a marketing map, as shown below. Its component parts are theme, activities, values, connections, outcomes and monitoring.



1 - Show your central theme. For example, Being found by your customers could be a central theme. It should anchor your activities and actions.

2- Identify Your Actions / Activities. Drawing circles and boxes to represent activities helps reveal the unconscious order to these actions. This will help you to

find out whether they support your central theme, where they lead, and if they can be measured. Using different colors helps to create a visual identifier of both priorities and hot spots.

3 - Rank Activities in Terms of Value. Now, assess the value of each activity in terms of high and low value. High value might equate to response rate, immediate return, what you believe you're best at or even what you most enjoy doing. Low value might mean one of two things: Low results to cost (time wasters), or activities that do not convey the appropriate message. If your activity doesn't express or contribute to your goals or central theme, eliminate it.

4 - Make Connections. Oftentimes, two or more actions are connected by a short chain of influence. In that case, what happens to one action may affect others, even if the parties involved in the activities are completely unaware of each other. For instance, in the 1980s, Bill Gates' mother, Mary Gates, sat on the board of United Way with John Akers, a high-level IBM executive. At the time, Akers was helping to lead IBM into the desktop computer business. Because of her shared interests with Akers, Mary Gates was the one who made the connection for Bill's first big meeting with IBM.

A former business associate or a colleague who has become influential in an area of interest to you and your firm could become a crucial contact. Shared activities forge ties between diverse individuals by changing their usual patterns of interaction, allowing them to break out of their prescribed roles.

Draw lines that connect your high-value activities to obvious networks. The objective is to find 'scalable' activities that can benefit or complement your central theme. Once you see how everything interconnects, you will feel more confident about the certainty of future actions.

5 - Calibrate Outcomes. Calibrate possible outcomes (predictions and goals)—both short-term and long-term. What would you like the end results to be or look like? What will those results mean to your business? What is each outcome worth on an annualized or long-term basis (quantitatively and qualitatively)? How will you know an outcome has been achieved? What are

the actions that need to occur to lead to these outcomes? Lastly, identify any obstacles that might keep you from achieving your desired outcomes.

6 – Monitor. After you have objectively and logically analyzed possible courses of action, identify the right person to implement each activity. Predictions require a comparison between what is happening and what you expect to happen. Your timeline becomes your gauge or monitor; it makes it apparent whether you are achieving expected. When something changes, you can easily identify and correct it.

To get the most use out of your map, keep it in plain view on the wall, or convert it into a screen saver, to maintain top-of-mind awareness. Schedule a regular, routine time to review your map. And of course, highlight milestones and accomplishments and acknowledge them. At the very least, you'll gain a fresh perspective on your business.

Step Two: Create Great Content

The most successful Marketing campaigns have three key components:

(1) Content - Content is the substance of any attraction marketing campaign. It is the information or tool that attracts potential customers to your site or your business.

(2) Search Engine Optimization - SEO makes it easier for potential customers to find your content. It is the practice of building your site and inbound links to your site to maximize your ranking in search engines, where most of your customers begin their buying process.

(3) Social Media - Social media amplifies the impact of your content. When you distribute your content across networks of personal relationships, it can lead to discussions. The content becomes more authentic and nuanced, and is more likely to draw qualified customers to your site. A Twitter account is free, too and can draw thousands of customers to your site.

Step Three: Target More Effectively

Techniques like cold-calling, mass mail and email campaigns are notoriously poorly targeted. You're reaching out to individuals because of one or two attributes in a database. When you do attraction marketing, you approach only those who self-qualify themselves. They demonstrate an interest in your content, so they are likely to be interested in your product.

When you buy pay-per-click advertising on search engines, its value is gone as soon as you pay for it. In order to maintain a position at the top of Google's paid results, you have to keep paying. Your time is better spent in quality content that ranks in Google's organic results.

Know your customer

If you don't know who your ideal client is, you'll end up with the opposite of the ideal client by default. Most target markets are typically very fragmented

and pretty much hidden; they won't come out waving a flag or giving away their location. You've got to do some research into their concerns.

After selecting a market to target, specialize. Begin with a study of your own clients—who they are, and their specific problems or issues. This should help with identifying and expanding your best markets. In my own business, I have discovered that the market for my product specialty is very select. Determine which specific local or regional target markets you especially enjoy working within.

Target sub-tribes - Nothing is more frustrating than having a number of physician clients, but not being able to penetrate their market. Cloning, surveys, or that old stand-by, the strategic alliances—none of them seems to help.

Instead of targeting a market, use your time to identify a sub-tribe within a much larger market. This is one of the best-kept marketing secrets as we move together into an unknown future. When you focus on the larger, more visible, organization, you often completely miss all the sub-tribes existing within. The medical profession exemplifies the theory of tribes and sub-tribes. Most people have no idea there are 280 organizations all with different medical interests.¹ Another example of sub-tribes is found in elite military units like Tom Wolfe's test pilots who joked about other pilots who didn't have *The Right Stuff*.

Choose the type of people within a segment of the market that you genuinely want to work with. Then help them find you!

Step Four: Identify Opportunities

Look for marketing opportunities within each of your target markets: Do effective research. Each market has specific financial challenges; discover where the real opportunities for you are. For instance, if a key company in your geographical area is in transition, target key executives in that company to uncover their particular problems and concerns.

For instance, one of my clients lived in Binghamton, NY, at a time when IBM was going through a substantial "early out" transition. This created tremendous opportunity in client acquisitions for those positioned as experts within the IBM system.

A new company may be entering or expanding within your area. If you have positioned yourself as the key contact for executives within that organization, you will naturally be high on the referral list within the company. Find common problems to a market and develop solutions to its specific problems. As a specialist servicing that market, you become invaluable to those clients. They'll recognize the unique value you offer them.

¹ *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, July 10, 1987 issue (Volume 258).

Identify any unique problems: Look for problems common to individuals within your target markets, and develop solutions to those specific problems. For instance, companies that are downsizing could benefit from lump sum distributions; become an expert on lump sum distributions if that is a prevalent concern.

Identify centers of influence: Identify people in key positions within organizations you are targeting and consider forming strategic alliances with them. Studies show that the wealthy place a high level of trust in their accountants and attorneys. "Centers of influence" are also directors of trade associations, presidents of social clubs, and community leaders. The best way to convince influential individuals to work with you is to present solutions to their real problems.

Identify publications your target market reads: Does your target market receive a specialized newsletter or publication? Would the director or editor of that publication print an article from you addressing the needs of readers? He or she would most likely be delighted. Call the publication and get the criteria for articles by outside authors.

Maximize the serendipity around you. Many people do not recognize a lucky break in life when they get one. If a publisher, a business leader, overachiever, or big thinker suggests an appointment, cancel anything you have planned; you may never see such a window of opportunity open up again.

Step Five: Define Your Message

Determine the most compelling message for your particular market: You've got to communicate the right message to the right people at the right time through the right channels to be effective. The message should indicate your ability to solve problems.

What is unique about my product or service? Why would someone hire me?

Communicate the Benefits You Provide

How are you going to communicate your message? One of the benefits of targeting your market first is that you can communicate directly to qualified individuals—instead of randomly contacting the masses to find a few qualified prospects. The problem with mass mailings and other mass advertising efforts is that unqualified people respond en masse. Mailings are best used when sent directly to a pre-qualified target market. It's both cheaper and a far more efficient use of your time. Less time divided by less cost plus a specific target market equals higher profitability and success.

The secret to a successful marketing program is aligning your approach with the way your clients *want* to be sold.

After you have taken the time to identify your target markets and opportunities, the next logical step is to position yourself as the expert who can best serve those markets.

Step Six: Position Yourself

Strategically position yourself within your target markets: Positioning is the art of controlling perception. You want to be viewed as a professional with specialized expertise in solving problems that having a lot of money creates.

David Ogilvy, author of *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, listed 32 important lessons he learned during his many years in advertising. He learned that one of the most important actions of all was to correctly position the product. Results, he claimed, were achieved not so much by advertising as by how the product itself was positioned in the marketplace. Positioning is vital to your standing out from the hundreds of thousands of investment advisors and insurance agents which the public views as about the same.

Sophisticated investors aren't attracted to products or marketing techniques; they're attracted to a person who can solve their financial concerns. Advisors who really understand how to solve specific problems are extremely effective, and investors will readily recognize that. The key is to focus on a specific niche of the market—whether asset management, estate planning, insurance, or taxes—instead of trying to solve all problems for everyone. Along with being focused, you must be very good at what you do—not only in your niche, but for a specific target market.

Commit to a public relations program that will position you as a problem solver in each target market. Find articles that are of interest to your clients and that address problems. Personally write *how-to-solve-a-financial-problem* type articles for regional trade or business magazines. Send out reprints of relevant articles to clients and prospects by you and other authors. Reprints can act as calling cards and reinforce each level of your marketing campaign, positioning you as an effective advisor in the community you want to reach.

Join trade or professional associations in your target market. Because associations publish specialized trade magazines and newsletters, they are an effective way to keep track of news, people, trends, and up-and-coming events. Attend conventions, trade shows, seminars, and other networking meetings.

Exhibiting at trade shows gets you deeply involved in a target market's community. You become one of them. People always prefer to do business with a person they know and trust.

When you understand a target market's business concerns, and prospects perceive you as one of them, your audience is especially receptive to your message. Now that your audience is receptive, communicate the benefits you are uniquely positioned to provide.

Step Seven: Give People A Way To Find You

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is the way to reach a customer at the exact moment they are seeking knowledge on the topic at hand. According to the Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization, it's "Just-in-Time Marketing" (<http://www.sempo.org>).

Most Web sites are little more than on-line business cards, but search engine marketing opens a huge opportunity to outpace your local competition.

Zoominfo.com

You need to at least check and insure the information is accurate. More than 47 million people are listed on the site. Even if you've never visited this site, chances are it has created an aggregate profile for you, gleaned from bits and pieces of online data associated with your name. Just click "claim profile," then follow the site's easy edit process to fill in your own professional history and other relevant information. Your own write-up will now replace their inaccurate one.

LinkedIn - You may already have a profile with LinkedIn (linkedin.com), the large business social networking site that lets you "connect" with colleagues and experts in your field. The site allows you to easily promote yourself and your accomplishments without most of the potential embarrassment of other social networking sites. It's difficult to get into trouble on LinkedIn, because you put up only professional information. You can personalize your profile page link, so others can find your profile at [linkedin.com /in/your name](http://linkedin.com/in/yourname). (Click on "Profile:" look for your "Public Profile" Web address, and click "Edit:") Once you've done that customizing, you can easily list your LinkedIn page on your résumé and Web site or blog. Bonus: A LinkedIn profile will usually pop up on the first page of Google results.

Go to Q&A section; you can use your expertise to answer other people's questions, which makes you more visible.

Spoke.com - aggregate data. I'd only worry about fixing the ones that show up in the first few pages of your Google results.

Facebook - if you haven't joined the crowd yet, don't worry. In fact, there are so many pitfalls associated with it, you might be better off without a page, unless you become a master of its privacy settings.

Twitter - it's a free social messaging site, but like Facebook you can use it for professional gain (by following the feeds of well-respected people in your industry).

Step Eight: Network to Success

Get the word out. Don't hide away in your office. Let people know you're in business. Send notices to trade associations in which you might want to become involved. If you join an association, don't fade into the woodwork;

become an active member. If you position yourself correctly as a problem solver, and correctly align with market forces, you'll find the doors wide open.

As an active participant in an association or industry, you can sponsor awards, contests or scholarships that give others recognition and help them grow in their professions. Or, simply work with the association sponsoring an award or scholarship. Such activities might not immediately show on your balance sheet, but they will help you gain recognition as a leader in the industry—an image you definitely want to project.

Give a little extra effort: Always give your customers more than they expect. Make your sales literature readily available. Send out additional reports, especially to key customers. Send clients something special around the holidays, even Valentine's Day, or some other appropriate occasion.

Keep in touch: Keep in touch with key customers. Let them know you appreciate their business. Send them advance notices of seminars. Frequently send out reprints and sales literature, with a personal note attached. A newsletter can keep your customers up-to-date. Whatever you do, don't give established customers a chance to forget or replace you.

Upgrade your business cards message:

- Add content to your card.
- Carry your business cards with you wherever you go.
- Hand business cards out to every new or old acquaintance you talk to—on the street, in an airplane, in the market, wherever.
- Include a positioning statement on your card, such as, "I specialize in providing financial services to small-business owners."
- Exchange cards. Be sure you get the other person's card, too. Write a note on the back of the person's card to remind you of the conversation and any follow-up you want to do.
- Write your home phone number on your card, but only for people you mark as being special.
- Have your office hours printed on the card, or note when you're usually available. This will make it easier for the prospect to contact you.

Most people take this technique for granted. They have business cards printed, which then just sit on office desks. If you have business cards, maximize their use.

Step Nine: Create a Measurement System

If you can't measure it, you can't improve it: You need to set up systematic reviews of your marketing strategies. Conduct a major review of your progress every six months. This will create momentum, strengthen your vision, emphasize successes and achieved goals, and help you to stay on your marketing track.

Lastly, review your old marketing material. Most people think of packaging as something to do when you have extra time, but in a commoditized look-alike world, the fastest way to differentiate yourself from your competition is in your packaging. Packaging means all your marketing materials from business card, yellow pages, to your firm's brochure. Jettison anything that does *not* reflect how what you do; solve your target market's problems, eliminate your clients worries or uncover their opportunities.

Conducting a marketing review is critical. Ask yourself these questions:

- ✚ *Where can I make my market program stronger?*
- ✚ *What more can I do? Is my approach achieving the results I want?*
- ✚ *What parts of my business do I need to strengthen?*
- ✚ *How can I create more demand for my services and products?*
- ✚ *Who are the additional clients I really want?*
- ✚ *What do these preferred clients really want?*
- ✚ *What are their key current financial concerns?*

Summary:

Your marketing theme of "being found" should resonate in your marketing actions. Commit to upgrading your content and do something to move your plan ahead every day. Study how your services can best be used in various scenarios. Find personal stories that show how your process has an application in your client's world. Rather than trying to humbly express why you are so good at what you do, tell stories of those who have benefited from the value of your beliefs, methods, and solutions. Recall real life events of how structuring wealth or assets, educating clients, assessing business risks, conducting succession planning, uncovering insurance issues, and estate planning helped real people.

Author: Larry Chambers (www.AttractionBuilder.com) is a writer and author whose books and articles assist firms and organizations to gain credibility and visibility. He is the author of *Credibility Marketing* and *The Guide to Financial Public Relations*.