

# 10 Deadly Marketing Mistakes that Can Kill Your Online Business

By Angela Wu

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Small business owners sometimes lament over the fact that they don't have a million-dollar marketing budget. While we've all thought about how much easier things would be if we had unlimited funds, it's still possible to earn a decent profit with the right marketing plan. Thousands of home business owners can attest to their success at building a profitable business on a 'shoestring' budget.

However, making a few mistakes can just as easily lose you a nice chunk of cash. Are you making these common mistakes?

\_\_1. Trying to market to as wide an audience as possible.

You can't be everything to everyone, no matter how hard you try.

Who did you originally create your product for? Assuming you did your research and know that there's a demand for your product, then you also know who your audience is. Focus your efforts on reaching these people and showing them how your product or service will benefit them. Don't worry about pleasing everyone else.

\_\_2. Focusing too much on you or your company.

How many times have you seen a site that says something like, "We're an established, 100-year company listed on the NASDAQ with over 10 billion dollars in sales, powered by our cutting-edge, state-of-the-art blah-blah-blah technology..."

\*Yawn\*. So what? As a prospect, I don't care. I want to know how your product or service is going to benefit

ME.

Focus on your customer. All the details about you and your company should be background information, not the focus of your marketing efforts.

\_\_3. Sticking with a marketing strategy that doesn't work.

Don't get caught up in the idea that 'things will get better' if you're not seeing results with your current marketing strategy. If you do the same things, you can expect the same results. If you've put in an honest effort and it's simply not giving you the results you're looking for, then it's time to try something else.

\_\_4. Changing or discarding a strategy that works.

It's easy to feel 'bored' with the same old thing... but if you have a winning marketing strategy that consistently gives results, then why change it?

The desire for 'something new' isn't a good reason to discard a great strategy. Sure, you can keep experimenting and testing new methods to see if you can improve upon your results... but be aware that your profits may suffer. Be sure to keep backups of all your marketing materials; if your new strategy doesn't work, you can always go back to the old one.

\_\_5. Inconsistent or no follow-ups.

Although some people buy on impulse, many prefer to think things over first. There can be any number of reasons why a prospect doesn't buy right away: money's tight at the time, they have other pressing concerns, they were distracted before they could purchase... whatever the reason, be sure to follow up with your prospects. You'll be much more likely to catch them at a time that they're ready to buy.

\_\_6. Taking a passive, rather than pro-active role.

Sitting back and waiting for money to fall into your lap just isn't going to work -- no matter how 'automated' your business is, or how wonderful your product. Take an active role in marketing your business... and that includes asking for referrals. Let your customers know that you'll do what you can make them happy, and ask them to pass along your URL to others who may be interested.

\_\_\_7. Expecting prospects to do too much.

Don't you just hate visiting a site, only to find that you either have to call for more information, or fill out a nosy form with lots of personal information so that the business can call you? Most people don't want to risk a high-pressure sales call, so they won't bother.

It's intrusive and can be time-consuming. Give your prospect the \*option\* of getting the information they want from the web, without having to speak directly to someone. Your phone number can be displayed as well, for those who prefer to talk to you or your staff in person.

That's not to say that asking for personal information -- or expecting a phone call -- is inappropriate for all businesses, of course. But in general, if you want people to stick around, make it easy for them.

\_\_\_8. Assuming that visitors know what to do.

I remember visiting one particular site not too long ago. I read the sales pitch and browsed the site... only to find a telephone number and a small form with a place for my email address. Confused, I thought, 'Am I supposed to call to order? What does the form do? Is it a newsletter signup box or is it an ordering form? How do I place an order?'

That site lost my sale, because there weren't any clear instructions. Tell your visitors what you would like them to do, and make the process as simple as possible.

\_\_\_9. Trying to do everything for free -- or not enough.

Many beginners try every free promotion method they can find. Others think that free promotions are useless, so they shell out large amounts of cash on what they believe are "effective" marketing methods.

- \* 'Free' isn't a 'bargain' if you don't get results.
- \* Throwing money at marketing isn't going to make your campaign a success.

There are plenty of excellent free or low-cost methods of promoting your business, and many methods that require a larger investment. Both provide excellent opportunities. The goal is to market your business using techniques that give you the largest return for your investment. And if it's free? So much the better; you'll reap larger profits!

\_\_\_10. Basing your marketing plan solely on assumptions or advice.

One common mistake is to do exactly what your competitors are doing. But just because they're doing something does not necessarily mean it's working! You could be copying a failing strategy.

There are countless marketing tips and many 'gurus'. Each one can only let you know what has worked for him or her. However, no matter how many people it's worked for, there is no guarantee that their strategies will work for you also. Studying as much of this material as you can will allow you to test and develop \*your own\* effective strategies -- those that directly bring results for your particular business.

Test everything you do. Your customers will 'vote' on the effectiveness of your marketing by making a purchase.

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Angela is the editor of Online Business Basics, a practical guide that shows eBusiness beginners how to build an online business on a shoestring budget. Visit her online at <http://onlinebusinessbasics.com/article.html> or request a series of 10 free reports to get you started: <mailto:businessbasics@workyourleads.com> .

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