



Marketing Wisdom for 2005: 105 Marketers & Agencies Share Real-Life Tips

by The Readers of MarketingSherpa

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A Letter from MarketingSherpa's Publisher

Do you ever feel less-than-inspired by your job?

Perhaps like me you've been involved in marketing for so many years and run so many campaigns that your brain begins to feel sucked dry of all enthusiasm.

Plus, it's not always easy being a marketer with the negativity that surrounds our profession these days. In b-to-b we are seen as a "cost center" churning out leads that sales reps claim are never quite good enough. In b-to-c, we are slimy commercial interests who sully the world with advertising attacking consumers from every direction.

Advertising, PR, and marketing used to be slightly glamorous professions you could brag about being in. (Remember Darren in Bewitched on TV?) Now, the profession feels a bit... tainted.

I'm incredibly lucky because every week I and the rest of the editorial team here at MarketingSherpa get to interview the world's best marketers in-depth. Their passion, their enthusiasm, their lessons, get the blood moving. (I feel a bit sorry for our own marketing team though, who has to cope with me bursting into their office every few days with a new idea from the latest story we're publishing.)

My best lesson for this past year though was to rejuvenate your marketing and business batteries by helping a not-for-profit who can't afford a high-powered marketer like yourself on staff.

I've always been such a workaholic that my contributions to help the world were limited to writing checks for charity. But when my friend Charles Terry of CWT Consulting asked me to join the Advisory Board of the Glimpse Foundation in 2004, I couldn't resist.

Glimpse provides a place online and in print for young people studying and living abroad to contribute essays, photos and essays to. They help all of us gain insights into countries and cultures around the world, and into what it means to be a global citizen.

I found myself coming alive in my first Board meeting. It felt so good to have a worthy help-the-world goal to apply all those hard-won marketing lessons and skills to.

In this cynical post-20th century world, we sometimes forget how critical marketing skills are. Marketing can transform a tiny entrepreneurial dream into reality. PR can get the word out about something that helps many lives. Advertising can keep brands we all love alive.

So, my advice to you is, if you find yourself feeling weary in 2005, look around for a good cause to volunteer apply your marketing skills to. You'll find your enthusiasm for marketing as a whole revived and you'll appreciate your day-job like never before. Plus, you'll meet some awfully interesting people.

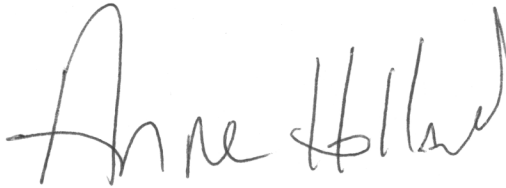
But don't just take my word for how great volunteering your marketing services is — here's a note from MarketingSherpa reader Claire Thompson of Zed PR (www.zedpr.co.uk) of how volunteering revived her marketing spirits:

My big lessons for 2004 were learned from a voluntary PR project. The Action 100 ride runs annually from Bristol to London at the end of August. The 100 mile ride raises funds for Action Medical Research, a charity that funds a huge amount of projects based on clinical evidence and has already resulted in a wide range of medical advances. Volunteering professional services took me away from my normal comfort zone — technology and telecoms — into the realms of consumer and regional media contact.

They may have gained time, creativity and expertise, but I gained contacts, personal negotiation skills, and the satisfaction of working in a field that was new to me, but which helped me think outside of the box for my normal client set.

Everyone should commit some time to a local charity project, even if it's only once. It's a great way to demonstrate how to be really creative on virtually no budget and will finetune event, people and time management skills.

Thanks for your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Holland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anne" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Holland".

Anne Holland

Part 1: Email Marketing

1 It pays to be contrarian. If you want to reach the small and midsize business (SMB) market, send email on non-typical days. For a monthly newsletter, I've found the best week to send them to this market is the third week of the month.

Most monthly newsletters seem to go out the first week of the month, or even the end of the last week of the month. Consequently, the recipients are bombarded with newsletters at the same time. Also, I have started experimenting sending out newsletters on Fridays, a day I never in the past considered a good day. However, for this market, where entrepreneurs and small business owners tend to work at odd hours, from wherever they happen to be, Friday is not a bad day for B2B newsletters. In fact, a fair number (10% or more) get opened over the weekend, when many small business owners and entrepreneurs are apparently catching up on their reading.

I've even noticed a few of the other large newsletters intended for this market are sent out on Sundays, a day I plan to experiment with in 2005. By sending out emails in these non-traditional days/weeks, I have consistently gotten 50% open rates.

Anita Campbell, Small Business Trends, www.smbtrends.com

2 We dramatically increased click through rates by offering a Chinese version of our newsletter. 80% of our very targeted audience downloaded the Chinese version, increasing our effective circulation by 47%.

We license wireless software technology to handset manufacturers all over the world. About 70% of our business is in Asia. This year we decided to offer both an English and Chinese version of the newsletter, even though our target audience has pretty good English. Our English version already had pretty good statistics. 37% of valid recipients clicked through and downloaded.

This allowed us to create two segregated lists, one which preferred English and one which preferred Chinese. We now send the email in Chinese as well. 20% of our emails are now in Chinese, and the click through rate for the Chinese newsletter is a whopping 80%. It showed to us just how important localisation is. The results have caused us to re-evaluate all of the material we send and make localisation a top priority for all kinds of material in 2005.

Peter Davies, TTPCom, www.ttpcom.com

3 Customers love to feel appreciated. This year we started sending out 'thank you' emails to customers who had purchased in the prior month thanking them for their purchase and offering an incentive to purchase from us again. Our repeat purchase % increased dramatically and this turned out to be a super successful program!

Jennifer Tabbal, Discovery Channel Store, <http://shopping.discovery.com>

4 The most consistent thing we've found from our email campaigns is that Pain gets far better results than Benefits. In psychology, it's called hitting the old brain — the decision making part of the brain that is solely concerned with Me (your prospect) and is triggered by emotional reactions. Put your prospect smack in the middle of their point(s) of pain right from the first line of the email, make 'em squirm, then give 'em a possible way out with what you offer.

To be most effective with this tactic you must first spend the time to seriously refine your target list of recipients so you're hitting the people that actually feel this pain every day or week.

Note: This may not be the ultimate purchaser of your solution, but could easily become your staunchest champion within their organization, and that's worth its weight in gold.

Darren Smith, Point of Reference, www.point-of-reference.com

5 We have a client with a B2C email list of around 80,000. It was several years old, and so had some 'opt-out' members on it. All came from transactions on his own site (none rented or purchased). Before we would work with him, we sent a confirmation email to his list requiring recipients to click a link in order to stay subscribed. If they didn't click, they'd be automatically removed.

His list lost about 25% of its members after that confirmation campaign (almost all of them were AOL members). Plus, about a dozen of the AOL users *still* reported his campaigns as spam, even *after* they confirmed their subscription. He was initially scared about losing a large chunk of his list, but overall performance of the campaign (leads generated) stayed level.

Now, his list is nothing but confirmed opt-in. It goes out once a week. Yet it still manages to get 3 or 4 AOL spam complaints from their feedback loop system every month (the FBL system sends you a copy of every email from your server that an AOL user has classified as 'spam').

Lessons learned?

- Confirmed opt-in will probably make your list shrink, but that is probably a *good* thing.
- Even with confirmed opt-in, you'll still get a small amount of spam complaints
- We think the very small percentage of AOL spam reports are accidents, or they are his competitors being malicious. Which takes us to the next lesson...
- A 'one-click' unsubscribe link (which embeds the user's email address or userID into the link) is extremely handy. If your email is classified as spam in AOL, a copy is sent to you, but they remove the complainer's email address. With a one click unsubscribe link, you can remove that person from your list immediately, and be done with it.
- If the client ever deviates from his schedule, like sends a day late, or sends an extra email that week, AOL spam complaints come in (about 2 or 3 complaints each time, as opposed to 1).

- The AOL FBL/Scomp reports are not perfect, but for an ESP like us, with thousands of users, they're a good indicator of overall list cleanliness
Ben Chestnut, MailChimp, www.mailchimp.com

6 Per your advice, on September 20th this year, I moved my ezine delivery date from Tuesdays to Mondays. My open rate went from 39.3 percent to a 42.8 percent. Those extra percentage points added up to more dollars in my bottom line.

Lorrie Morgan-Ferrero, Red Hot Copy, www.red-hot-copy.com

7 We work for a few big companies in Germany as well as a lot of midsize companies. These companies have only a few email addresses and our focus is to give them the chance to win new subscribers easily. We produced a special subscription page where the company reps themselves can subscribe new readers. The trick: parts of the email are flexible, but with a default text.

Example: A high-class restaurant asks his guests for their email-addresses after they finished their meal. The next morning they get a 'thank you once again for your visit'-email that can be personalized in the first sentence and in the postscriptum. So the email may start like this: Mike, thanks for your visit with your wife and your lovely kids in our restaurant yesterday. It was a pleasure...

P.S.: You asked for the possibility to arrange a birthday dinner for your grandma. Of course we are happy to be your host then! The effect is absolutely great — people love this kind of mailings. The additional work for the restaurant is little, if there is nothing special to say the subscriber just gets a default standard text. Of course it works only with a few new subscribers per day because of the additional workload — maybe 20 or so — but then it is a great feature. We do this for a couple of 5-star hotels and restaurants in Berlin, Frankfurt and Hamburg and I can really recommend it to other marketers.

Uwe Sinn, rabbit eMarketing, www.rabbit-emarketing.de

8 Lesson: For email marketing campaigns, communication is Key and it is your responsibility that the framework is in place for all personnel before hitting the 'send' button.

I was working with a high-tech company who sold networking equipment. The company was clearly old school but wanted to do email marketing. Their email marketing strategy was sketchy at best so we went in there and overhauled the strategy and got the company on track. One of the email campaigns this company wanted to do was to develop email campaign to get at least 25 new firms in channel partner program by year-end.

Process: Met with all internal departments impacted by this campaign for their buy-in, input and feedback. Had input in planning, development, and testing phases. Developed, tested, implemented, and managed campaign.

Result: While we exceeded the goal of the campaign and improved the company's house list in the process, the Sales Operations Manager decided to send out an email piece of her own. We did damage control by immediately

sending a 'we apologize for the oversight' email, in fact, only a couple of recipients were bothered. Lesson: We did what we could to enable communication and we got a lot of GREAT feedback, we know next time, to better educate people on the campaign, our involvement in it, and how we were helping the company to reach its ultimate channel goal — more partners = more customers.

Sue Duris, M4 Communications, Inc., www.m4communications.com

9 I had been creating marketing letters for sometime to keep top of mind with my prospects for corporate video production. It was a letter format, printed on glossy stock, which included a few images from a recent video I had completed along with a 'clever' note. I sent it out every three months or so and never got much of a response. Some people when I would check didn't even remember seeing it with all their other mail. After a suggestion from my 'Marketing Mentor' (Ilise Benum) I started to follow-up the letter with an email that had some repeat of the message and a few of the images I used in the print piece. My response rate increased from zero to on average 25%. It was sometimes an acknowledgement they had seen the print piece and other times a request to give them a call about an upcoming project. I found that the follow-up of the email enabled my prospects an easy, quick way to acknowledge my promo and say Hello in a no fuss, no muss way.

Don Forschmidt, PrimeLight Productions, www.primelight.net

10 I started my first job at an online marketing firm in early May as a Senior Deployment Officer. I was biased and cynical, to say the least, in regards to email marketing. It only took about 2 weeks to turn my thoughts around.

I was responsible for an email campaign for a client who sold skin cream supposedly made by a missionary from the 18th century... HOW BORING! I 'knew' the campaign would tank. I had convinced myself that this was a total waste of time and nearly called the client to consult them about maybe changing their strategy. The subject line they wanted to use you ask? '18th century nun cured my jock itch'. Yes, you read that correctly. I figured the best we could hope for was a low complaint and opt-out rate. I was positive the end user would be asking themselves 'A time traveling, jock-itch curing nun, eh? What happened to good ole Viagra spam?' I couldn't be more wrong. The campaign did great with open rates upwards of 14 percent. Another great one was a campaign for a client who sold exotic jerky. 'Man Bites Gator' was the subject line and it experienced even better results.

The lesson I learned was one I use everyday here at my desk: Use your imagination and keep the email exciting. Outrageous subject lines have become a specialty of mine ever since these two campaigns.

Bruce A. Prokopets, Data Resource Consulting Inc, www.dataresourceconsulting.com

11 This year I was fortunate enough to help one of my clients begin email marketing against a list of email address leads collected from their internet Web site. Their product is a high-ticket item and their industry has a shady reputation at times (not my client, of course). So we expected low open and clickthrough rates. Many of the addresses also were six to eight months old with no email sent to them and so we expected high unsubscribe rates. However, the first email campaign (two rounds of email) went beautifully: low unsubscribe rates, high open rates (50% on one email), and strong clickthroughs. We generated strong foot traffic for their open house and a few people became customers. It was a beautiful thing. We nailed everything.

It was too easy. In the second emailing, the first of two emails sent was a simple offer email, a personal letter with lots of the same pretty pictures as the first email campaign but laid out on the page better. We had high expectations. Then we watched the open rates for that email drop by half and clickthroughs do worse.

So for the third email we swapped back in the email layout that had worked in the first campaign. The open rates and clickthroughs increased strongly. I looked at the low-performing email and suddenly had an epiphany: too few links or, more precisely, too few opportunities to convert interest into action. I had gotten too smart and thought a personal letter from the Office Manager with a few choice links and terrific product photos would perform better than an impersonal catalog layout with lots of smaller product pictures but more links. I won't do that again!

Tim Slavin, Red House Communications, LLC, www.redhousecommunications.com

12 We get our customers' best response when the email messages they receive are very brief with only 1-2 lines of copy and a small graphic at most. Our City Diary customers, who order their personal pocket planners each year, rarely respond to anything other than a simple reminder that they should order a new diary before the end of the year closes. And when our customers do finally make their annual visit to our web site they do so with one purpose in mind — to purchase their diary. And most customers will disregard any other invitations until that purchase is completed. We own three online business and we've found that the best time to encourage them to visit another of our sites is at the end of their checkout. This method has been particularly effective with our customers who have been with us for over 25 years and may not be aware that we've branched out to include other product lines.

Marketing Analyst, Per Annum, Inc., www.PerAnnum.com

13 This year, I learned readers really don't dislike ads in their email newsletters (no matter what they say) — they dislike poorly done ads in their newsletters.

One of my clients had a twice-monthly newsletter with the requisite ad for a product she offered. She tried to keep the ad as small as possible and kept the focus on her content. But that wasn't working. Not even a little bit. When she and I started working together, I took her through all the basic steps of a newsletter — from branding to personality. And then we got to the idea of crafting a really enormous offer and call to action.

And that's when she wrote an ad that I really didn't think would work. It was beautifully written and engaging. The writing wasn't the problem. Rather, I didn't think it would work because it was so long. Nearly half the length of her newsletter in one advertisement. Plus, she put it right smack at the top of her newsletter. I thought readers would be annoyed, and maybe even a little resentful — after all, whenever I talk with clients about their newsletters, their big complaint about other people's newsletters is the advertising.

But, exactly the opposite was true. Not only did she have banner sales records, but her readers responded very positively. Since she met with such great success, I've seen other clients try a similar approach — and it's working. I'd always heard readers have an inherent distaste for the commercial side of a business newsletter, and that seemed to set up a combatant relationship (however subtle) between publisher and reader. 'How can I just convince them to buy?' This year, I saw the power of a well-told story in enticing customers and I've learned that ads don't have to be a sore spot for readers.

Jessica Albon, Newsletter Spa, www.newsletterspa.com

14 I learned that, just because the younger generation has grown up with computers in their classrooms and with Internet capabilities as part of the world in which they have grown up, they do not necessarily know very much about how things like email work. We have phone banks whose agents ask customers for their email address so we can send them a message of thanks for doing business with us. However, these agents periodically report email addresses that start 'www.'. Another common mistake is having email addresses reported with the word 'at' instead of the @ symbol. In other words, when it comes to technology, familiarity does not necessarily breed comprehension.

Anonymous

Part 2: Search Marketing

15 Part of the reason pay per click marketing is so interesting is because we actually got more by spending less. Let me repeat that, we INCREASED our results by LOWERING our maximum price per click thus dropping our ad from 1st position to 3rd position, and almost doubling click through. In what other marketing medium can you REALLY get more by spending less!?

Josh Katinger, Accession Media, LLC, www.accessionmedia.com

16 One of the lessons I learned this year (or rather, helped my client learn thanks to your help) was just how powerful targeted landing pages can be for conversion rates. My client (a b2b & b2C healthcare services firm) had been generating qualified leads using traditional offline advertising methods, at a cost of over \$6.00 per lead. We pitched a strategy to test paid search in an effort to reduce the overall cost per qualified lead. The client agreed, but had many preconceived notions about the best methods to use. The company was anxious to increase site traffic and decrease lead costs using paid search, but had a less than 100% commitment to all of the work required to make PPC programs work as well as they could.

We outlined the implications that such a program would have for their web site, its layout and navigation, and of course, the content. The response we received was not unfamiliar: the client wanted to jump into paid search, but preferred to delay the site changes we felt were critical to the program's success. After weeks of 'beating a dead horse' we made a decision to show them in real life. We launched a PPC campaign that sent traffic to the client's chosen page — the home page.

Despite our best efforts, the client vehemently believed that this was the best page to send searchers to. So we decided to prove our strategies to them. Not surprisingly, conversion rates were dismal for this campaign. What's more, we saw cost per lead actually increase to over \$10 per lead. Offline advertising was the winner. (So far.)

After 3 weeks of doing it their way, (and 'peppering' them with many of the wonderful articles that Marketing Sherpa produces that pertain to paid search to help substantiate our advice,) we convinced the client to give us 3 weeks to show them that our way would deliver better results. We produced 4 highly targeted landing pages with content relevant to 4 different sub-groups of searchers. We channeled traffic to their respective pages, and used the same offer on each page.

Within 3 weeks we were able to produce qualified leads of at least the same quality as their print advertising program (in many cases they were much more qualified) at a cost of only \$.58 per lead. A decrease of over 1000%! We also produced a 50% increase in the number of leads generated. We showed the client that by delivering content to searchers that was highly relevant to the topics they were searching on, and by streamlining the signup process we could dramatically increase the number of leads generated and slash the overall cost per lead.

The client now has a much more cost effective lead generation program that delivers many more qualified leads, and has since chosen to divert their offline advertising budget to our online effort (and listen to us much more than before!) A fantastic success! Thank you for helping R.O.Why! Marketing convert a client into a true believer of the power of Internet marketing done right!

Brian LeCount, R.O.Why! Marketing, www.ROWhyMarketing.com

17 2004 saw a lot of changes for us. One site we worked on for SEO was best completed by using a new site vs. optimizing the existing site. Creating a new site, fresh without re-creating the wheel made it easier, quicker and optimized from the ground up, we had great results in 60 days. The old ways may have worked, but using a new site we were able to do things the original webmaster didn't take into consideration when building. Our job was easy once the client understood the benefits and saw the results.

David Hallmark, CrystalVision Web Site Design & Internet Services, www.cvwvp.com

18 Don't underestimate the stupidity of your competitors. In search engine marketing you will frequently find competitors bidding unprofitably high for listings and undermining the effectiveness and cost efficiency of your campaign.

The problem in most instances is that your competitors are not smart enough to figure out that they are driving up the cost of advertising to a point where it is no longer efficient. If your competitors' job success is measured on being listed in the top spot instead of gaining cost effective conversions then you will have an even more difficult challenge to reach your own goals cost effectively.

However, revenge is sweet indeed when a competitor bids \$5, the 3rd bid is \$0.43 and you can bid \$4.99 in 2nd place. You're forcing the competitor to pay \$5 per click while your effective cost is only \$0.44 per click. Not everyone knows this trick and goes to show that you should never underestimate the stupidity or superior ability of you competitors to impact your own campaigns.

Jurie Pieterse, ING DIRECT, www.ingdirect.com

19 I learned that pay-per-click is still an undiscovered jewel. An associate and I set up an online board game retailer in October of this year... fed primarily by PPC traffic. It is now December 21 (less than 90 days later), and the company is processing order number 2,531! Over 90% of this traffic has been generated by PPC and the client is ecstatic. In fact, the online store's success has been so overwhelming, the owner is rethinking his initial plan of adding a new retail store in 2005. Why add costly overhead when you can open an online store and generate significant sales for just a few hundred dollars?

Jay Lipe, Emerge Marketing, www.emergemarketing.com

20 One of the most important lessons I learned this year is that paid search continues to be one of the most effective and quantifiable means of online advertising, despite increasing bid pressure. Our paid search agency continues to grow our client list and see their success day in and day out. We feel a great responsibility to our clientele because of the importance paid search plays in their marketing and business growth. Tactically, beyond Google, Overture, and to a much more limited degree Ask Jeeves and Findwhat, there's no need to waste you or your clients time and money; but keep on testing and experimenting!

Jon Lisbin, Point It!, Inc., www.pointit.com

21 Looking at just conversion isn't enough. You need to know which goals are converting and how much that is worth. And if a ppc keyword isn't converting, it isn't always the keyword's fault. Sometimes it is the landing page, other times it is the funnel process, and often times it is the ecommerce system. Finding the breakdown in the process is the best way to improve the return on ppc keywords.

Brett Crosby, Urchin Software Corporation, www.urchin.com

22 We publish a financial weekly newsletter. For the past three years, our subscription price has been \$49.50 per month. We had experienced reasonable growth in our subscriber base, but we wanted to test the market to see if we could find a lower price point where the volume of new subscribers would justify the new lower price. We ran an advertising campaign, primarily through AdWords and Overture, for this test. The price was dropped to \$9.95. We expected this rate to have a dramatic increase in our signups. It had a small increase, but certainly nothing to get excited about.

Our second test was astounding... We moved the price to \$19.95 for the TurnerTrends Report and \$19.95 for the TurnerTrends Stock Ratings product. Then, we ran the same ads for the same timeframe. Our signup rate dramatically improved. We experienced more than a 500% increase in signups. And, the amazing thing is the vast majority of signups select both the TurnerTrends Report and the TurnerTrends Ratings, for a total of \$39.90 per month.

So, the lesson we learned was interesting for us, anyway. 1) You can offer your product at too cheap of a price and lose credibility. Our customers just did not believe a credible financial service would charge that low of a price. and 2) You can offer a product for under \$20, but include additional components and most subscribers will take the combined product.

Mike Turner, TurnerTrends, Inc., www.turnertrends.com

23 It is not necessary to build out massive keyword lists. A carefully selected, refined list of keywords that speak to your customer is all you need and is much more manageable!

Gina Christiani, Bookspan, www.bookspan.com

Part 3: Site Design & Conversion Tactics

24 Our site had gotten a bit stale. Shortly before Christmas season it was decided to do a 'quick' facelift for Christmas. The result was a lower click thru and volume below last years. My lesson: Never get talked into a rush site overhaul just before a major buying season, no matter how well intentioned! Our 'stale' site was proven a better business generator.

John Coons, E Diamond Corp, www.ediamondco.com

25 I learned that spending a lot of money on a slick new Web site doesn't necessarily result in a higher conversion rate and increased revenues. I learned that even highly gifted people who don't 'get' the company culture are not the ones to put in charge of marketing communications. I learned that Marketing Sherpa is a great thing to read, and that we can use the ideas there to promote our organizational intelligence. (Your informational is regularly read by almost half of our staff.) Thanks for the great job you do.

Lorraine Janeway, Pres., Aperion Audio, aperionaudio.com

26 In 2005, creative Web site design will decline in importance as the use of analytics rises and people begin to see hard data that proves a functional Web site is more important than a good looking Web site.

David S. Culbertson, LightBulb Interactive, www.lightbulbinteractive.com

27 The biggest lesson of '04 has to be the JC Penny case study. I dub '04 the year of conversion for me personally. And at the end of '04 it all came together in a practical case study. In it I learned the most important lesson of my autodidactic study, namely that the visitor-to-conversion metric is not the end all, cure all metric of Internet marketing. JC Penny pointed out that their visitor conversion was very low in the month proceeding the Holidays. They shed light on the fact that just because conversion may be low over a specific period of time, the overall site effectiveness might be at an all time high. I have since grown into measuring a Web site's effectiveness as a whole and how it contributes to the business' overall mission. Now I am always on the look out to measure a Web site's effectiveness beyond the standard visitor conversion metrics. Thanks Sherpa!!!

Matt Browne, Integral Impressions, www.integralimpressions.com

28 When showing new Web site designs to your CEO, make sure the mockup uses gibberish instead of something close to the actual text that you might eventually use. My CEO dug in his heels on what unfolded to be a bad design because he liked the title. It was a 3-week project delay and additional (un-budgeted) design revs to get him to come around.

Stephanie Worthington, Orbital Data, www.orbitaldata.com

29 Never underestimate the power of simplicity and the free trial. Earlier this year we were running a clunky, ugly site, circa 1999, featuring a subscription process requiring the user to complete seven registration screens (and seven 'submit' buttons, for that matter) in order to complete a pre-paid order for an annual subscription. Streamlining that process to one screen and a 30-day free trial lifted net conversion by 150%, with no other changes to the ugly, anti-marketing design of the old site. By contrast, our mid-year, marketing-friendly site redesign, complete with plenty of highlighted benefits and 'try now' buttons, only raised conversion by a few percentage points.

While our redesign was time and money well spent, primarily due to dramatically improved product usability and some great bundling opportunities, the benefits of giving users a simple, risk-free approach to ordering, regardless of site aesthetics, was not lost on us.

Hugh Byrne, Primedia EquipmentWatch, www.equipmentwatch.com

30 In our online prints and photo gifts store, we found that placing a simple 10% off coupon code in a pop-up window called "View Current Discounts" gets discovered and applied frequently by potential shoppers. On average the "hidden" coupon code can account for an increase of 20% of our total store sales. And for customer goodwill it makes every shopper feel like they are getting a deal. To limit your exposure, you can set limits on the coupon.

Russ Novy, Webshots/CNET Networks

31 In 2004 I was reminded once again that customers rule and yes, it's true, pop-ups must die.

One of the more successful conversion tools we used over the last few years was a Web site exit offer/survey. The promotion was delivered by a pop-up window when a customer left a site, and provided clients with an opportunity to both gather customer feedback to improve their site and save the sale. The idea is solid and had performed well, but this past year, we saw the effectiveness significantly diminished.

The widespread adoption of pop-up blockers (enabled by default in 2004 for Internet Explorer's browser w. SP2) prevented large percentages of customers from even seeing the offer. Of more concern is the latest research that shows pop-ups are now ranked as the most hated form of advertising and customers transfer their negative reactions to advertisers who use them. With this type of strong momentum, it's long past time to change course and come up with new, innovative ideas and conversion tools.

Suzanne Galvez, eMergent Marketing, www.emergentmarketing.com

32 Averages lead to average results — and who wants to be average? This year we started taking 'average' conversion rates from our clients' sites (leads generated or sales divided by visits) and by using smart web analytics tools to divide the data into various segments to see how each segment converted. We wanted to find out what lay behind the overall average conversion rates they report. What did we find? Conversion rates from visitors who first found them through a banner campaign were 85% below 'average' where are as

conversion rates from returning visitors who had previously responded were 150% greater than average. Users of internal search are 75% more likely to order. We saw a range of conversion rates from 0.25% to greater than 50% depending on the segment! How can you use an average to cover that range?

Answer: You can't! If you use averages in your web analytics you are doing yourself self a real disservice. So in 2005 we plan to ensure all our clients stop using averages and focus on each segment and how they convert. With this data in hand we have been able to fine tune landing page strategies, search strategies and re-engineer sites to optimise them for each segment identified.

Matthew Tod, Logan Tod & Co, www.logantod.com

33 I manage a marketing Web site for a wireless manufacturer's style-centric phone line. Over the years we've been spending sizeable portions of our budget on content to feature on the site, including music videos and some original video content. We had found ourselves in a bit of a dry spell with new content, and had begun to look to new content partners in the record industry and elsewhere.

When our client mentioned that they had access to their latest set of humorous brand-oriented TV spots, we debated whether or not we should add them to the site. After all, these are TV spots... for a company. We assumed that posting TV spots would be too overt a tactic; that it would backfire the way selling corporate logowear on your site reeks of 'yield to the company' self-importance. So we asked ourselves, do people want to see these TV spots, or will it turn off our visitors?

Taking the risk, we added the three 30-second TV spots to the site. As a single act of promotion, I submitted a link to the spots on a popular gadget news blog. Yep, you guessed it. The TV spots increased traffic by a whopping 100% — doubling traffic — and sustained for over three weeks. Thanks in large part to referrers from the gadget blog, the spots were the single most effective content we've ever put on the site in its 17+ month life. We found that entertaining and viral content do not always need to be specifically manufactured, licensed, or produced. Without realizing it, clients may already have compelling, attractive content waiting in their arsenal.

Perry Wang, Media Revolution, LLC, www.mrev.com

Part 4: Advertising (Online and Off)

34 For the first time, we experimented with a Word of Mouth campaign to help promote awareness and drive conversion of our new custom boot program called BOOTSTUDIO. This program allows you to personalize and customize every aspect of one of our most popular waterproof boots. This campaign enlisted the services of DEI Worldwide and focused on engaging existing and prospective Timberland consumers via chat rooms, message boards, and instant messenger conversations.

The overall intent was to drive awareness of the program and ultimately, of course, sales of the product. We worked closely with DEI to refine the program, including choosing where we would and would not engage consumers and how we would and would not present ourselves. Importantly, we elected to be upfront about who we were — highlighting that the chatter was a Timberland representative. We believe it is critical to be honest in your representations and not to ‘fake’ like you are a member of the community. We also learned the value of arming our chatters with a meaningful offer that could be conveyed with a promo code. A WOM campaign relies on engaging others to ‘spread the word’ virally through the Internet. So you would expect to see a delayed ‘crescendo’ as momentum builds. In fact, we’ve seen an increase in page views over time (indicating increased awareness) and sales volumes have doubled over their original baseline pre-WOM campaign.

Perhaps more importantly, strategically, is the wealth of information gathered from the documented conversations with thousands of consumers about our program. We obtained valuable insights on colors, price point, and other configuration options that will be included in our program going forward. Not all campaigns are suited for the WOM approach. But campaigns that involve a story that can engage consumers and enlist their help in engaging others should be considered.

Troy Brown, The Timberland Company, www.timberland.com

35 As a company that focused mainly (read: exclusively) online advertising, we felt the need to start branching out into offline vehicles to extend our reach, while still tracking revenue from our efforts. We felt that radio could be a good fit. We could afford a decent local test in terms of creative and the media buy, and we liked the ability to specifically target key demos. Fortunately, there are radio shows out there that not only fit demographically, they also fit psychographically, in terms of do-it-yourself listeners, which is perfect for what we have to offer.

The problem is that we didn’t have a strong radio spot. We also didn’t want to take the radio station’s offer of ‘we’ll create a spot for free for you’ for obvious you-get-what-you-pay-for reasons. So, we went the radio host endorsement route. Key to our decision here was making sure that the host had a long tradition of doing endorsements with the same company (in other words, it was working for other companies). The show that the radio host was on was also an advice-type show, so the listeners were already in the ‘I’m going to tell you what to do’ mindset.

The short of the story is that the local test campaign paid big dividends. We were able to track sales by looking at the lift in local revenue, coupled with traffic from the host's Web site and the numbers of discount requests by listeners (we did a 'enter my name in the discount code box and get 10% off' promotion). In other words, we easily made our money back and then some. The moral of this story is this: if you can get a trusted radio host to endorse your company or product and can negotiate a decent rate, you can make the registers ring.

Scott MacDonell, LegalZoom.com, www.legalzoom.com

36 Having an advertising technology that provides users with self-control of the web experience turned into VERY few opt-out options. In Ooqa-Ooqa campaigns, giving the users the control was very successful. This is something the whole industry must learn: To treat the users as you would like to be treated.

Mookie Tenenbaum, United Virtualities, www.unitedvirtualities.com

37 Location, location, location ... was the lesson we learned when a recent acquisition-focused online campaign was under-delivering. Over 13 million impressions across 30 of Canada's most popular consumer sites and portals were averaging a generous 0.70% click-through rate, but producing poor conversions results. We reallocated 15% of the media buy to Yahoo! Mail exit screen, a channel that performed well in the past. One creative, one size, one area, generated more conversions within seven days than the multi-site approach did in three weeks.

Lesson learned? Test new ideas, build insight, monitor campaigns closely, and always have a plan B in mind.

Steve Mast, Vice President Managing Director, Delvinia Interactive, www.delvinia.com

38 Affiliate programs don't start themselves; it takes a lot of proactive work with the affiliates and networks to generate interest. This means joining the affiliate forums to see what concerns and joys others are having, regular product and news updates to your existing affiliates, and actively looking for new affiliates. Affiliates are one of the best sales forces you can have so treat them like a part of your team and give them all the material and help they need to go out there and promote your product or service.

Steve Dovey, Softpoint Multimedia, www.savapoint.com

Part 5: Direct (Postal) Mail

39 In the lead up to Easter 2004, we undertook a substantial test campaign for one of the biggest electrical retailers in the UK. We distributed over 500,000 catalogues both personalised via mailings and non-personalised using door to door distribution. The campaign was a great success, delivering almost one million pounds in genuinely incremental sales against matched 'control' stores, much to the retailer's surprise — they were DM skeptics.

But the surprise for us was this. We learnt long ago that you have to get the store staff 'bought in' to any marketing initiative or it will fail, no matter how smart. So we did motivational training sessions launching the scheme in all of the stores in the two weeks leading up to the promotion.

They must have been pretty good, because sales in the test stores started to pull away BEFORE THE PROMOTION TOUCHED DOWN! It was a great reminder for us of just how important a factor staff motivation and involvement is in any retail environment.

Adrian Rowe, Managing Director, Red C Marketing, www.redcmarketing.com

40 VAC, a developer of audit technology for vending machines, needed to determine who their target markets were and then customize a campaign to reach them. Different school districts let individual schools manage the programs and others managed the process from a central point.

Solution: A multi-tier direct mail campaign focusing on different potential target audiences across school districts, ranging from district Treasurer to an individual school's facilities manager and then tabulating the results to hit the right person. The direct mail campaign consisted of a series of postcards featuring a magnifying glass and the search for hidden money to fund school projects. The final mail drop was a real magnifying glass and a letter. The direct mail campaign was reinforced with targeted media relations focusing on school administrators, food & beverage and facilities management.

Through these efforts, the client was able to secure contracts and pilot projects with three of the nation's top-10 school districts as well as one correctional facility.

Alec J. Rosen, AJR & Partners, www.ajrpartners.com

41 Even though we are an association we still have to market ourselves like any other business. And while we have done our fair share of on-line and e-mail advertising, and continue to, we have found that our direct mail letters, postcards and the mailing of sample issues of our newsletter are netting us a better conversion rate than on-line. In fact, we are seeing a little over 3% response increase in these direct mailings than we ever have before. Same offer, same prices, same type of lists. We don't know why this is yet. We can only speculate that we are now standing out more because people are getting less mail delivered and too many messages on-line, thus clouding the waters. In 2005 we will be increasing pieces in the mail, and testing more print advertising in business magazines to see if the same holds true.

John Schulte, National Mail Order Association, www.nmoa.org

42 A nationally-known finance company called me to write a direct mail piece to replace their tired control. Much of it was compelling, much of it was lacking, and the format begged for a makeover.

I was able to save them money by making over the existing control — revising, re-writing, adapting instead of a complete re-write from scratch. Not only that, the new piece I wrote beat their old control (and all competitors) hands-down!

The Lesson Learned?

Before you plunk down \$5,000 to \$15,000 in copywriting fees — not to mention royalties — for a new control, consider these ways to get more mileage and money from your existing control (with mild apologies to my fellow copywriters, hungry for lucrative new business):

1. Change your headline. A better headline can increase response as much as 900 percent. According to copywriting legend John Caples, sometimes the best headline is one that makes a startling announcement or gives news. Other effective headlines promise a breakthrough, feature a glowing testimonial, feature your offer or make a guarantee.
2. Change your opening sentences. Make sure they flow logically and smoothly from the new headline(s) you are testing.
3. Change your subheads and transition statements. Make sure they are in harmony with your new headline and lead the reader quickly through to your call to action. Smooth out any jarring conceptual “speed bumps” in the process.
4. Change your package format. For example, if you’re using an eight-page letter in a 9x12 envelope, test an eight-page self-mailer with headline, attention-getting graphic and teaser copy visible near the mailing label. Plaster your best testimonials all over the back cover.
5. Add a step to the sales process and save conversion costs. For example, instead of mailing a full package, generate leads via direct mail postcards and/or small ads in targeted media. Send the leads to a direct response Web site, opt-in e-mail autoresponder sequence, fax-on-demand or other method that captures and solicits the leads. Rework the copy in your full control package to follow up with leads. You’ll not only save sales costs, but also create the opportunity to build a prospect list you can sell to over and over again.
6. Add more testimonials. If you’ve done your job well, you probably have accumulated testimonials from happy buyers since you’ve been mailing your old control. Feature them! The best testimonials are specific, believable and prove your benefits. Weave them into your selling copy as you sell the benefits and go for the close.
7. Change the color. If you’re using a boring black on white piece, test black on bright yellow. Or add more color throughout the piece. This is especially effective if you have been mailing repeatedly to the same lists. The key is to grab the reader’s attention with something that looks new and different.

8. Use more graphic enhancements. This includes photographs, illustrations, charts, etc. — anything that reinforces the selling power, dramatizes the benefits or proves your claims.
9. Add a “Reasons Why” box or inset in the piece. Under a headline such as “8 Powerful Reasons Why You’ll (Make Money/Save Money/Feel Better) When You Own Our Widget,” summarize the key benefits the buyer will enjoy. Make them “picture with pleasure” how much better off they will be after they buy from you.
10. Bulletize. If your copy is too dense, try breaking thick blocks of copy into powerful “bullets” that sell benefits, summarize the offer or give more reasons why to buy now. The faster they read, the sooner they buy.
11. Test another P.S. Use a deadline warning, testimonial, benefit summary or offer an additional bonus.
12. Modify the offer. Make it harder or softer. Add a bonus, change the terms or offer a longer or stronger guarantee.

Russ Phelps, Killer Copy/Maximum Marketing, www.russphelps.com

43 In any type of direct mail campaign — whether it be standard postal mail or email — the response is only going to be as good as the offer. I recently put together a 37,000 piece postcard mailer for a client in the hospitality/gaming industry.

Initially, the offer was for a specially priced dinner/room package, intended to draw new customers from outlying areas. After some consideration, the client changed to offer to a 2-for-1 dinner offer. The postcard art was completed in a very attractive design, and the pieces were mailed. Mind you, 37,000 postcards.

At the time the offer expired, the response rate was 168. That is not a ‘percent’ — that is total responses! 168 out of 37,000! The lesson to take away from this is — it doesn’t matter how much it is dressed up — or even if it is delivered to the right demographic — what matters MOST is that the offer needs to be strong enough to cause the recipient to act! No offer — or weak offer — no response...

Bill Black, Black Horse Productions, www.blackhorse-productions.com

44 A simple, well written, hand-signed letter (yes, letter — not email) expressing your gratitude for your customers’ purchases and a \$0.37 stamp go a long way in keeping your customers happy and loyal. You don’t need to over-complicate it.

Stan, Pacific Shaving Company, www.pacificshaving.com

Part 6: General Advice

45 We are a small non-profit organization located in Denver, Colorado. Most of our marketing dollars get directed into our one large fundraiser, the Heart of the Grove. This year we worked very hard to become completely immersed in non-profit marketing and fund raising. According to our well researched marketing plan, we advertised in our local paper, we passed out 10,000 fliers, we put up posters and purchased on-line advertisements. We checked every single idea off the list.

Did our efforts work? Sure, we received more responses and increased our profile but only by a little bit. All of the extra efforts, special practices, and great ideas only brought a small increase in our business. It was the long term marketing basics that really made the difference. People who had seen our fliers last year were much more likely to attend this year. People who already knew about us were much more likely to send money.

What we learned this year is that running a non-profit organization is really running a business. We learned that good, basic marketing practices and practical business sense are the true keys to success. All the bells, whistles, great ideas don't matter as much as simply and carefully applying the basic principles of marketing. It's kind of funny really. We thought we had to share this!

Claudia H. Christian, The Open Grove, www.opengrove.com

46 People THINK that they want more choice in products and services but experience shows that you can give people too many choices.

I certainly did that with a new marketing tool in 2004. We developed an internal marketing tool for optometry offices that was significantly pre-tested by Optometrists and their staff. We then designed the final version of the marketing tool — with 13 variations to suit the specialized needs of different eye clinics.

The response? None. People — even the ones who had been pre-testing the tool and getting great results from it — were simply overwhelmed with the number of choices we gave them. I am sure that many INTENDED to respond to our offer some day, but put it away 'until we have time' and of course that time never arrived. SO, we went back to our offering and simplified. We chose two main options and on each of those gave two variations, for a total of four products. Orders started coming in, and now positive referrals are building the response. People, I learned, want some choice, but are paralyzed in the face of too many choices.

Lorne Daniel, Grandview Consulting Inc., www.grandviewconsulting.com

47 Customers want direction and support — too much choice makes them undecided.

Markus Naewie, Kaufhof, mnaewie@whu.edu

48 The lesson I re-learned this year is to remember to write for the reader. WIIFM (What is in it for me) is not a new concept, yet so many so-called marketing professionals bypass the benefits and deliverables for the reader in their marketing messaging so that they can instead talk about the power and reputation of the organization and its products and services. We had a consultant come in for the purpose of helping our staff develop our team skills. He pointed out that to be successful in dealing with colleagues and teammates, it is helpful to employ some successful sales and marketing strategies. When he asked the group what 'WIIFM' meant, the lesson came flooding back. Thinking about WIIFM when communicating to a prospective client helps to write from the reader's point of view, a lesson that never goes out of date.

Jenine Kaznowski, CFA Institute, www.cfainstitute.org

49 Keep it simple. That applies to everything in your business — marketing, office layout, how you work with others. The world is complicated enough without you adding more complication and stress. If things start getting complicated, expensive, or both, ask why. Keep asking why until you're either satisfied it needs to be that way, or you've simplified it again. Use simplicity to focus on the relationships in your life and business. In the end, they're all you've got.

Simon Young, SimonYoungWriters, <http://leadershipissues.blogspot.com>

50 In 2004, I learned that intuition is as important as statistics when it comes to making Internet marketing decisions. We have to remember that, even though we are working on machines, we are working with people. You can advise affiliates all day long about their navigation and metrics, demographics and all that — it's all very important. But if you don't have a human connection with your affiliates and merchants, all the technology and number crunching in the world isn't going to inspire them to promote you and drive traffic and make a campaign work.

The same goes for Web site design, email marketing, search engine advertising and other online marketing tools. When it comes to finding out why people are online and what they are looking for — ask yourself why you are online and what you are looking for. Stand outside the statistics and ask yourself how you feel about your campaign or Web site and you might be surprised by the creativity that results.

Kirsten Weisenburger, Share Results, www.ShareResults.com

Part 7: B-to-B Marketing

51 A client had crafted a campaign for new functional add-ons to their computer security software. The phone component of the campaign featured an ‘advertisement — inducement’ message to be left overnight on the phone mail systems of their active customers for first-thing-in-the-morning listening. They hired me to write and record the pitch, which the campaign managers insisted be at least sixty seconds long. I counseled otherwise, but they were adamant. They did agree to position the campaign as a ‘test.’

The campaign bombed big time. The message was sent to several thousand customers. We had two responses, zero sales. We called a dozen customers afterwards to ask ‘how come?’

Lesson learned: when business people first arrive at work and have 150 e-mails plus 58 other phone messages, the last thing they want is to sit through a recorded marketing or sales narrative. So they delete. We decided to test a different approach ... a fifteen second message with no campaign pitch. Rather, an invitation and encouragement to the web site for important security news. Results: 100 messages left, 18 web visits (with customer password log-in) within 2 days. Eight sales the first week. Winner!

Michael A Brown, Business To Business By Phone, www.michaelabrown.net

52 Sales people want selling time rather than more sales leads. Ask most executives and marketers what sales people need and they will say, ‘more leads.’ Your sales people don’t want more leads actually, what they want is ‘more effective selling time.’ You must realize that the extreme time pressure sales people face — especially those with a complex sale — requires them to ignore what is not immediately relevant and highly likely to produce revenue. So before you invest any more money in lead generation ask this question, how can we give our sales people more selling time? Then write down your thoughts and meet with your sales team and ask them the same question. How can we help YOU get more selling time? Now shut up and really listen... The key is to communicate and then collaborate.

Brian Carroll, InTouch, Inc., www.startwithalead.com

53 The Content-Free Buzzword-Compliant Vocabulary List: ‘Our powerful software is flexible, intuitive, easy-to-use and integrates seamlessly with your other tools. Robust and scalable, your organization can enjoy the benefits of our best-of-breed world-class offering.’

How many times have you read this in marketing materials for software? Does it provide you with any real information — or is it simply a string of meaningless buzzwords? When you or your team uses these words and phrases in a presentation or software demonstration, you risk loss of credibility. Presentations and demos, in particular, need to focus on facts — not supposition — in order to achieve technical proof or generate a real vision in the customers’ minds.

Peter Cohan, The Second Derivative, www.SecondDerivative.com

54 Content is still King... Our most successful online campaign last year was a good, old-fashioned white paper. It was a guide to online fundraising for nonprofit executives that received a 10% response rate, was downloaded over 1,500 times, was picked up as a contributed article, and was proactively mentioned by several organizations as a factor in deciding to become a Convio customer.

What made it different?

- Taking the time to create a thoroughly researched, well-written piece of valuable content vs. re-purposing existing content.
- Making sure the content was relevant to the target audience (our marketing manager has customers review the drafts)
- Making sure the offer tied back to our company's value proposition. Too often marketers focus on 'catchy' offers like gift certificates or remote-controlled cars, that drive good response numbers but do little to further the value proposition.

Fred Waugh, Convio, www.convio.com

55 While marketing has an ever-increasing need to prove its return on investment, we've also found that sales support also has sets of metrics that must be addressed: in my part of the company alone, when a new sales professional joins us, we reward him or her with 2+ inches of sales product/solution training, 20 thick PowerPoints — and that doesn't even include an introduction to how we integrate our offering with the rest of the company! So to make it digestible, we've learned the need to make it easier: deliver a thin "playbook" that provides a fast-start to a sales pro, and keep their orientation less daunting. It's really no different from buying a home electronics product — we have the detailed product documentation, and the "quick-read" to make it functional now.

Chet Dalzell, Harte-Hanks, www.harte-hanks.com

56 In June 2004, we experimented with a special offer: an 'All-You-Can-Train' unlimited use license to our writing curriculum. For a \$1000 license fee customers could use our materials to train an unlimited number of people for a six-month period. The offer gave customers a three-month purchase window.

Great offer at a great price, right? Then why was response so flat?

When we talked with prospective licensees, we were reminded of how many hoops they had to jump through before they could implement a major training initiative: needs assessment, coordinating the initiative with multiple business units, getting legal to review the license agreement, getting the higher-ups to approve, reserving a training space, identifying qualified in-house trainers. They simply needed more than three months to get the license approved.

So, we quickly contacted all our prospects and extended purchase deadlines to accommodate their decision-making cycle. By October, we had sold twice the number of licenses we had expected to sell. We've now made the offer permanent-no deadline at all to purchase an All-You-Can-Train license.

Leslie O'Flahavan and Marilynne Rudick, E-WRITE, www.ewriteonline.com

57 My company had to grow its turnover substantially for it to gain the security needed in a tough industry — food. Everything in this industry is being commoditised and then purchased on price but I still had the advantage of specialising in the rare and pretty much unknown area of native Australian foodstuffs (herbs, spices, fruits and their products).

I created the strategy of optimising my distribution to get the result I wanted. I began approaching hotels and resorts in selected locations, offering to run an Australian cuisine promotion; something quite unique and exclusive to them. This got me into the markets I wanted and airfares, accommodation, meals and a few other costs covered. Naturally, there was also the sale of the products needed for the promotion, which added to cash flow.

Once it was all in place, I asked the hotel if they would like to add to their kudos in their city by holding what I now call a hospitality lunch where chefs, Food & Beverage Managers and GMs are invited for a free meal and are exposed to my pre-eminent products. This approach has resulted in leveraging my sales pitch from one on one (probably by email as a cold call) to me talking to 45 to 70 chefs eating dishes made from my ingredients and all commenting positively on products they particularly liked.

It was then a simple task to ask this audience about their recommendations as to local distributors (some were even invited to the promotion over the next day or two) and I grew my network from 6 countries to 28 in just 9 months. Incidentally, I also had an absolute ball doing it.

Vic Cherikoff, Cherikoff Food Services Pty Ltd, www.cherikoff.net

58 This lesson is about keeping in touch with your customer base and not just by email. During 2004 I have made a point of delivering seminars and workshops on the subject of emarketing mostly to SME's and mostly in Regional areas. The lessons learnt were these:

1. Face time is the most valuable. During the seminars I was able to conduct surveys and to discuss in detail some of the issues facing online and would be online marketers. I have been able to construct a top ten list of areas of interest, which was surprisingly consistent throughout the series of seminars and will be focusing on those during the coming year. Online surveys have terrific benefits but they do not allow the interactions and group discussions that you will get in a seminar.
2. Seminars are a great place to sign up subscribers, not just the ones who attend but the ones they recommend as well. I estimate that each seminar had an effective sign up rate of 55% + due to the referral effect.
3. The sign ups from seminars are proving to be the most interactive when online and most likely to buy from our range of services. It may sound trite and it may sound obvious but it was also a reminder for me to keep up the personal contact with your market and your customers. In the end it pays some serious and measurable dividends.

Gordon Cramer, Actif Communications, www.actifcommunications.com

59 I decided to give fax broadcasting a shot. Many of my clients are in the construction trades, so I decided that would be my first target. I already had most of their contact information. My total fax number count was 2,138. So, on Tuesday December 14, 2004, I sent out two different faxes, 1,069 each, with a different headline. I always test everything, because you never know what's going to work and what won't. My headlines read: (1) Business Owners, \$1000 Marketing Secrets — \$1.00 each — 100% Guaranteed (2) Business Owners, Are You Upset — Do your competitors get a lot of the money that should be going into your bank account? 1,588 faxes made it to their destination.

Within two minutes my phone started ringing, and it rang and rang and rang. Over the next four hours, I wrote down 78 fax numbers. Every call was a 'take me off your fax list' call. Plus, my fax machine was churning out page after page of the same message 'take me off your fax list.' Someone actually wrote their message, one word per page, and faxed me an eight page 'take me off your fax list...' request.

But, as I fingered through the stack of faxes, writing down fax numbers to take off my list — there it was — the first order.

Now, here's what I learned. Next fax broadcast will have an automated fax removal number on it or to be removed, the recipient will have to fax back the original fax to me. That way we are not wasting time fielding removal calls all day. 78% of the 'take me off your fax list' came from the Fax with the headline 'Are You Upset.' I guess they were upset I sent the fax and asking them in my headline was not very smart on my part. My one order come from the \$1000 Marketing Secrets-\$1.00 each, headline so I will test that head again. My ROI was a small loss, but because it generated the first order, I was still happy.

Sanford J. Barris, Business Marketing Services, www.97MarketingSecrets.com

60 I learned that if you're marketing to a local audience over the web, you'd better have a product ready to satisfy a national audience as well. My seminar was planned for just in two cities in southern California and I was marketing it by local print advertising with the sign-up on my Web site. I kept the seminar manual on my computer and continuously updated it with additional information so it could be given in loose-leaf form to attendees at the last moment. I promoted the manual on my Web site as a benefit to attendees. But if I'd finalized even an early copy of the manual into softbound, I could have been selling it effortlessly to the national audience visiting my Web site, as I realized once requests to buy just the manual began coming in from other states. But with the seminar impending, I lacked the time to put the manual into a separately saleable form. Lesson learned! Next time, I'll be ready for the national audience as well.

Suuzen Ty Anderson, LawMarkets.com, www.lawmarkets.com

61 2004 was a year of going back to the basics of marketing — connecting people who have needs or pain with our solutions. This ‘conversation’ can happen in many mediums and unfold with myriad marketing strategies, but by far the simplest (and I think one of the most effective) solutions is to engage your market with a live event.

In 2004 we created and promoted a ‘Thought Leadership’ seminar series where clients and prospects were invited to hear industry experts share best practices and solutions. With between 80 and 100 attendees per event this strategy helped us create a deep market ‘intimacy’.

Top level benefits:

1. Positioned us as ‘thought leaders’ in the market.
2. Because they were free we received media coverage for our events, our subject matter (and our companies!).
3. Solidified client relationships.
4. Demonstrated value (without selling anything) to our invited prospects.
5. Gave our sales teams a valid reason to loop back and ‘touch’ their sales funnels with an invitation to attend.

Kimball Norup, The Nelson Family of Companies, www.nelsonhr.com

62 I was hired by a French enterprise software firm to help launch their U.S. division in 2004. The U.S. sales team had been hired prior to beginning the marketing, which was a mistake because there was an imperative to generate leads quickly using traditional marketing. We tried direct marketing and found that, with no brand presence in a mature market, responses were few. However, at the same time we invested substantially in PR up front to build awareness with the industry influencers. As soon as we were able, we shifted most marketing resources to partner marketing, which would complement the awareness that was building in the upper tiers of the marketplace. Relationships with key OEMs and partners blossomed quickly, which led to more leads in the pipeline than any direct marketing we had done.

Michael Harris, The Harris Group, www.the-harris-group.com

63 I sell a b-to-b report and consulting service to a very tight niche market — my total US customer universe potential is about 5,000 companies. So I went with a high price point and a lot of value-adds, and intended to use AdWords as my primary traffic source. The ads worked great for getting traffic — I averaged 5% plus clickthrough across all of my terms, and up to 20% on a few highly targeted terms. But my conversion was horrible — regardless of which keywords brought the traffic in. At the same time, I was contacting trade magazines to do articles, interviews etc — and with each mention, my site got a nice spike in traffic and usually a few sales resulted. So the PR is working way better than the AdWords.

Second lesson — a bonus for you! ;^) The next most successful method for sales — both in total revenue and in cost per sale — is endorsed offers to other people’s lists — where I make a deal with the list owner (usually a newsletter publisher) to endorse my offer to his/her list and take a commission from the sales.

Scott Braden, Microsoft License Secrets, www.microsoft-secrets.com

Part 8: PR & Blogging

64 In corporate public relations, there is often the pressure to issue a press release every time a C-level executive feels that the company does something they'd like the media to know about. Other times, it is the PR people, looking to justify their position, who drive companies to issue news.

This year I opened my own PR agency to service the large Israeli technology market. And one of my principles has been focusing my clients to issue press releases and press pitches that have real news value to the targeted media. Rather than building press pitch lists of more than 150 journalists, we instead build smaller press lists based on the coverage our competitors have received, which helps focus the press list beyond what standard industry lists provide. With fewer reporters to contact, we have the time and resources to cultivate the necessary relationships with reporters to better serve them as well as my clients.

Even old news can have news value when it's properly packaged to the right reporter who is interested in such stories.

Uriah Av-Ron, Oasis Public Relations, www.oasis-pr.com

65 I learned about how to get amazing search engine placement through a challenge I issued on my blog to the Public Relations Society of America. Their 2004 World Conference did not include a single workshop on blogging. I used my blog, What's Next Blog, to chastise them for their shortsightedness and issued a challenge to them to add a blogging workshop. I did that on a Tuesday in October. By Friday, my challenge had traveled the blogosphere worldwide and I had been invited to speak about blogging at the conference. The amazing thing, however, is that within those few days my blog posts hit the top 10 search results for PRSA 2004 Conference. One post said I challenged them and a second said they backed down and invited me to speak.

The power of blogging has been proven by many case studies. But this is the clearest example I've seen of the power of blogging to increase SEO rankings. The result was greatly increased traffic to my blog and a well-attended PRSA workshop.

B.L. Ochman, whatsnextonline.com, www.whatsnextonline.com

66 A business blog will make more present the customer in the company's day-to-day life. It's an evolution of the organization culture for an external communication that doesn't have for initial purpose to sell a product, using a formatted language, but to create a relationship. And a two way one, like a relaxing and informal chat. Is there a better way to create, manage and develop a true relation?

Duarte Canrio, Inesting, www.inesting.pt

67 After submitting pitches and sending product samples to large (print) publications, we started to actively seek and communicate to smaller specialty blogs such as [treehugger.com](#) and [designsponge.blogspot.com](#). What we found interesting and appealing was the fact that blogs function as information hubs for others.

Mentions on six blogs resulted in numerous links from other blogs and sites, inquiries from offline publications like Budget Living and Jane Magazine, but also calls from buyers like the Target's Red Hot Shop. The 'proximity' of the medium works well for us as our business is online and it is also extremely gratifying to see a product featured only days after you pitch it (vs. months with offline publications).

Another welcome side effect is that our Google Page Rank increased and we are now getting more traffic through Google search results. The time that we spend on seeking blogs and dropping them informal emails has paid off beyond our expectations. Blogs are now part of our regular press distributing list. Some even get plugs on products before they are featured on our site at [illicodesign.com](#)

Carine Magescas, Illico Design , [www.illicodesign.com](#)

68 Don't underestimate the power of a letter. As a speaker, author and consultant I constantly look for the most effective ways to market and expose my services. Six months ago I decided to approach top business publications about writing a guest column. I selected 10 magazines. I wrote one letter, included writing samples and suggestive topics for stories. Within 2 weeks received an email from Fast Company indicating their interest and a contact person I should follow up with. This one letter secured me a writing contract, a monthly column, added credibility and already several other big income generating assignments. When you think you see a good opportunity, act on it today. Be proactive. Send a letter.

Karen Post, [www.brandingdiva.com](#)

69 By chance, I scanned your newsletter one day last spring where you included a call for entries for the Stevie Award competition for women entrepreneurs.

Well, long-story-short, I entered my best client and lo and behold, she ended up winning in one of the categories! Because she had a conflict, she flew me to New York where I picked up the award for her. A wonderful weekend. She won in the mentorship category. It never would have happened if I hadn't decided to click into your newsletter that day. Now she has this beautiful Oscar-like award that is helping to promote her business.

This is what else I learned: PR consultants should keep a careful eye out for all sorts of award opportunities. It is a fail-safe way to get positive (very positive) publicity for your client that lasts and lasts.

This has been a great year. My client also won Pitney Bowes' Best Small Business Award and was featured in the company's beautiful four-color magazine with a circulation of 800,000 Pitney Bowes small business customers. For

this article, Pitney Bowes paid for a fabulous photo shoot on location in downtown Houston.

The good news goes on. My client was also named a finalist in the Inc. magazines Entrepreneur of the Year competition and won Houston Business Journal's Top 50 Woman Owned Businesses. All of this in 2004. The Stevie Award was especially exciting.

Sharon Dotson, APR, Bayou City Public Relations

70 I hired a great entertainer for a large tradeshow and conference this year who really wowed everyone with his magic and psychic abilities. Bob was photographed daily and featured in the Sibos Daily News, but somehow they always cropped the pictures so that the company name was left out. A backdrop directly behind Bob with our company name that could not be cropped out would have provided more name recognition for the company. It was one of those little things that you just don't think of. But I will next time.

Sue Barnhill, Sterling Commerce, www.sterlingcommerce.com

Part 9: Agencies & Consultants on Growing & Managing Clients

71 Managing client expectations is critical. In an M&A situation earlier this year, a client CEO was seeking the proverbial ‘pie in the sky’ front-page story in the Wall St. Journal. I had seen this dynamic many times over in my ten years as a corporate communicator.

While the relatively modest size of the deal itself precluded such coverage, we were more confident of the prospects for at least headline pickup by Dow Jones and proactively communicated this. Ultimately, with expectations set accordingly, we were able to deliver this coverage and deep trade and business media pickup. We also secured in-depth briefings with two top-tier industry analyst firms, one of which resulted in a positive corporate profile and critical third-party validation of the rationale for the merger.

Lesson learned: No surprises. Set client expectations clearly well in advance of the promised deliverable. Credibility wins hearts and minds.

Brian Muys, Vice President, Strategic Communications Group, www.gotostrategic.com

72 Here’s a classic mistake made by many agencies seeking to serve and impress new clients, and to which we also fell victim in 2004: Delivering too much, too soon and raising the bar to unrealistic levels for future service. It’s one of the most overlooked aspects of doing business — expectation management.

We forgot this mandate with a client that signed up for a customized program of public relations and marketing communications services, which included several add-on projects, including a revamp of the company’s Web site. Because this was the client’s first experience with professional communications services, expectations were higher than we realized moving into the program. Initially, things went as planned as the staff familiarized itself with the client’s operations to better prepare for pitching stories and features to the targeted media. There was a special need, however, to meet a tight deadline to create a nomination package for an important industry award. It arose in the two weeks between the time the contract was signed and when work was to officially start.

Even so, we took on the project to demonstrate ‘good faith,’ and met the deadline by dedicating one staffer’s efforts to that particular project. Unfortunately, the pace and quality of work on this front set the client’s expectations for the pace and volume of future work: The client expected all of the rest of our work turned around immediately rather than achieved in the weeks or months dictated by his budget. We should have taken the time to explain to this newcomer to professional PR and marketing services that these are step-wise processes.

Chris Scott, Hodge Communications, Inc., www.hodgecommunications.com

73 We launched our new book service Zooba in April 2004. Bookspan runs about 40 book clubs and we're therefore very used to doing the same things time and again. As this service works and feels quite different we decided to hire an outside agency to help us promote it. Agency A started with much enthusiasm but we decided to let them go after only 5 months as our CPO targets weren't achieved at all. We then hired agency B but had to go through the same experience all over again. In the end we switched to our in-house media team and since then we've seen a nice increase in customer base and sales. Sometimes going with what you have pays off way better than bringing in outsiders.

Christian, Bookspan, www.zooba.com

74 Lesson learned: The client's definition of success, might not be the same as yours. One of our more successful campaigns (in terms of client results), turned out to be a c-sat loser for us. We were tasked with helping a relatively small subsidiary of our largest client to improve their search engine driven traffic, for about 60% of what we'd usually charge for such a project. So, we took a 30-page site with little indexable content — made up primarily of screenshot images from PowerPoint decks — and turned it into a site full of keyword-laden content.

When we started, only three pages were indexed in any of the leading search engines and traffic to the site was anemic. Within six weeks, all pages were indexed by the major search engines and search-driven traffic to the site was up 10x. My partners and I were pretty smug when we were asked to attend a conference call with the VP of Marketing regarding the SEO project. The first words out of his mouth were, 'I don't show up on the first 3 pages of Google...'

His expectations were far from reality — on a phrase with more than 2.5 million results, he wanted to be in the first three pages. I'll tell you, it's hard enough explaining the intricacies of search engine algorithms with a willing participant, but I felt like I was doing it while juggling on a high wire over a lava pit. He didn't care that search traffic had increased substantially or that a site which was previously invisible to spiders was now getting indexed every day.

As a result of this experience, before we put together a proposal for even the smallest project, we get an answer to this question: 'What results will you expect from this project, in order to consider it a success?' We include our potential client's answer to this question in the overview section of each proposal and reiterate it on acceptance of our proposal. Not only does this one statement help manage client expectations, but we've found that it also gives the entire project a focal point that helps minimize creep and distractions.

Monkee-Boy Web Design, Inc., www.monkee-boy.com

75 Several months ago, one of our accounts went through a major corporate reorganization that resulted in the loss of our main Sponsored Search contact. His replacement was an experienced Marketing executive with little direct experience in Sponsored Search Marketing. After reviewing our Google AdWords campaign, the new executive felt that our ad titles were not what they should be and changed all of them over to a standard format that did not include the use of keyword phrases.

The impact was immediate, and the overall CTR dropped from an average of 9.8% to just over 7%. When we contacted the new executive regarding the drop it was clear that she was open to our suggestions. We took this opportunity to run simple A/B tests (a method the new executive was very familiar with) that clearly demonstrated the importance of keywords in AdWord titles for her campaign.

The most obvious result of the testing was that we were able to restore keywords to the AdWord titles and see an almost immediate return to an over all 9%+ CTR. The most important result of the testing was that we were able to create a new and strong working relationship with an excellent customer. Further tests on ads and landing pages are scheduled — and we are working more closely with this client than at any time in the past — a situation that benefits us both.

Brenda Wright, Enquiro Search Solutions Inc., www.enquiro.com

76 I heard a quote recently by Maya Angelou to the effect of ‘when someone shows themselves to you, believe them.’ Although it was meant for personal relationships — I believe it applies to business relationships as well. As a small marketing agency owner, walking away from business is a very difficult decision to make. However, when a client ‘shows themselves to you,’ and you know in your heart that the fit isn’t right, sometimes it’s just better to walk away, than to try to make it work. Sometimes despite your best efforts, a client might not appreciate the value you bring to the table. The lesson learned is that there are many that will. Your time is better spent going after that business than wasting it with a client ‘who doesn’t get it.’

Angela Morsa, Active Integrated Marketing, www.activeintegrated.com

77 The Lesson of Bite Size Chunks: As marketers, we all know the importance of a comprehensive plan — it leverages every dollar in the budget, assures that interlocking strategies and promotions don’t fall victim to ‘slipping through the cracks,’ and generates a stronger overall impact, translating to higher sales and a more devoted customer base. It’s a no-brainer, right?

Wrong! Your best intentions can be the fastest route to a frustrated client... or worse, a lost account. I’ve found this to be true among for-profits and non-profits alike, start-ups and multi-million dollar organizations, and new economy or traditional businesses. Do you remember the famous line in the movie ‘What About Bob?’ starring Bill Murray? ‘Baby steps... baby steps to the door, baby steps to the elevator, baby steps to the...’

As marketers, our natural enthusiasm compels us to jump straight to the scene where ‘Bob’ has tied himself to the mast of a boat out on a lake. As the boat, captained by friends, speeds past the shoreline Bob enthusiastically proclaims to on-lookers, ‘I’m sailing! I’m sailing!’ That’s us — we want to get right to it, overcome the obstacles (in his case, fear of water), and start broadcasting for all the world to hear. It makes us good at what we do... until we notice that our clients are still back on shore ‘baby stepping’ their way into the marketing initiative.

It's a lesson I learn over and over again. Here are some examples that probably sound oh so familiar even in your own experience. (I'll leave the companies anonymous since my goal isn't to point fingers other than at myself.)

- The non-profit that invested \$25,000 in an acquisition campaign, but wouldn't spend \$300 to correct the online donation link. Results? Status quo — no lift in response between pre & post online giving options.
- The real estate developer with a dynamic plan to attract high-end prospects for site visits, but didn't vigilantly prepare current neighbors for the guests or follow the strategic plan to build welcome networks throughout the community. The outcome was a terrific influx of prospective buyers confronted with scowls by current residents who viewed them as 'outsiders.'

It's a good reminder that our job includes designing and managing a marketing strategy that our clients can really get their arms around. One that rolls-out in bite-size chunks so clients can adequately prepare for the back-end responsibilities necessary to service or respond to all those terrific opportunities we're bringing in the front door.

Heather Logan, Solutions Planning Group, SPG@SolutionsPlanning.com

78 We're all so busy helping others promote and grow their businesses that sometimes we forget to take our own advice. Make the time and just do it!

Mark A. Patten, Delphic Sage, www.DelphicSage.com

79 Two points: First point — I learned that in order to grow my agency, I needed to base fees on value, not on task. In other words, my clients don't care how many focus groups studies, competitive analyses or keyword buys I'm going to do. Those are tasks. They care about value: how much revenue will they gain, how much market share they can take, how doing 'xyz' will help eliminate their problems. Ultimately, this is where the value lies.

If you focus on the value the clients gets, the less they even care about price! In fact, if your clients are price focused throughout your relationship, they do not understand the value you bring to the table because you have not conveyed this effectively enough. Tragically, they only know how much you cost.

Second point — Never use time as the basis of your value. In the end, there are only 24 hours in the day. Project based fees are substantially more lucrative.

Anonymous

80 The best and only way to grow a marketing firm is by producing results for your clients. The kind of results your clients need: additional revenue, gaining market awareness, or building brand recognition, but you must produce results! It may be a slow and steady process (kinda like losing weight — the slower it is, the longer it stays off) but in the long run, its effectiveness will build your marketing business. Then, it's your turn to show off your marketing expertise by marketing your own company! You will garner word-of-mouth testimonials, case studies, ROI samples and more which can be marketed via a monthly newsletter, presented to your networking groups or as part of your company's PR campaigns.

Sandy Cahill, Cahill Consulting, www.cahillconsulting.net

81 What's most important is providing quantifiable solutions. We've changed the structure of our business and products to enable us to provide an element of payment on results and payment based on usage for our customers.

W. Shillito, Decifer Solutions Ltd, www.decifer.co.uk

82 Never underestimate the power of networking and staying in touch. I've only been in business for myself for 21-years — and am constantly amazed at how the work and effort I put into networking and staying in touch with clients and prospects pays dividends — often when you least expect it. The simplest 'rule' I employ is actually the cheapest. Every day I give one business card to someone that I didn't know when I got up. I cheat a bit on weekends and sometimes give away more than one a day — but every New Year I take a moment to think that there's about 500 people out there that I didn't know this time last year! And slowly but surely it pays off in solid business — and never fails!

R. David Gould, Bald Eagle Consulting Inc., www.baldeagleconsulting.com

83 Want to get your clients talking? Send them free beer. I worked with Aussie company Brewtopia (www.brewtopia.com) to come up with some custom-made brew for my Bar Branding Design Agency. What client can say no to a free drink?

Peter Majarich, Bar Branding Design Agency, www.barbranding.com

84 I learned this year that all the technology, techniques, tactics, and tools in the world pale in comparison to the personal relationships you build with your clients. If you know what you're doing, and you have your clients' best interests at heart, you'll win every time.

Anonymous

85 What my mother always said to us kids growing up is directly applicable to building strong business relationships: 'Son, always send a Thank You note.'

Robb Hecht, Hecht Consulting, www.hechtcom.com

86 You can never, ever assume that a prospect is too big or sophisticated for your services. In fact, the best companies are often the hungriest for best practices and a fresh perspective on the business challenges they face...

Grant Hosford, ZAAZ, Inc., www.zaaz.com

87 Very small businesses can't afford consulting. I spent three quarters of 2004 wrestling with small businesses to get my very modest fees. In the last quarter, I discovered seminars and other 'one-to-many' tools of offering my services that yield upwards of 6 times my hourly rates. Not to mention the brand credibility and lead generation that comes from these activities. I am very optimistic about the potential of 2005. Good luck to you all! Allan Sabo President ALTI Business Upgrade Consulting www.ALTIconulting.com

Allan Sabo, ALTI Business Upgrade Consulting, www.alticonsulting.com

88 I met a prospect in the last minutes of a conference where PS&L was exhibiting. He got us on track to respond to their RFP for a major piece of work. I wanted this connection to work. Our conversation was good, the email back and forth was good except for one thing, they would not tell us who we were competing against, even when it was just us and them. They did ask us for tons of additional information, keeping us on the line and getting lots of free consulting. I suspected we were being led on, but by then, it was too late. We did not win the RFP. It went to a company 30 minutes from the prospect; we were on the other coast.

That experience has been repeated often enough, the experience of wanting to respond to an RFP and not listening to that tiny voice that says this is 'no good.' Good prospects really talk to you, they don't hold things back, and in the end that is one of things you want from a good client, someone who really talks clearly and honestly.

John Stapleton, Paskill Stapleton & Lord, www.psandl.com

89 My company has a number of marketing agencies that private label our email marketing service. We have found that the agencies that organize themselves around a defined customer set versus just a set of offerings are the most successful. In 2004, this focus has become more critical as the industry became more competitive as more and more freelancers entered into the market.

Joe Colopy, Bronto Software, <http://bronto.com>

90 Our agency launched a new PR firm, PayPerClip, and obtained great media coverage by positioning it as a new model for the industry. (It charges clients for results, i.e., media placements, instead of for our time.) Positioning it as a resource for other PR and marketing agencies helped with media coverage as well. In addition, we created a free newsletter and notified all current and former clients and prospects of our new option. Two big lessons came from this launch of a new sister agency: first, find a way to give the market what it is asking for and you will find success; second, having two agency models that provide prospects with a choice builds trust and increases conversion rates.

Christine Pillsbury, EVP, PayPerClip, www.PayPerClipPR.com

91 I am a freelance marketing communications consultant. I used to offer prospective clients a free initial consultation, which often involved taking a train to downtown Chicago and meeting with a marketing director for an hour. That's half a day away from the office, with no backup because I'm a solo professional. Less than 30% of those consultations resulted in new business. Starting in 2004, I charge a flat \$100 for initial consultations. I get far fewer prospects, but those who pay the \$100 are more qualified prospects and so far 100% of them have hired me.

Dave Freedman, D.M. Freedman Company, www.dmfreedman.com

92 2004 has been a year of risk-taking, self-imposed change, challenge, crisis and self-realization. My fiancé and I took an incredible leap of faith in our quest for crafting a life of balance, creativity and success for ourselves. We left our east coast networks, friends and families to start over in Denver without jobs in December 2003. We networked from scratch and used email, phone calls and daily life interactions to meet individuals in marketing, advertising and technology in order to create work situations that were right for us.

Instead of following everyone's advice to find a job beforehand and heeding a distressed economy, we took the attitude of believing in ourselves, our abilities and have been able to create a steady stream of contract work individually, as well as positioning ourselves as a team. We prepared for at least six months' worth of no income. We lived a little frugally and enjoyed exploring our new world with our extra time. We learned from every interview, redid our portfolios countless times and observed our new community's opportunities in technology.

By contracting in various technology companies, I have confirmed what works and what doesn't work to inspire me. It's a great way to make sure there's a mutual fit. I have found others like me who want a life outside the workplace, who are drawn to the beautiful mountains that surround this thriving city. Those east-coast friends who thought me crazy are now thinking about moving out here. In a nutshell: If you want to take a leap, pack your parachute as best you can. Do your research. Believe in yourself, give things time to evolve and enjoy the ride. Don't make yourself fit into someone else's vision of success.

Dorothie Hughes, Marketing Consultant

93 Can you explain a good search engine optimization strategy as easily as best calls-to-actions on a direct marketing piece? True solutions are coming in not marketing with technology but using technology to market and grow new channels of business. When you have strategy, design, content and technology in one team, under one roof, all working for your clients, you'll have a competitive advantage that small agencies can't afford and the big ones can't ramp up fast enough and still be cost effective.

Mitch Joel, Twist Image, www.twistimage.com

Part 10: Jobs: Hiring, Looking & Office Politics

94 The lesson I learned this year was not to think short term when hiring new people. When interviewing people for an open position, it's important not only to get the best person for the job, but also to know where that person truly wants to be in three to five years. Most of my employees have been with me for many years, and it's important to discuss career paths early so that we can develop great people internally rather than have to hire from outside. I now hire based on career potential rather than if the person is the best candidate to fill the open position. It sounds obvious, but most people don't do it.

Marc Schiller, ElectricArtists, www.woostercollective.com

95 I've learned that my investment in recruiting and developing a talented team always pays dividends, and that every shortcut I've ever taken with regard to recruiting and development has come with a cost (financial or otherwise). Never compromise with regard to the quality of talent on your team. The online marketing industry evolves too fast; you need innovative thinkers and thought leaders working on your business, no matter the size. If you're trapped in a labor market that's low on good talent, invest the effort to intensify your search. It's always worth it.

Clint Schmidt, 1-800-CONTACTS, www.1800contacts.com

96 2004 was a year that many of us spent professionally rebounding along with the economy. Some industries are responding slower than others and the challenge of finding career satisfaction can be overwhelming. Bottom line: There is no magic answer — though patience is the key word upon which to focus. They say that finding a job is the hardest 'work' you'll ever have to do. That has never been more true than during these past few years.

Push yourself to think outside the box. Network every relevant connection you have ever had — there is no shame in asking. Reconsider that opportunity which represents a different company or line of business. And above all, market yourself with the same ardor and ingenuity that you would for any perspective boss. Eventually the rewards of all this hard work and creativity will pay off. The results will be that much sweeter — a manifestation of the intensity of the journey. Here's to 2005 — a year that we professionally AND personally thrive!

Nat Rosen

97 An old lesson, but worth repeating: 'The grass isn't always greener when looking for a new job. Before leaving a company, look in your own backyard to see if there are opportunities within the organization before jumping from the frying pan into the fire,' said the singed marketing professional.

Anonymous

98 The best lesson I learned in 2004 is the '60 Day New Hire Survey.' This is a survey that you give new employees after they have been with you for 60 days. The purpose of the survey is to discover is the person right for the job but it's also to ascertain if you are hiring right. Another important use is that new employees often see improvements that management might be missing. It has questions such as, 'What are the three things you like most about your job?', and 'What are the three things you like least about your job?' It also asks about your interest in being trained for other jobs. You can find a copy on the web by simply searching for '60-Day New Hire Survey.'

Tom Egelhoff, Small Town Marketing.Com, www.smalltownmarketing.com

99 The soft skill that can reap very concrete results for your team: There are many ambitious professionals and executives that understand the value of networking, and seek relationships with powerbrokers within their organization, industry, and community. However, it can reap nearly instant rewards if those leaders also consistently built relationships and connections with potential skill players for their team.

For example, a supervisor finds out their terrific office manager, or phone support staff, has just given 2 weeks notice. It will take HR weeks or months to put just the right candidate in your hands; meanwhile your team effectiveness is materially affected by the loss of a strong performer.

However, if the supervisor had always kept their eye out for sterling skill players, and built friendships with them, a position could be filled in a week or two. If you treat this skill players like 'somebody' when they aren't on your team, they might jump at the chance to be on your team when you need them most. I've seen this skill pay off numerous times, and continue the momentum upwards for the thoughtful leader.

Don Rua, Raymond James Financial

100 There are more companies, more career choices and more opportunities than ever before in history. Use it to your advantage. — Don't write your resume to fit the job ad, find a job ad that fits your resume. It's a simple exercise but takes some time — but then, you're worth it, aren't you? Collect job descriptions that appeal to you; job ads from a variety of industries, companies, locations, positions/responsibilities, etc. Piece together the best of each to write the kind of job ad that has YOU written all over it.

Tony Niederer, Open Text Corporation, www.opentext.com

101 Regarding office politics, keep a cannon handy and fire the moment it rears its ugly head. The consumer, client and Idea are our priorities, leaving neither time nor energy to waste on such unproductive pursuits. Few assets are worth defending more than your company culture.

Mark Silva, Real Branding, www.RealBranding.com

102 The Director of Marketing took my idea and presented it as her own! However, even when you've been wronged, professionalism, teamwork, and chain-of-command can still be followed while protecting yourself and your reputation. This past year, any of my proposals, large or small, have been presented to the DOM and the GM together in the same meeting (proposed as a 'time-saver' for all involved). Employees that knew first-hand of my effort involved in the 2004 proposal have also learned who they should and shouldn't go to with input. And the DOM's 'known creativity' and, therefore, company respect is diminishing. I may not be sitting the highest up (yet), but my respect has been, and is continuing to be, earned in the way it should be.

My largest lesson learned is that thinking 'outside of the box' isn't just good ethic for innovative marketing, but for innovatively handling the powerful 'big dogs' in the office and coming out on top. And setting a better example than those above you can be the best revenge, the best career booster, or both.

Anonymous

103 The Internet is changing so rapidly, that marketing and online strategies recommended by professional organizations, such as MarketingSherpa, tend to be a psychological reach for small to mid-sized businesses. Change often brings out fear in people even if the change is for the better... The lesson I learned as Director of Online Services for a publishing company, is to keep the finish line in site, but realize that you might have to go more the pace of the tortoise than the hare in reaching the goals you have for your company.

Lisa Trager, Rodman Publishing, www.rodmanpublishing.com

104 There is no such thing as too much communication. I am in the midst of a career search because I did not 'Cover my assets' with regard to a personnel issue discussed with my employer's vice president. We discussed a sticky situation behind closed doors regarding one of my subordinates. A plan of action was laid out, which I executed. When the resolution did not go as anticipated, raising the ire of the president, I was made the scapegoat by the VP for having acted alone on an issue that should have been brought to his attention. While in a meeting with the President and VP, I could not believe that he just sat there denying I had ever talked to him about the situation. Had I just sent an email to the VP summarizing our meeting immediately after it took place, I would not be writing this.

As elementary as this sounds, I didn't feel it was necessary in the situation, as the VP was a friend, and we had always been on the same 'team'. In hindsight, I'm looking at this as a positive. I learned a valuable lesson, got out from under a clearly unethical superior, and have the opportunity to make a clean start. By working my network, I am currently in discussions with two companies that are considering creating positions for me based on my skills and accomplishments. Either opportunity will give me the chance to grow professionally, expand my network, and better provide for my family and my future.

Anonymous

105 The incredibly positive power of accepting responsibility for my actions is the most important lesson I learned in 2004. My first experience with this concept as a part of corporate culture was in early 2004 when I spent a few weekends as a hair model for Redken (a fun break from my job as an in-house marketer at a large company). On the walls of the model room, hand-made posters illustrated new cuts and color techniques and offered motivating slogans. A reminder for the Redken employees to take responsibility for all their actions stood out to me because it seemed so unusual.

I wasn't sure if anyone really took the posters' messages to heart until I ran into a scheduling problem. I mentioned the conflict to the model coordinator and even though she had had nothing to do with it she immediately apologized that there had been a miscommunication. She asked one of the stylists what had happened, and he was quick to admit his mistake and apologize sincerely. There was no blaming, no fighting, just a calm reaction of, 'Now that this happened, how can we fix it?' A solution was quickly reached, and everyone involved walked away happy with the outcome.

This contrasted sharply with the atmosphere of the corporation where I worked. Everyone there was suspicious of each other, quick to blame, and fast to point out others' faults. The employees worked in constant fear of making mistakes.

The positive exchange I witnessed with Redken affected me greatly, both personally and professionally. I began trying this principle in my marriage. It still amazes me how quickly either my husband or I can end an escalating fight when one of us chooses to make an honest admittance of our part in the conflict.

Recently, I moved and started working for a small ad agency. To my happy surprise, I had stumbled upon a company with the same culture of accepting responsibility. Everyone here at RTP admits their own mistakes, and, even more unbelievably, apologizes for the part they may have played in other people's mistakes! There's something freeing about saying, 'That was my fault. I'm sorry, and I will correct it.' A sense of teamwork and mutual responsibility pervades our work and makes our team successful time and time again. The result of this culture of humility is that I am not afraid to make mistakes. Therefore, I try more, learn more, and create more than I ever did in a culture of fear. I plan to keep this lesson in mind, and wherever I work, spread the positive effects of this humble attitude.

Becky Miller, RTP Advertising, www.ertp.com

The MarketingSherpa Story



Sherpas guide climbers up Mount Everest. This, however, is not Everest or a Sherpa. It's Clip Art.

Perhaps you've heard of the Sherpas of Nepal? They're natives who guide climbers up the treacherous slopes of Mount Everest.

The climb to marketing greatness can be almost as tough and exhilarating. Did you know the average VP marketing's job tenure in some industries is only 18 months? Plus, figuring out new tactics, such as search marketing, email segmentation, or online PR — can be as tricky as climbing an icy slope.

Consider MarketingSherpa your friendly native guide.

Where did the idea for MarketingSherpa come from?

From you, actually. During the fall of 1999, our Founder Anne Holland crisscrossed the US, Canada, and the UK meeting with hundreds of marketers to ask them one simple question, "What information do you really need to make your job easier?"

Marketer after marketer gave the same answer — Case Studies about marketers (not vendors), real-life results data, and how-to tutorials for the tough stuff. So, that's exactly what we research and publish for you.

Our first newsletter launched in February 2000 to a few hundred friends-of-Sherpa. Now we're up to 173,000 weekly readers, thanks almost entirely to word-of-mouth from folks like you.

How does MarketingSherpa get Case Studies?

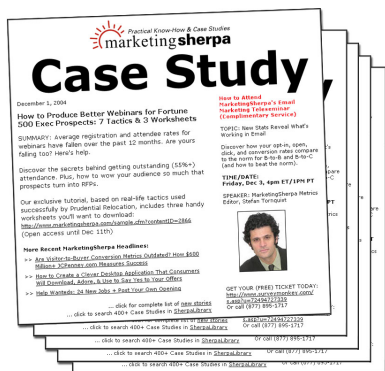
Sheer hard work. Just like mountain climbing, it's not easy.

100% of MarketingSherpa's case studies and know-how articles are researched and written by our in-house editorial team. We don't accept outside columnists, contributed articles, or anything written by an outside expert or PR person.

Instead, we use old-fashioned reporting.



Our reporters toil away at 499 Main St, Warren, RI to bring you new Case Studies weekly.



We're constantly surfing marketing, advertising, and PR campaigns online and offline. When we see a marketer using a tactic that might be useful for others to know about, we call that marketer up and ask, "How's it working?" If the marketer generously agrees to be interviewed, we talk with them in-depth about what he or she has learned during the campaign.

Then, we write up the story including tactical notes, results data, creative samples for everyone in the MarketingSherpa community to be inspired by.



Thanks to everyone who bought tickets to our Annual Summits this year. Here's a shot of the full house at San Francisco in November.

Metrics Guides and Buyer's Guides for marketers, plus carry "best-of" books and reports from other publishers you might find useful.

Just please don't ask us for consulting or agency services. Many of our best customers are consultants and agencies, and we would never presume to compete with them. We're a publishing company, pure and simple, and we aim to stay that way.

No, we don't take advertisements in our newsletters or on our main Web site. And we never ever rent out email names. We prefer to remain editorially unbiased and to serve only one master — you.

How does MarketingSherpa make money?

When you shop in our online bookstore at SherpaStore.com, or attend one of our Summits, your purchase goes directly toward making MarketingSherpa possible. We publish a full range of annual

Why Rhode Island?

Marketing happens all over the world, not just on Madison Avenue. MarketingSherpa's staff is based all over the world as well — including Austria, Israel, Oregon, Arkansas, Massachusetts, and Brooklyn.

However, we chose to open our head offices on Main Street in the small bustling town of Warren, Rhode Island. We're conveniently located within a half hour of both Providence and Newport, and about 75 minutes from downtown Boston.

We like it here. People are friendly, houses are affordable, and you can't swing a dead cat without hitting a water view. Plus, Warren has great coffee shops, restaurants, and ample free parking. And with the money we save on Madison Avenue rents, we're able to give 100% paid medical and dental benefits to our employees. You can't beat that.



Action Shot – behind the scenes in our Warren, RI offices – Service Manager Sharon Hamner inspects a delivery from East Bay Printing before shipping reports out to SherpaStore buyers.

Got any other questions for MarketingSherpa?

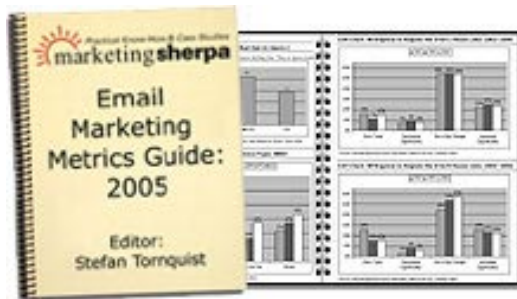
We love hearing from you! Your input directly inspires every story we write and everything we do. You can call us toll-free at (877) 895-1717 (we're open during east coast business hours) or email President Anne Holland directly at AnneH@MarketingSherpa.com.

Thanks for your support!



Anne Holland looking Presidential

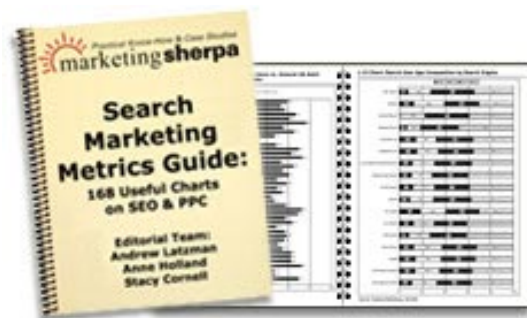
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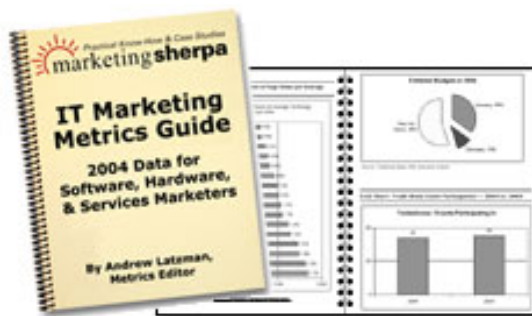
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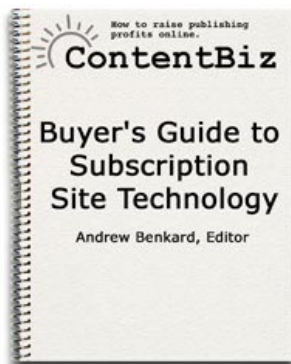
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