

Marketing Rule #2: It's a Big Ocean...And You are a Small Tug Boat

Consider a quick thought exercise: imagine you are a small but determined, rickety tugboat rising and falling casually, easily, as the ocean surrounding you swells and then dips beneath the horizon. You disappear into vast, blue dunes only to resurface slowly as you are pushed upwards by a surging crest of rolling, undulating pillows of water. This repeats endlessly as you try to gain bearings and find your way through the massive, heaving waves under you.

Suddenly, a wall rises in the near distance and you immediately gain understanding that the shadow that has overcome you is not just a tidal wave of doubt, but something more substantial, something more consuming. It's the darkness resulting from your competition's massive marketing plans...

While the example is a little dramatic, I bet it's not an altogether unfamiliar description of how you might feel with your business as you take a glance at what the marketplace looks like. The simple fact is the example is actually a pretty realistic view of what can happen with your marketing plan execution. Mix that together with the tumultuous economy, the complexity of new media and the difficult rigor that "measurable" results require and you are presented with the challenging prospect of making sense of it all.

And, while at first blush it may seem like it, I am not actually here to depress you about the hopeless scenario of managing your marketing budget and strategy futilely. Rather, I will instead show you that despite the fact that you are a small, yet enterprising piece of wood construct floating in a massive, moving world of competition you still stand a chance at reaching your goals... if you take the right steps.

Marketing Rule two in a series of five is that you have to come to terms with what and who you are. Then approach your results with that knowledge in mind.

Here's another example to help you understand exactly what I mean. Recently, the marquee buzzword you hear about town is how to "Monetize Social Media". Sound big, promising and something worth trying to do, doesn't it? Sure does – if you have that as one of your main objectives and have committed the resources and funding to support it. And even more importantly, if you have the knowledge to do it. If you don't then stay away...stay very far away.

Why would I dissuade you? Well – I am not so much dissuading you as I am persuading you to spend your marketing budget on the right things for your company. If you are a start up, perhaps you should concentrate on more foundational things like understanding what your brand even is before you engage in more complex, and frankly, more potentially expensive endeavors. But that should be your rule on everything. Not just the new social media chatter.

Here's the encouragement: even if you are a start up, you may be perfect for social engagement if you have that as one of your primary objectives, it falls within your brand representation, you strategically support it, and you have the help you need to not waste your time or money chasing rabbit trails.

The fact is, tackle what you can tackle. Once you complete that, move on to new stuff. Not before. Remember, you are a small tug boat in a big ocean. You have limited

resources. As a result, spend you money to support who you are, not to “keep up with the Joneses.” And don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. You business should be designed to take advantage of your marketing channel choices...not the other way around.