

# 10 Common Marketing Mistakes to Avoid

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A good marketing plan can help launch a new business or grow an existing one. Common marketing mistakes, however, can quickly derail even your best efforts. To give you an edge, I have outlined ten problems that plague small businesses. Avoid them and you should have more success attracting customers.

**1. Not Marketing to a Defined Group:** Before embarking on a marketing campaign, determine your target audience and gear your marketing plan to that audience. Trying to appeal to everyone typically does not work.

**2. Inconsistency in Your Marketing Efforts:** You need to have the same look and feel throughout your ads, promotions and overall marketing plan. The key to this is having a consistent brand and a solid grasp on your company's identity. If you are wrestling with this, consider hiring a branding consultant to help invigorate your company image.

**3. Lack of Diversification:** Marketing on television, in print or on the Internet alone will reach only a segment of your potential customers. Targeting your audience with different media will encourage familiarity with your brand. Also, customers are more receptive to certain media at different times. For instance, if you have an auto repair business, radio may be the best medium for reaching a captive audience in their cars. However, an ad in the weekly automobile classified section of your local newspaper may reach your target market on a Saturday morning when potential customers have more time to browse and notice advertisements.

**4. Not Focusing on Repeat Business:** Repeat business typically makes up 80 percent of customers in most businesses. Too often marketing campaigns heavily focus on attracting new customers and not building relationships with current ones. Remember that repeat customers can drum up new business for you. Try promotions that offer two-for-one deals or friends and family discounts.

**5. Starting Too Late:** Time your marketing campaigns to coincide with new products, new services, seasonal sales or an upcoming event that will attract business. Seasonal marketing efforts should start well in advance of the holiday. And campaigns tied into new products or services should be developed in parallel with the product or service itself.

**6. Not Having a Clear Marketing Message:** Marketing messages that are contrived, confusing, too subtle or too long can easily miss your target market entirely. The most ingenious marketing plan is wasted if no one gets it. With so many businesses vying for customers' eyeballs, it may be tempting to try to rise above the noise with daring marketing schemes or gimmicks. Remember that the most daring marketing campaigns are rolled out by large companies with hefty budgets and the ability to hire the best marketing minds in the world. And even then, there is a large amount of risk involved.

**7. Going Overboard:** If it sounds too good to be true it probably is. Too much hype will turn people away. If there is something truly unique about your service or product, back it up with examples.

**8. Forgetting That Slow and Steady Wins the Race:** If you blow your entire marketing budget on one big ad campaign, then what will you do the rest of the year? Marketing means building a reputation over time through ongoing exposure. A singular effort may make a splash, but you will quickly disappear from view if you cannot sustain your campaign.

**9. Not Getting Feedback:** Test your marketing ideas and do focus groups if possible. Do not launch without getting some feedback first. If you have the budget, a third-party market research firm can be a big help in targeting participants and objectively asking questions. Remember, you are more subjective about your marketing plan because you developed it.

**10. Making a Change for the Sake of It:** Just because you are tired of your marketing plan doesn't mean it isn't working. Too many businesses make changes because they think they have too. It takes some time for marketing efforts to ramp up and gain traction. Often a tried and true formula will be more effective.