

## Playing to Win 12.12.11

**When it comes to marketing, we are caught between a tight budget, and the need to know what to continue, what to change, what to drop. We know that when you stop doing marketing you lose all the momentum. But we're having trouble figuring out how much is enough, too much, too little. And funds to commit to marketing are tight. Help!**

**Top Thoughts:** Marketing is a complex game. Think of each marketing initiative as a type of play. As in team sports, some plays are better in one situation, i.e. offense, some in others, i.e. defense. One play / one marketing initiative can't do it all.

When you engage with marketing, play to win. Increase wins by practicing and putting various programs into play. Put someone in charge to work with you. Stay within budget, and get creative.

Playing any game without a playbook is a bad idea. The same is true in marketing. You'd probably be very critical of a coach randomly throwing plays at the field, telling the players to try, do their best, without an overall game plan.

Have a book of plays you want to use in marketing, for different purposes. Run the plays multiple times in practice to see if they work, and get the bugs out. Then launch plays real time and test them against the competition.

You can also think of marketing initiatives as members of a team. It's important that all initiatives pull in the same direction, even though each one is different, and they're spread out all over the field of play. There is a multiplier effect that comes with variety on the team. Be sure to focus all efforts towards the same goal, winning at getting more clients, more leads and more awareness.

Regularly assess each initiative's ability to help you achieve short and long term goals. Periodically swap out one play / one team member for another, in order to get the results you want. Here are some examples of marketing categories to focus on:

- Group clients by need, behavior, industry, buying approaches.
- Build a list of existing services - use the list to get new clients.
- Create new products / services, keep existing clients engaged and spending.
- Ask customers and prospects how they found your company, do more of that.
- Do research: demographics, pricing strategy, competitive advantages.
- Develop a toolkit of plays: referrals, billboards, trade shows, direct mail, social media, advertising, case studies, internet demonstrations, the list is endless.

Weed out the bottom performers, add new ones. Expand the best producers.

Assign someone the job of being your assistant coach. Meet regularly. Review results. Define your goals and agree on what to test. Roll out ideas that deliver in practice sessions, see how they work in the real world. Don't quit after one try.

When it comes to budget, spend what you can afford. Split the budget between tried and true initiatives, new projects that you've tested and know they're ready for prime time play, and some that are your "farm team" because you're still experimenting to see if they can work.

Remember that some teams have bigger player budgets than others, and that doesn't always equate to results. If your budget is small, you'll need more low cost players – focus on the internet and marketing activities your current staff can implement. Check with industry based peer groups on what works for them. Cut down on expensive trials by adopting programs others have tested.

Your marketing payoff ratio is defined as marketing expenses divided by revenue and also divided by gross profit. To prove marketing efforts are delivering, you want to see the cost of marketing drop, in relationship to revenue and gross profit. Your marketing budget stays steady from year to year, as you change around your "players", your marketing initiatives. Your marketing spend : revenue ratio drops as proof that your marketing efforts are working.

Looking for a good book? Introduction to Marketing Concepts by Graeme Drummond.

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