

Moving Beyond Sales to Achieve Advocate Status.

Quick Tips:

- Value long term relationships
- Spend client dollars carefully
- Saving = Earning
- Avoid budgetary temptation
- Always consider ROI
- Trust is capital

My most valuable customers tend to be those with whom I enjoy a long-term, trusted relationship. As these relationship evolve over time - and billings grow, the costs attributed to accomplishing the initial sale can be factored over a number of months. With some luck this cost will quickly depreciate entirely.

I have found that establishing trust and building a valued relationship over time often requires that we provide sensible advice regarding what not to purchase from us. By doing so we can take an important step toward becoming true advocates for our customers rather than merely service providers.



This may seem anathema to business; it is at least counter intuitive. But the trusted counsel we can provide is part of the added value that nourishes a productive, enjoyable and profitable business relationship. Successful marketers understand that if they can demonstrate methods to save a client's money, the net result is by and large indistinguishable from those efforts that are designed to help them generate revenues.

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To achieve the best results in a marketing communications campaign each component of the marketing mix (advertising, PR, sales collateral, trade show efforts, direct marketing, etc.) serves an integral function. Most customers understand this, and budget permitting, choose this integrated approach. But getting a "green light" on a multi-disciplinary campaign is not an invitation to spend a client's marketing dollars with impunity. One of the most valuable pieces of advice I can offer a client is how to avoid spending their money on marketing efforts that are unlikely to contribute significantly to achieving their goals and objectives. The temptation to "throw everything" at a campaign is hard to resist. It's a bit like placing a wager on every horse in a race knowing you will ultimately gain some return - whether you will come out ahead, however, is another matter.

Given the current economic environment, the necessity to view every expense through the "ROI" lens has never been more important.

It is true that some aspects of a given campaign will appear to result in greater return on investment than others. However, it can be difficult if not impossible to ascertain the "absolute value" of any individual component. This is because of the dynamic nature of integrated marketing. Your PR messaging will have an effect on readers of your ads; your direct mail campaign will have an impact on the quality of visitors at your trade show booth. These visitors will have perceptions about your company and products gained through your advertising, and so on. But just as in the game of football, "piling on" unnecessary marketing activities has its consequences. The law of diminishing returns must be understood clearly as it applies to marketing. I understand this but sometimes my client may not, thus I believe it is my responsibility to prevent unwarranted or unnecessary spending even though my customer may be inclined to disagree.

Turning down work can be very challenging, especially when your revenue demands are high. But I have learned that offering customers my best, most prudent advice on how and where not to spend their money can pay dividends over the long term.

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