

by Jay Conrad Levinson

If your marketing is right, but your timing is wrong, watch out. Even the best-laid plans go awry when the timing is off. Here's how to prevent that.

Sometimes a company actively markets the right product or service to the right people in the right media. But the marketing turns out to be a flop all because of poor timing. In order to get the most mileage from your marketing, you've got to be keenly attuned to the right times and the wrong times. To gain a bit of insight, consider these ten examples:

1. You've created the perfect mailing package, but it arrives too early in the week, when your prospect is thinking of the week ahead -- or too late, when your prospect is thinking of the upcoming weekend. Moral: See to it that your mailing arrives on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

2. You've got a fine product but a limited budget and a lot of competition. What to do? Do your marketing when your competitors have eased up and you can gain the largest share of mind with the smallest marketing investment. Maybe that will be during what are deemed the slow months. But it's when you can attract the most attention the fastest.

3. Everybody receives Christmas catalogs in September and October. If you sent yours during July or August, you'd get people thinking of your company then and later on as well. It's may sound a bit crazy, but if you explain why you are mailing at that time, it will make sense to your prospects. Naturally, this applies to times other than Christmas.

4. You keep abreast of current events by watching the tube, reading the paper, accessing online news services, perusing newsweeklies, and subscribing to publications within your industry and community. You should be doing this, and if you do, you can tie in your offerings with what is happening at that moment in history. A recession is ugly except to companies that realize it is an ideal opportunity for them to make sales.

5. Be careful not to launch your marketing too soon. One of the most common errors in marketing is to promote before all the bugs have been worked out, before the salespeople know all the facts, and before you are ready to fill the flood of orders and engage in guerrilla follow-up. Remember that patience is a guerrilla virtue.

6. One of the saddest moments in marketing is the snazzy newspaper story or big time TV report about the products or services that are not yet available. The business owner is so enthralled at the thought of free publicity that the news is released before people can buy what he or she offers. They won't come back another time, and the media won't give you another splash. Restraint is necessary even with free news coverage.

7. Savvy retailers wait at least one month before having their grand openings. If they don't wait, customers will come flocking in to become acquainted with untrained salespeople, poorly stocked shelves, slow delivery times, clumsy sales procedures and messy surroundings.

Polish these items to perfection before your grand opening or it won't be so grand. Guerrillas are rarely in hurry.

8. Telemarketing calls that don't get through or that reach answering devices are wastes of time and money. Find out when your prospects are most likely to be at the phone, and then do your telemarketing. It may be at 11:00 a.m. to businesses and 6:30 p.m. to homeowners. The first goal of a phone call is to reach the prospect.

9. Use speed in the timing you use to deal with customer requests, orders, questions and complaints. People revere their time these days more than ever. Revere it with them and never waste one minute of theirs.

10. Never be in a rush to create your marketing materials. Keep in mind that to develop them, you are faced with three variables -- speed, quality and economy. You may select any two, but not all three. Guerrillas opt for quality and economy very time.

Timing also refers to tying in with the news of the moment, with what's on your prospect's minds, and with what your competitors are doing. Guerrilla timing can make the difference between a campaign fizzling or flourishing.