

# WISDOM REPORT

## Marketing Wisdom for 2012

Real-life stories of success  
and lessons learned

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# Marketing Wisdom for 2012: Real-life stories of success and lessons learned from the MarketingSherpa community

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Marketing Wisdom for 2012

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We are thrilled to be the sponsors of the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of MarketingSherpa's Wisdom Report.

For us, the Wisdom Report represents all that is good in today's community of marketers – an ever present desire to learn, a willingness to put into practice new and proven marketing strategies and tactics, and a belief that sharing your successes with other marketers benefits everyone.

Throughout this year's report you will notice some orange dotted call outs. These "factoids" have been garnered from over 140,000 companies – small, medium and large – who submitted during December, 2011 their website URLs to our new Marketing Grader tool. Three critical areas of their marketing were evaluated – top of the funnel, middle of the funnel and analytics.

What the factoids in the Wisdom Report show is how marketers are doing in terms of their ability to fill the top of the sales and marketing funnel, how effective they are at converting traffic into leads and leads into customers, and how good they are at measuring their successes and failures. We include these factoids because we thought you'd be interested to see how your marketing efforts compare to others.

We think this year's Wisdom Report is filled with amazing insights - a treasure trove of inspirations for our marketing community.

Enjoy,

The HubSpot Team

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the 10th edition of the MarketingSherpa Wisdom Report, our annual collection of marketers' real-life stories, test results, and lessons learned from the previous year.

Though I'm relatively young in my own marketing knowledge, after reading this year's Wisdom entries, I feel confident in stating the following:

*Marketers are survivors.*

Much like towns that are forced to rebuild in the wake of a tragedy, you and your peers have weathered recession, faced increasing customer skepticism, and have had to adapt to the ever-advancing intelligence of the online population. No longer are your claims or guarantees enough to promote conversion. Today's buyer is resourceful, Internet-savvy, and more dependent than ever before on customer reviews, page rankings, and other widely distributed opinions and proof points.

In other words, you not only need to sell value – you need to prove it, time and time again.

But, without fail, many of you were up to the challenge. This year, you shared a wealth of stories that highlight resourcefulness, creativity, and a sound understanding of how basic marketing tenets not only apply, but thrive, alongside the latest technologies, practices, and new marketing realities.

If 2010 was the year you rediscovered the power of communication – both with customers, and within your own companies – 2011 was the year you turned this newfound knowledge into action. You took off your social media training wheels and became proficient in leveraging these dialogues toward sales. And social marketing's influence wasn't limited to specific platforms, either; you'll see accounts of how social media seamlessly integrated with email, e-commerce, and even traditional retail and print media marketing.

Likewise, this year saw a tremendous number of entries centered on the power of testing. Taking the lessons learned from 2010, you quickly used this knowledge, tested in myriad ways, and optimized your efforts for better returns. Therefore, we have created a section devoted to your finest testing and optimization efforts from the past 12 months.

And, as always, we have included our annual section on general marketing wisdom – the timeless truths that are easy to forget in today's flood of new marketing platforms, yet at the same time remain central to success each and every year.

So, we thank all of the "survivors." Thank you all for your time, your efforts and your wisdom. These entries will inspire fellow marketers toward bigger and better things to come in 2012.

Best,

Brad Bortone  
Senior Copy Editor, MarketingSherpa (a MECLABS company)

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## CHAPTER 1 EMAIL MARKETING

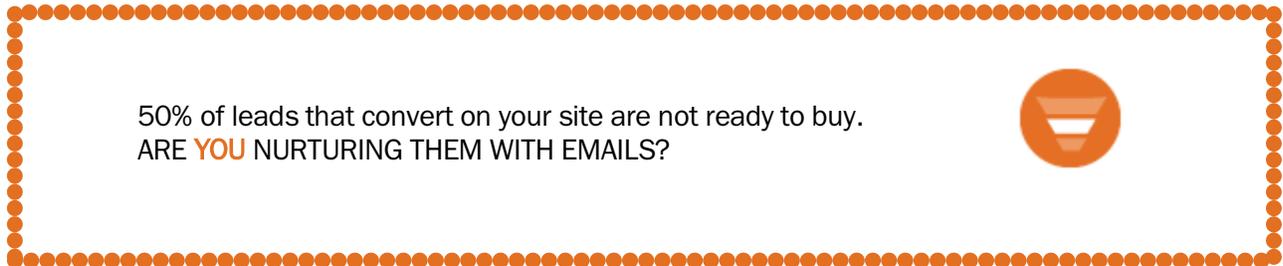
Just a year ago, many marketers were spending a good amount of bandwidth discussing the “inevitable demise” of email as a viable tactic. Now, just days into 2012, these same marketers are eager to begin the year’s email campaigns, excited to put their fine-tuned, more accurately targeted lists into use.

The coming year poses a number of exciting possibilities for email marketers. For starters, ESPs are finding new ways to render email on mobile screens, opening the doors for new avenues for messaging. Likewise, the increased use of QR codes will create a wealth of new list-building opportunities for marketers hungry to improve the quantity and quality of their email targets.

With these new email tactics in place, it becomes increasingly important to respect the privacy of your subscribers. Today’s customers are savvier about the ways of the Internet, most notably in the use of behavioral targeting. As such, it is more crucial than ever to ensure subscribers know their information is safe, and your company is trustworthy.

The following entries may be limited in number, but are broad in appeal, and offer proof that not only is email alive and well, but growing in new directions. We expect this section to be considerably more populated by next year’s edition of the Wisdom Report.

For exciting email marketing case studies and how-to articles, be sure to [subscribe to the free MarketingSherpa Email Marketing newsletter](#).



50% of leads that convert on your site are not ready to buy.  
ARE YOU NURTURING THEM WITH EMAILS?



## OFFER A HAVEN FOR THE “WANDERERS”

In 2011, as part of the research for my new book, I conducted my own email mystery shopper campaign. I was surprised to learn that very few companies send emails to customers that “welcome them to the brand.”

None of the companies that I contacted ever sent a follow-up email asking why I didn't purchase the product or service after checking out their site. I call these consumers “wanderers” – those people who walk into a store, call a contact center, or click on a site for the first time and are not engaged by the folks at the other end. Those companies that are involved in marketing are missing tremendous opportunities, worth billions of dollars every year, by not turning all wanderers into lifetime customers.

Those organizations that make wanderers feel welcomed, important and appreciated on every encounter, especially the first one, will reap tremendous rewards.

*Richard Shapiro, [The Center for Client Retention](#)*

## SHORTER ISN'T ALWAYS SWEETER

My lesson learned in 2011 is that copy length is irrelevant, provided the sales story is compelling and hits an emotional sweet spot with the customer. I wrote and tested two email blasts for a client looking to boost retail store traffic. The 850-word email generated 42% more store visits than the 200-word email.

Marketers who believe that “shorter is better” may want to reconsider that philosophy (or start shopping for a different copywriter).

*Barbara Sibley, [Sibley Smart Copy](#)*

## DON'T OVERTHINK YOUR CONTENT

Our main customers are enterprise sales and marketing teams who want to build relationships and business with C-level executives. Typically, these folks don't know how to speak to the C-level, so we arm them with deep information about these executives that helps them structure their conversations.

We mail an email newsletter every other week to thousands of opt-in subscribers. We have been doing this since we started the business. And while the size of our list has grown slowly and steadily, our open and clickthrough rates have stayed the same no matter what. We have tried different formats, A/B testing, subject lines, thought leadership articles, etc. and the results are always the same.

Recently we were due to send our newsletter the week after Thanksgiving. After a relaxing holiday weekend, I found myself behind on writing the featured article – and fresh out of ideas for topics and subject lines. Suddenly I remembered a brief conversation I had had with a Chief Information Officer at Oracle OpenWorld. I had found myself sitting next to him while I was killing time before a client meeting, so we chatted for a few minutes. I asked him, “What does it take for someone to get a meeting

with you? What gets your attention?”

In my post-Thanksgiving haze, I wrote a brief article about what he said, titling it, “How to Get a Meeting with a CIO.” I used the title as the subject line for the newsletter, hit send and hoped for the best. Imagine my surprise when this afterthought article produced the best results we had ever had. Not only were the opens and clicks higher, the article generated comments, subscription trials and new members for our LinkedIn group.

In looking at the results, I concluded that the mailing was a runaway success for two reasons:

1. It was straightforward and relevant: Too weary to use fancy jargon, I chose what I thought was a boring title: How to Get a Meeting with a CIO. Yet it resonated well with our readers, many of whom are struggling with getting C-level meetings. It was a clear statement that tapped right into a key pain point that many of our customers have.
2. It was authentic, credible and told a story: People prefer real-life stories to lists of recommendations and prescriptions. I have published top ten lists before on the exact same topic and they have not received nearly the response. The article provided a real-life glimpse into the thoughts and opinions of a key target audience and our customers ate it up.

Lessons Learned: Don't overthink your content. Keep it simple and authentic. Tell a story that gives your customers insight into their customers.

Sharon Gillenwater, [Boardroom Insiders](#)

## BEWARE OF “OVERMARKETING”

Sometimes you shouldn't try to sell. Using sell words “exclusive” and “discount” in an email subject line not only gave us a worse response, but dramatically increased the spam complaint rate. Sometimes, the common marketing hype words can turn people off, while finding a more friendly tone can produce better results.

Tim Watson, [Emailvision](#)

## A PICTURE IS WORTH...

A few months ago, some colleagues passed along another company's email webinar promotion, the picture in which didn't match the webinar content. I wondered what would happen if we did something similar, but with an image that did match the event theme.

So, we tried it and after doing A/B testing between image and non-image mailings, the image version was such a success, that it's now standard practice.

Michael Kinstlinger

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## CHAPTER 2 ONLINE MARKETING

Growth. If there was only one word to describe the current and future state of online marketing, it would be “growth.”

The term “online marketing” has become an umbrella that’s almost too broad to contain the tactics and platforms held within, as the continued growth of this marketing mainstay will almost assuredly need to be broken down into more specific areas for upcoming Wisdom Reports.

Social media has become an entity unto itself, and has its own section of this report. But, soon we will likely see specific chapters for mobile marketing – both inbound and outbound – and even proximity marketing, such as that conducted by platforms like Foursquare or ShopKick.

Likewise, we will also see many more success stories that highlight wins made with QR codes, “daily deal”-type sales, and even the growing trend of “everywhere” commerce – which may just overtake traditional plastic credit cards as the dominant way to purchase.

Your online marketing stories from 2011 were varied and diverse ... a sign of very exciting developments to come for 2012.

To learn more about new ways marketers are using online tactics, in both the B2B and consumer space, be sure to [subscribe to our free B2B and B2C newsletters](#).

In 2011, thousands of companies graded their online marketing using [Marketing Grader](#).  
SEE HOW **YOUR** MARKETING RANKS IN 2012!



## INTEGRATE CHANNELS FOR A SEAMLESS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

We are seeing trends in the retail e-commerce industry that reflect what we are hearing from the 1,000 brands and 18,000 retailers we service. The channel differentiation between online shopping vs. mobile commerce vs. brick-and-mortar is slowly fading into memory. We saw the results of this trend during the 2011 holiday season, with mobile visits to Shopatron stores accounting for about 15% of total traffic and 8.5% of revenue over the Black Friday/Cyber Monday weekend.

Customers don't want to have to actively "choose" a shopping channel. They want more transparency between the channels—look it up online, buy it in store, etc.

Mark Grondin, [Shopatron.com](http://Shopatron.com)

## THE "LONG TAIL" IS GETTING LONGER

Buyers are searching with more specificity than ever before. So, if you want to be found online, it's simple ... include specific content on your website. If you sell "22B-Z series parallel shaft BLDC gearmotors," make sure these details are on your site.

Why? The sales conversation, and therefore your sales process, historically handled in person or on the phone by your sales and customer service teams, now has to take place online. Your website needs to replicate precisely what was once the sole domain of your staff. That "domain" now belongs to your website.

If your company's products or services don't show up in search results when buyers do that ever-lengthening long tail search, you risk losing out to a competitor that has that information and does show up.

Susan Orr, [Thomas Industrial Network](http://Thomas Industrial Network)

## DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP

The one thing I learned in 2011 was to persevere. Although this was challenging at times, I continued to blog regularly and participate in social media. Aside from using more traditional tactics (albeit, less frequently), my online efforts have helped our company build impressive, organic SEO.

Every once in a while, I receive phone calls or emails from prospects who discovered us online. When I ask how they found us, they say they did a search and they share their keywords. That's when the perseverance pays off – with inbound leads.

Elaine Fogel, [Solutions Marketing & Consulting](http://Solutions Marketing & Consulting)

## REMARKETING...REVISITED

We've seen such dramatic results from simple remarketing campaigns; I believe it will be a standard practice within every paid search campaign in 2012. It's never been a better time to do so. Once a costly marketing strategy, companies can embrace the free remarketing capabilities available in every Google Adwords account, and take advantage of the latest way to use display advertising.

Heidi Sturrock, [Sturrock Interactive Media](#)

## TARGETED LANDING PAGES FOR PPC ADS

By creating targeted landing pages for our PPC campaigns and ad groups we have seen our PPC conversion percentage double overnight. Pretty good ROI, in my opinion.

Jake Maki, [DataOne Software](#)

## A NARROW FOCUS CAN'T MOVE MOUNTAINS

This year, I think one of the biggest things that was really driven home to us was the continued importance of an integrated marketing program.

While we constantly support all of the inbound marketing techniques, including email marketing, website maintenance and SEO, social media, blogging and PR, we have seen that it's increasingly important to combine these tools if looking for results.

Just using one technique is helpful to a company's program, but won't move mountains. With an integrated approach, results are greater.

Emily Carter, [Grassroots Marketing, Inc.](#)

## MARKETING AUTOMATION IS WITHIN REACH (EVEN FOR SMES!)

Thanks to firms like Eloqua and Marketo, marketing automation (MA) technologies have recently boomed, and not just on the large enterprise level. As a conversion-driven marketing agency, we have spent years strategizing and executing marketing automation programs.

In 2011, we took the additional step of hiring a dedicated marketing technologist to provide one-on-one consultation and drive innovation for our clients. Clearly, the investment in MA technologies is a large one in terms of both time and money. However, as the demand for marketing automation services grew, we recognized the potential for considerable return on investment.

Though small- to medium-sized enterprises (a category in which we and several of our clients belong) may balk at the thought of investing so heavily in one tactic, we found that the long-term benefits could outweigh the risks.

We offer our clients the following advice:

1. Realize that an inefficient system is more costly than an efficient one with high start-up costs in the long run.
2. Don't let the hurdle of expensive training deter you when the potential for gaining a competitive edge is significant.
3. Recognize that the time spent is an investment in a more efficient future.
4. Base the decision to implement MA technology on the individual characteristics of the firm, such as its goals, capacity and personnel.

We continue to educate our clients on these emerging technologies and have invested in developing a MA skill set for our team members. We recognize that the MA investment we have made both for internal and client purposes will be vital as the industry continues to grow in 2012.

Sam Eidson, [90octane](#)

## MAXIMIZE THE REACH OF YOUR BLOG

As content marketing has become more widely understood as a concept, it's opened up a lot more opportunities for marketers. For instance, a few years ago, an email service provider may have blogged almost exclusively about topics directly tied to the email channel and lists.

But, with content as the foundation of marketing, and with so many interrelated formats and channels, that same blog can now cover channels like social, mobile, video, webinars and e-books, and tactics like conversion optimization and integrated campaigns, and still maintain an even higher degree of relevance to the audience.

In our case, this has paved the way for new co-marketing initiatives that got off to a strong start this year, and that we're planning to expand greatly in the year ahead. And if the early results are any indication, we should have a few solid case studies from these new content marketing projects for the *2013 Marketing Wisdom Report*.

Hunter Boyle, [AWeber](#)

## INTERNET MARKETERS AREN'T AS CONNECTED AS ONE WOULD THINK

I did a lot of travelling for business this year. New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Houston, Las Vegas, Toronto, Denver, Boulder ... and I'm sure there are a few places I've left off the list.

One thing that I've realized is that we, as Internet marketers, are not as connected to each other as we think. With all of the blogs, webinars, books, and events, it's easy to quickly jump to conclusions that we are a tight-knit, vibrant community.

But this is the opposite of what I've seen as I travel from office to office, marketing group to marketing group. We are actually very disconnected from each other. We tend to operate in our individual company silos doing what we do, knowing what we know, and not sharing what we should share.

The reality is that there are answers and solutions to almost every problem out there. If you're sitting at your desk right now mulling over a difficult challenge, I guarantee you someone out there has had that same challenge and has succeeded through it. But this information is either very difficult to find or delivered via a few talking heads who may or may not have any clue to what they are saying.

MarketingSherpa strives to fill this missing void, to be this marketing community, but we cannot do it alone. We need individual marketers working in the trenches to play a major role.

So, I challenge everyone in 2012 not to withhold all of your classified information and secret sauce, but pay it forward. To share on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter the things that work for you. Comment on those blogs you read. And try and give as much as you take.

Adam Lapp, [MECLABS](#)

## BALANCE PRECISION WITH SCALABLE REACH

In 2011, an increasing number of marketers adopted data-driven strategies, more specifically, search retargeting, which is the ability to target consumers based off of user search history. However, although search ads remain one of the highest performing ads on the Internet, only 4% of users' time is actually spent in the search engine, while 96% is spent on content related sites in the areas of entertainment, news, social media, video, etc.

For many marketers, moving beyond the search engine, while continuing to leverage the highest level of consumer intent (i.e. search data), has become the key to success. Marketers who have embraced search retargeting have seen returns on ad spend at nearly 300% above goal, clickthrough rates nearly 3.2 times higher than run of network, and ROI roughly 700% higher than the initial investment.

Today, success is defined by balancing the scale seen in display with precision seen in search engine marketing. In 2012, the ones to succeed will be the ones to embrace search retargeting and other technologies that focus on targeting.

James Green, [Magnetic](#)

## PRESS RELEASE SEO

1. Perform keyword research: In each press release, you should target 2 or 3 top keywords that are relevant to your industry. If you already have an SEO campaign in place, you probably have a good idea which keywords you need to target. If not, you can use a free keyword research tool, like Google AdWords Keyword Tool to identify relevant keywords.

2. Include your company name in the headline: The reason you want to include your company name in the headline if possible is so that you can own the top search results for your brand. That way, whenever a customer or a reporter searches online for your company, they'll see your website and a bunch of news about your company. It increases your credibility, and it's helpful for driving down any negative search results if they exist.

3. Use keyword-rich anchor text: Links are the key to increasing your search engine presence. Most news

directories allow you to include links back to your website within your press release. To increase the visibility of your press releases and your website, use keyword –rich, targeted anchor text in your links. For example, suppose one of the keywords you’re targeting is “red widgets.” You’d want to include a link in your press release around the words “red widgets” that links to a page on your website about your red widgets.

4. Stick to reputable news distribution websites: The low grade press release websites have always been something I recommended avoiding. You’re wasting your time if you’re posting your press releases to these websites, because they won’t get found. In fact, being linked to these websites could even hurt your reputation with Google. However, there are still a handful of free reputable news distribution websites that have trust and high “Page Rank.”

5. Have something to say: If you want your press releases to spread far and get picked up by good news websites, you need to have something important and relevant to share.

Jane Daniels, [ROCK STAR PR](#)

## DON’T GO IT ALONE...

Get an affiliate program. We started 18 months ago and today have hundreds of affiliates who are promoting our site. They send us free traffic and if any of it converts to revenue they get a piece. Administration of these programs is trivial with companies like ShareASale, CommissionJunction, etc.

Of course, like most things, 90% of our affiliate traffic comes from 10% of our active affiliates. You will want to target some relevant, high-traffic affiliates by hand. But once you get them onboard, the results are worth it. We now get about 15% of our overall traffic from affiliate partners.

Mike Scanlin, [borntosell](#)

## PUT THE “QUICK” BACK IN QUICK RESPONSE

QR codes absolutely exploded in popularity in 2011. However, many marketers struggled through the process of implementing them successfully. Some of the best practices that I’ve learned have been:

1. Point the QR codes to mobile websites
2. Shorten the URL before you create the QR code
3. Provide instructions and incentive on your printed piece to encourage people to scan the QR code
4. Make sure that your campaign is set up properly so that you can track the effectiveness of the QR code versus other response channels!

Jason Pinto, [interlinkONE](#)

## USING YOUR BLOG TO HELP CUSTOMERS TAKES TIME, BUT REAPS GREAT REWARDS

The MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments blogs have gained a 400% traffic increase in 2010-2011 when compared to 2009-2010. Now, this isn't a single-factor split test, so I can't give you the exact reason for that lift. But here are a few things I observed that might help you grow your own blog traffic.

Nothing here should really radically shock you (and, sorry, I have no shortcuts to success to share, this takes hard work), but it should be a good affirmation of getting all the blocking and tackling right on your blogs.

It comes down to a simple, three-step process:

1. Identify your audience and understand their needs. Everyone, everyone, everyone has pain points. IT professionals want to decrease the chance for security breaches on their networks. Working moms want to more efficiently use the time in their day. Rodney Dangerfield wants more respect. You can help learn about your audience's needs in many ways. Other social media are helpful. Engage with them on Facebook, LinkedIn, through Twitter, and on forums. Or just passively read about what their pain points are, what they value, and, if possible, what they specifically want and don't want from your company (ratings sites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, and UrbanSpoon can be helpful for this as well).
2. Invest aggressively. Social media, especially blogs, aren't free, and they're not even cheap. That's like saying getting Lance Armstrong's lungs are free. Hey, you don't have to pay any money, just ride your bike 30 miles up a mountain every day. Clearly, there is an investment there...even if it isn't a monetary one. So if you're looking for more than just a simple SEO blog filled with keywords that might help organic traffic but do nothing to help convince your audience that you are the solution they've been looking for all these years (and where have you been hiding?), you need to invest in true inbound marketing. This may be as simple as investing your time in writing rich blog posts that address those pain points in step 1. It may be investing your Subject Matter Experts' time on the blog. Or it may go so far as a monetary investment in a brand journalist or social media manager.
3. Focus on helping your customers, not selling. And for this reason...I do not recommend sticking a copywriter on your blog. But if you do, make it clear to that copywriter that the point of the blog is not to sell. Because people do not pass around a sales pitch. They do not come back every day to read a sales pitch. And a sales pitch doesn't go viral. Sure, some commercials have, but it's because their content was just so darn good and they didn't shove a product down your throat (29 seconds of "Waaaaaaasup", 1 second of a logo). So put a laser-like focus on solving those pain points you've identified in step 1. Some of these blog posts may not even include mention of your product at all. For the ones that do include your product, keep in mind that your product is not magic.

And your product did not fix any of those pain points, the person buying it did. Running shoes don't get up every morning and run five miles before work; a dedicated runner does. A piece of marketing automation software doesn't deliver higher-quality leads to Sales, a dedicated marketing manager with the right tools does. And this goes beyond just the writing of the blog posts. Interact with your audience. Do everything you can to serve them. Answer their questions. Respond to their suggestions. Admit you're wrong when they call out your mistakes.

Because even when you are trying your best to serve that audience, you're not perfect. And neither am I.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful. As Dennis Miller always says, "Of course, that's just my opinion, I could be wrong." Here's to some great blogging...and marketing results...in 2012.

Daniel Burstein, [MECLABS](#)

## BECAUSE NO ONE STRIVES TO BE ON PAGE 2 OF SEARCH RESULTS...

Learn SEO and do a lot of it. If you are a small company with more time than money, you have to invest time in learning how to do SEO. Once you start to rank in the organic search results you will really see the payoff from all that free traffic coming your way.

We started 18 months ago with a brand new (unranked) site. Today we have 38 phrases in the top 3 organic results and 95 phrases on page 1 of organic results. This creates about 25% of our overall traffic, and it's free. Well, "free" in the sense that we don't pay for it, but we did have to spend 18 months working on our SEO to get here.

Mike Scanlin, [borntosell](#)

## SOME QUICK HITS ...

My learnings from 2011:

1. Enough is enough! Can't we all just get along? It's time for digital and TV to "share the love," so they can optimize budgets.
2. It's not just about digital anymore. When you say digital, expect digital, social and mobile.
3. Paid-Owned-Earned is the marketing organizational wrecking ball
4. Connect with more than just your shareholders. Focus on and engage with ALL stakeholders.
5. Emerging Technologies and Consumers: Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

Tim Rumpler, [imc<sup>2</sup>](#)

## IF YOU HAVEN'T TAKEN THE LEAP, NOW'S THE TIME...

We are a small, family-owned business. We have had great success through 2009, but 2010 and 2011 have been rather challenging. In the second half of 2011, we decided to change strategies and do more online marketing. In the past we have done more traditional marketing, with print media and sales people. We hired a SEO company at the end of the third quarter. Whereas I used to spend more time on the production side of the business until a few weeks/months ago, I am now focused on learning the online world.

Sam Lazarus, [ServiceMaster by Best Corporation, Inc.](#)

## HOW TO BUILD LINKS THROUGH GUEST BLOGGING

As a small business we do not have the budget of our competitors who can afford to give away \$200 items for product reviews. So, we offer giveaways in amounts that we can afford. We answer “What's in it for me?” (WIIFM) when we approach bloggers with our guest post pitches. We never write link request in the subject line. Instead, we do research about how we can benefit a blogger. Is he/she asking for expertise?

Even with these goals in mind we only received four responses out of 60 requests during our first campaign. What did we change for our second link building campaign? We added writing samples of posts that were more journalistic than commercial. For example, we downplayed our products and wrote content about interior design in general.

We also imitated the favorite phrases of the blogger such as, “I love this!” A change in tone and a more informal approach won a 75% response rate.

Summary of marketing tips for link building through offering guest blog posts:

1. Never write link request in subject line of email to blogger. Instead find out what info. They want from experts. Then use a subject line such as: “Guest post query - resource about home decor trends for 2012”
2. Answer WIIFM when pitching to a blogger. Find out what he/she cares about. Decide to offer something within your budget. Can you afford a \$40 giveaway of store credit? Make an exclusive coupon only available to the blogger and his/her readers for a limited time.
3. Remember that when you guest post, you are not doing a hard sell. Instead, rely on the good rapport that you've established with the blogger as host. He/she will name your company and add the hyperlink. Concentrate on making your content valuable to readers and fun to read. Mimic the voice of the blogger to communicate with her established audience.

[Lighting by Renee](#)

## KEEP IT SIMPLE FOR CLIENTS

One of the main lessons – and marketing messages – that we came away from this year is that if a website and/or email marketing strategy are easy to implement *for the client*, it will be done more regularly. If it's done more regularly it will yield better results.

We kept having conversations with clients and prospects who complained that they found it difficult, confusing, expensive, etc., to keep their website up to date so they hadn't touched in months if not years. They knew they needed to do it but avoided it like the plague because they didn't want to feel stupid because it wasn't easy for them. Or they didn't want to deal with their programmer who set it up so only they had access to it.

But the clients who had a simple content management system that they could manage themselves were far more regular in updating content. Clients that had a strategy for email campaigns and used a provider that they were comfortable with sent out more emails.

This is especially important for small businesses that, more than likely, don't have a person whose sole purpose is to market the company.

Jann Mirchandani, [Marketing Cafe](#)

## IT'S TIME TO RETHINK DIGITAL ... AND START OVER

We know that every year brands are shifting more of their media investments from traditional to digital, which means digital needs to have even more impact on driving profitability. However, the digital environment is cluttered with potential partners offering volume capabilities making it difficult to navigate and plan effectively.

Most digital plans lack the right reach and frequency to have proper impact. Marketers need to understand their most profitable consumers and devise a well-balanced plan that effectively reaches them. The following tactics will help:

1. Use a variety of sources to identify your most profitable consumer
2. Identify markets with heaviest concentrations
3. Analyze the behavior of your most profitable consumer
4. Apply optimal reach and frequency to make the proper impact
5. Develop a strategic media plan based on consumer and market insights
6. Execute media logistics
7. Create attribution framework

Marketers need to expect more from their digital dollars and stop using guesswork. With this plan, they will maximize every media investment to connect with their consumers.

Shawn Riegsecker, [Centro](#)

## LAURELS ARE NOT A GOOD PLACE TO REST

We saw a lot of growth in 2011. Yet, despite this, the key to marketing is to focus on continuous improvement. In this field, you never get to sit back and relax, thinking your job is now complete. Success means constantly measuring, tracking, testing, analyzing and evaluating-and then doing it all over again. Marketing is the shampoo of the business world; you must always lather, rinse and repeat.

Jonathan Beaton, [Idatix](#)

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## CHAPTER 3 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

In 2011, we saw many new developments in social marketing, such as the joining of social media and search marketing, and a notable rise in social media spending on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+. And, the exciting part is that marketers have only begun to explore these new opportunities.

For example, 2011 witnessed the expansion of social CRM, enabling another channel to reach and interact with customers. In 2012, we anticipate social CRM will become a mainstream solution for organizations wanting to connect marketing operations from the top to the bottom of the funnel. Companies that learn how to adopt and implement these solutions will more effectively reach and engage with their customers, leading to improved ROI.

Also, we are seeing a trend of social media becoming a key factor in search results. For companies looking to preserve or improve search rankings, social marketing activities will no longer be optional, but rather a necessary element to drive traffic.

In 2011, we also saw companies begin listening to customers wants and needs via social media, with an increased focus on responding to customer commentary. In 2012, companies will need to proactively create and share information with employees and influential customers to help define their offerings. Marketers now have the opportunity to address specific user needs they may not have been able to using traditional online marketing tactics.

To learn more about how marketers are effectively using social media for an ever-growing range of marketing practices, be sure to [subscribe to our complimentary Inbound Marketing newsletter](#).

34% of homepages have been shared on Twitter according to [Marketing Grader](#).  
IS **YOUR** HOMEPAGE SHARED ON TWITTER?



## IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE RIGHT ... AUTOMATE?

People, in general, and entrepreneurs, in particular, spend a large portion of their time at work, and one of the persistent challenges is that there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything that needs to be done to run a successful business.

One of the best ways to overcome this hurdle is to delegate work to automated processes.

The Web provides an invaluable, unique marketing tool that is promoting you and your business all day, every day. Use it to your full advantage by efficiently setting up auto responders to emails, prescheduling Tweets to Twitter, and posts to blogs and Facebook. The frequent social media updates have the added benefit of driving more traffic and attention from visitors and search engines. You can also use your website to prescreen customers, answer frequently asked questions, as well as to provide downloadable sales, marketing and press materials.

I have built upon a very successful 2010 and realized an even better 2011 by automating processes throughout the year. The entrepreneur who utilizes these automated tools not only gets a leg up on the competition, but saves money and their most precious resource – time.

Tom Warthen, [ProSite Web Design LLC](#)

## LEVERAGE YOUR SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

It may not be an original thought in this time of “social everything,” but this year I really discovered the benefits of leveraging a community. Don't underestimate the power of your team, your peers and your marketing community. Many marketers like to manage their own little territories, take away the action items, and pore over their own projects.

Over the last year I've really discovered the value of reaching out for a second opinion, particularly as new channels and platforms for sharing develop. Posting on a LinkedIn group, asking questions in the comments section on blog posts (other commenters often have more ideas than the author!), sitting down with a peer or cross-functional colleague to brainstorm ideas – these things have driven so many “aha” moments, and taken many of my initiatives from pretty good to outstanding.

As part of that, don't forget to give back. Engage with and support those around you – a practice which often ends up being as helpful and inspiring for you, as it is for them.

Pamela Markey, [MECLABS](#)

## LINKEDIN FOR LEAD GENERATION

Our experiences in 2011 validated the fact that LinkedIn is the most viable social media outlet to secure qualified sales leads, especially in rocky economic times.

We actively represented a client in telematics (GPS), joining the relevant groups. After only a week or two of active participation, we were able to pass along a lead for a \$1.5 million order, with annual fees generated on the back end.

Similarly, LinkedIn has proven invaluable for our own marketing efforts, leading to both increased website traffic and more than doubling the average time spent onsite. With LinkedIn, we're directly reaching the professionals who are truly interested in and grasp the value of our services.

Larry Kenigsberg, [K2 Global Communications](#)

## IT'S OKAY TO MOVE BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA

2011 was the year that I had to recalibrate my marketing, which had been primarily rooted in social media, dating back to 1995. Social media is still very important for increasing visibility and widening my circle of influence, but the amount of actual paid consulting gigs it brought me was well below par. Fortunately, referral marketing was very strong for me this year, bringing in several major clients.

At the same time, I'm trying to develop a major new profit center in my business: a syndicated monthly column on going green profitably. I have enough clients for this to prove the concept, but not yet enough to make it a going concern. I've spent much of the year tweaking and refining that, and now have set 2012 as the year to make it work or give it up.

Shel Horowitz, [Green and Profitable](#)

## LEVERAGE YOUR CUSTOMERS, SUPPLIERS, AND PARTNERS FOR EXPOSURE

Marketing is hard; you need to make sure you spend your time on where you get the biggest bang for your buck.

When we launched, because our affiliate program was not yet set up, we offered to pay them per registration using Google Analytics data. This enabled us to make a big splash right out of the gate even while we were still working to develop our affiliate program. You need to find the right influencers in your industry to help get the word out.

Another aspect was making the site social. Every coupon has its own Facebook "Like" button. And all of our blog posts have social sharing buttons. When it comes to advertising, we're very quick to pull the plug on tactics that don't back out to what we're looking to achieve on a cost-per-new-user basis.

When doing advertising, don't spend too much money upfront. Rely on Google and Facebook where you can target very specifically and see if your ads are working within a couple days for less than \$100.

Don't forget to enlist your suppliers. We ask all of the brands supplying us coupons to help promote them with Facebook and Twitter posts. Enlist the help of your fans by creating contests that are fun for

them to enter but also help spread the word about your business. Answer every Facebook and Twitter post promptly and courteously.

Every business has assets. Make sure to leverage your customers, suppliers, and partners for maximum exposure. Asking them to help promote you often goes a long way!

Josh Grossman, [SavingStar](#)

## SOCIAL MEDIA IS MORE THAN THREE PLATFORMS

In 2011, I found great value in plugging into niche social media sites for my business and for my clients. Sites such as Pinterest, Polyvore, Tumblr, Instagram, and Fancy. These sites are integrated with the “staple” social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare, but bring a new media-rich twist to social media content.

When it comes to social media, content is king. Without interesting content, your brand loses interest. Content is no longer all about text on the page (let's face it, our attention spans are shortening to the beat of 140 characters). Now, interesting content comes from a mixture of text – quotes, facts, funny stories...and strong visuals.

Fashionistas respond to visuals on Pinterest Pin Boards and Polyvore Styleboards with cultish fervor...brands such as Kate Spade are telling new, interesting stories about the world around them through Tumblr and Instagram (rather than spamming fans and followers with their brand). This way, fans and followers remain engaged and even small brands are able to reach target audiences on platforms that are not inundated with worthless data.

People are going to these niche sites to experience interesting photos and visuals, and in return, discovering new brands, designers and companies in an adventurous and inspirational way.

This new style of social media content (when combined with the 'staple' social media platforms) has worked for my brand and many of my clients, and I think 2012 will be a huge growth year for this style of social media content curation and compilation!

Martha McCarthy, [The Social Lights](#)

## CONTENT IS KING FOR 2012 EFFORTS

The primary way we coped with the ongoing recession and restricted marketing budgets was to focus on content development and sharing, to become a resource and increase leads from inbound marketing, instead of pouring everything into outbound marketing efforts. With the growth of social media in 2011, it was imperative that we participate in the conversation to make sure our voice was heard, promote our brand and engage potential leads. This has also been a key area for our clients looking to engage with top talent/prospective candidates.

The game has definitely changed, from chasing after prospects and cold calling to developing relationships and attracting them to you, via providing useful resources and positive experiences for

your target audience. As such, we now have employees on board whose primary focus is social/emerging media, to work with our marketing and business development departments as well as our clients.

Content and social marketing has helped us to cut costs, improve measurement, increase revenues, broaden our reach and improve the quality of leads in our pipeline – we believe that content marketing will be an absolute must in 2012 and will be working to place more of our focus in this arena.

*Skye Callan, [CKR Interactive, Inc.](#)*

## USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INVIGORATE CLASSIC IDEAS

We are in the middle of an exciting holiday social media campaign, Good Deed Dare. Rather than sending out traditional advertising agency greeting cards, we are sending out dares. The Good Deed Dare campaign dares people across the world to do a good deed and then pay it forward.

We encourage completed dares to be posted on Twitter using a specific hashtag. For every dare on Twitter, Salt will donate cash to our favorite charities. In addition to creating a wave of good deeds, we have two goals for this social media approach to a holiday card: To show clients our social media capabilities, and to create a crash course for internal team members unfamiliar with the power of Twitter.

We have been running the campaign for less than a week and are happy with the results so far. Over 200 dares have been Tweeted, and 50 dares have been completed. Our goal is to have 2,000 dares completed by the end of the holiday season, and a wave of good deeds that continue to be paid forward.

*Jennifer Evans, [Salt Communications](#)*

## BUILD IT, AND THEY WILL COME

Our client, Logicalis, was hesitant to launch a blog. They didn't necessarily think having a blog was a bad idea; they just didn't want to build something just for the sake of building it, and after a few months have it go dark. After many conversations about strategy, goals and purpose we were convinced that, as a team, we could create a blog that would be worthwhile and would stand the test of time.

We knew we wanted to keep the posts short and interactive, while showcasing thought leadership in the market. We needed to keep our audiences across the board involved in the promotion of this blog, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, mobile devices, and via strategic SEO and PPC campaigns.

Finally, the new blog, HypeOrRipe.com, was created, with an integrated marketing campaign, to provide a place for business and IT leaders to share their opinions on technology topics.

In the first three days of launching, the blog had 168 visits, with 520 page views and 3.10 pages viewed per visit. The bounce rate was 48% and the time on site was 1:53. Most of the referring traffic was coming from the Logicalis website, LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook. Plus, the blog had a Google Page Rank of 4 within 60 days.

Since the blog was launched in April, traffic to the Logicalis site has nearly doubled. The integration of social media, mobile marketing, SEO and PPC resulted in a very successful blog launch. By identifying Logicalis's goals, we were able to implement an integrated marketing plan that addressed the audience across all platforms, allowing us to hit the ground running with the Hype or Ripe blog.

Courtney Cooper, [Webbed Marketing](#)

## MAKE CUSTOMER INTERACTION A SIMPLE, SEAMLESS PROCESS

I have been trying to grow the number for Facebook fans and interactions for my client, a plastic surgeon in Mexico. As you can imagine, safety and trust are big issues when considering going to a foreign country for any type of medical care, so social media and real patient testimonials are crucial in helping patients feel at ease. I posted lots of articles, and nothing was working.

Then, I decided to launch a contest.

I used the Wildfire app to launch a video contest, where past patients could win \$1,500 towards their next procedure for sharing a video testimonial. The results were pretty dismal. In the end, the problem came from taking people away from where they wanted to be – Facebook – and making them try to figure out how to upload a video to YouTube through the Wildfire app contest platform.

A few months later I decided to try again – this time, I tried to make it as easy as possible for patients to share their photos and story – and to keep the interactions ON the platform they were already comfortable using.

I sent an email blast to existing patients announcing the contest (the same way I did previously, with the same prize), only this time, because it was so easy, we immediately got success stories generating hundreds of likes and comments!

The number of Facebook fans, which was at a stand-still for months, went up 775% in two weeks. Post views were up 500%, and feedback 1,000%!

Holly Berkley, [Interactive Marketing Consultant](#)

## THINK REALITY TV WHEN BUILDING YOUR FACEBOOK AD

When creating a Facebook ad, no matter how good the title and body of your ad is, the image you use will likely make or break its performance. Think of Facebook like your own personal reality TV show. It's a place that people visit to not only keep in touch, but to also be amused and surprised by posts and photos of friends and family.

The news feed keeps people coming back because constant updates mean that every time a person logs onto Facebook they get updates that are new and possibly surprising. When choosing an image, think of what your target audience would be wowed by on a reality TV show. People are looking for the

unexpected in reality TV and they're looking for the same on Facebook. Pick an image that's relevant to the rest of the ad, but also draws the eye.

In accordance with Facebook Guidelines, an unexpected but relevant picture will almost always perform better. So go for the unexpected! Keep in mind that the unexpected can be edgy, cute, trendy, fun, funny, nostalgic, attractive, quirky, or any combination of these.

*Kaushal Sampat, [Compass Labs](#)*

## NEWCOMERS, BELIEVE THE HYPE

Social networking has not only helped my "brand" but it has helped my profit margin! "Making friends" and exchanging links with others in addition to sharing and leaving a kind word now and then, has become a win-win situation for my brand and my business.

While growing my networking I've also been able to grow my website visitors and subscribers to my newsletter. All of this growth has increased the opportunity for advertising on my website. I've had some great offers to write reviews in addition to guest blogging spots. Thanks to social media, my business has new opportunities.

*Danna Crawford, [PowerSellingMom.com. Inc.](#)*

## FOLLOW THAT BIRD!

I've had great success utilizing Twitter this year. I keep my Twitter feed strictly industry specific. Also, while I have favorite reliable sources for re-Tweeting I find that re-Tweeting breaking trade news from new individuals who re-Tweet from the same source as me has grown my followers and increased my scope of networking.

*Matthew Valentinas, [The Law Office of Matthew Valentinas](#)*

## ENERGIZE YOUR STAFF TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS

Maximize social media results by getting your entire organization involved in social media content creation efforts. A client looking to integrate social media across their business drove this lesson home since the senior management team believed that every aspect of social media was solely marketing's responsibility

To get the entire staff involved in social media creation, I recommended these five tactics that can be applied to most organizations:

1. Establish corporate social media guidelines. Outline what's acceptable for employees to do and say on social media platforms, as representatives of the organization and as private individuals.

2. Encourage staff to participate in social media content creation. Ask everyone to contribute their insights about your firm and products. Help them by providing suggestions and examples to follow. Lastly, integrate these activities into everyone's job description.
3. Provide tools to help support employee success. Regardless of background or education, a good proportion of your staff may be reticent to have their communications publically showcased. To overcome concerns, supply editorial, graphic, copyediting and technological support to make their content shine.
4. Give staff training. Initially, staff responded "I can't write." After presenting other ways to create social media content they felt more comfortable about contributing. Use these sessions to brainstorm new social media marketing ideas.
5. Reward employees. To incent your staff, do more than say "It's your job." Highlight employees' content and social media contributions publically across your organizations. Also, offer them tangible rewards such as gift cards.

To date, my client has responded positively to these suggestions. As a result, employees feel energized about social media participation. They've started taking baby steps to implement the easy opportunities and are planning company-wide training at their annual planning meeting. The takeaway is to not underestimate every employee's ability to contribute to achieving your social media goals.

Heidi Cohen, [Riverside Marketing Strategies](#)

## PEOPLE REALLY DO RESPOND TO "BEST-OF" LISTS

Since our website's launch in 2009, social media and content marketing have been major drivers of traffic to our website. This fall we took it to a new level with Ventureneer's "25 Best Social Media for Social Good Blogs" list. The list lessens the overload for nonprofits and social enterprises by providing a shortcut to good information about using social media for social good.

To announce the list, we contacted winners; did an online news release; blogged; and worked Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn groups for nonprofits and social enterprises using social media. During the two-week launch, traffic to the website tripled and has leveled off at 30% higher.

Lesson learned: People really do respond to "best of" lists. The lists establish a positive relationship with those who make the list. Those relationships can be very productive and long-term. Because of the relationship built through the process, I've written guest blogs for four new sites, which increases my visibility and invites people to my own site.

Secondly, best-of lists entice people to your website and, if the content matches their interests, they'll become regulars.

Geri Stengel, [Ventureneer](#)

## IT ALL BEGINS WITH TRUST

Trust and engagement have been huge in 2011. Organizations are gaining maturity in social marketing and finding that in order to increase engagement, you first must win your audience's trust. According to our research, the top three tactics for achieving this include multichannel messaging, improving thought leadership, and segmenting the delivery of content.

Jen Doyle, [MarketingSherpa](#)

## TAP INTO THE VAST SOCIAL OCEAN TO GENERATE LEADS AND CONVERSIONS

This is a lesson on how educational institutes should and can. We'll demonstrate a campaign we undertook which led to a 42% increase in our student admission for academic year 2011-2012 as compared to the previous year.

St. Aloysius College, Mangalore is a 136-year-old institute that launched a two-year master's program in mass communication and media studies in 2008. After the first few years experiencing dismal response to traditional marketing tactics, we decided to get into social media. The reasoning was that our core audience – the 21-24 age group – are active social media users.

As the main vehicle for this campaign, we launched an official blog, and studied student Internet habits and decided to employ heavy SEO tactics to attract visitors. Our pre-campaign studies showed that numerous outstation students prefer to have course application form available for download on an institute's blog / site. We put this up on our blog and displayed it prominently, along with faculty information, infrastructure and course details. And we started populating the blog on a constant basis with relevant content from mid-August 2010.

In the initial months there wasn't much traffic. We speculated this might be because students looking for higher studies aren't yet looking actively. This proved to be right as our traffic picked up substantially in January 2011 and peaked during April-May (the academic year commencement period) of that year.

Our final analysis shows that a sizable chunk of our traffic has downloaded the application form, and a healthy percentage has submitted the form for admission. With a 42% increase in actual student numbers, we now have a sizable slice of our student body hailing from other cities and states in India, a feat directly attributed to social media campaign.

Altogether an eye-opener of how social media can be employed in education industry to attract and persuade student body by engaging the latter on a platform they most feel comfortable on.

Vishal Nayak, [St. Aloysius College](#)

## SOCIAL SHARING DRIVES TRAFFIC

At the beginning of 2011, our company blog had been around for less than a year and we were looking for opportunities to increase traffic. Using social media, we doubled the number of monthly visits to our blog in just six months. It was a great lesson in how powerful social media has become.

We started by connecting with people we wanted to interview for our blog and who were well-known in their respective industries. We also started using HARO to send out and respond to queries, compiled a list of bloggers we wanted to reach, and started following each of them on Twitter.

We'd leave comments on their blogs, re-Tweet them, engage in conversations, reference and link to their blog posts in our own articles and interview them for blog posts. We'd involve them in the promotion of the interview posts by sending them Tweets and emails containing the link. Often, they re-Tweeted the article, posted it on Google+, LinkedIn and mentioned the article on their own blog, linking back to the original piece.

On our end, we promoted all of the blog posts on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn, and got involved in discussions about the posts on LinkedIn groups. It's amazing how quickly we were able to build our blog traffic, and our brand, without having to dish out any money.

Joe Gerard, [i-sight Software](#)

ARE **YOU** ROCKING A FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGE?  
56 percent of marketers  
graded on [Marketing Grader](#) are.



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## CHAPTER 4 TESTING AND OPTIMIZATION

One of the predominant themes of the *2011 Wisdom Report* was the return to marketing basics. Even the most tech-focused marketers seemed to return to time-honored practices, demonstrating a strong understanding of how these tenets could benefit new tactics.

And, a significant number of entries focused on one of the most basic marketing (and life) tenets of all – “Measure twice, cut once.” In other words, test...test...test.

As digital marketing continues to grow, so does testing and optimization of digital practices. From a promotional Tweet to a print ad, the call-to-action in most marketing pieces is likely to direct you to a website. And if marketers are spending huge amounts of their time and budgets on driving traffic to a website, they want to know (and improve on) how that website performs. With all the money spent on driving traffic, even a small increase in conversion can have an outside ROI.

This is why testing and optimization has seen such rapid growth over the past few years. For example, in the *MarketingSherpa 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Report*, we found that marketers have double the number of in-house employees entrusted with LPO just in the two years from 2009 to 2011. Two difficult years, during which, not many things in marketing increased.

Though each year’s *Wisdom Report* differs, based on the entries we receive, we are confident that a chapter on testing and optimization will become a mainstay in this publication for many years to come.

To receive weekly bits of MarketingSherpa’s extensive research, please [subscribe the free Chart of the Week newsletter](#). And to see the latest in testing and optimization practices, be sure to see the free Web clinic replays and informative blog posts from our sister company, [MarketingExperiments](#).

Marketing automation is behavior-driven,  
multichannel and cross-platform.  
IS THAT TRUE FOR **YOUR** MARKETING?



## MEASURE INBOUND PHONE CALLS MADE FROM PAID AND ORGANIC KEYWORDS

We measure which phone calls came in from each keywords. We use a service which lets us associate a specific phone number to specific keywords searched. We use it in our paid and organic searches. It lets us know which keywords are getting people to call us.

Our booking rate is very high once people call us so it allows us to develop an ROI for our inbound phone calls and not just Web visits.

Mike Robinson, [Permit Place, Inc.](#)

## METRICS DETERMINE TESTING

When optimizing your site, it's important to understand your Web analytics framework to decide which factors to test. Start with your business objective, which could be one or several of the following: Reach, Acquisition, Conversion, or Retention.

Based on that, define the goal of the website, the metrics that support it, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that you want to influence, and then which factors relate to those KPIs. You'll end up testing variations of those factors in an A/B test (for example, if the factor is a headline, and the variation is color, you could test a blue headline versus a red headline) or multiple factors and their variations in a multivariate test.

Either way, you'll have a strategic roadmap for understanding things to test on your website.

Kim Ann King, [SiteSpect](#)

## DON'T IGNORE PROOF

Nothing teaches like experience. The problem is that experience can also blind you. Once you learn something, you can very easily close your mind and ignore evidence. That's why the scientific method is so valuable to executive marketing leaders. They are the ones with the most experience. They are therefore the ones most vulnerable to blind spots.

David Green, [MECLABS](#)

## THE TOOLS ARE OUT THERE

In 2011 we introduced our line of beach bags. We used Google AdWords and Vendor Drop Ship programs to discover, test, and implement our beach bag marketing, before investing in inventory and costly advertising. I knew my ROI, before I spent a dime.

Bob Shirilla, [Keepsakes Etc.](#) / [Simply Bags](#)

## USING A “LEAN STARTUP” APPROACH TO MARKETING

This year I applied the “lean startup” approach of a minimum viable product to my marketing campaign. I started my PPC campaign with a bare bones landing page and tested out basic assumptions, such as targeting the right keywords and is my product even wanted by customers.

Then, I would make small iterations and start A/B testing those iterations. In one I added a sales video. In another, I changed the design. I would even change the product itself as I saw fit.

I ended up with a campaign that yielded \$13 for every \$1 invested. Not a bad return for 2011.

*Brandon Yanofsky, [My WordPress Expert](#)*

## NUMBERS DON'T LIE

Our client's offerings included a solution engineered for one specific CRM application, and we were engaged to generate opportunities at companies who had that CRM installed. The client provided us with a purchased list comprised of target companies, and data points included the presence of the required CRM, the number of seats, as well as each company's revenue, employee count and SIC code.

We quickly found that the provided data on the CRM in use was incorrect. We went back to the list, compared the rich supporting data points on firmographics (revenue, employee count and SIC code) to results to date, and conducted an in-depth analysis to build a predictive targeting model that identified prospect companies more likely to have the required CRM and be more likely to purchase our client's solution.

We were also able to increase efficiencies by removing companies less likely to have the required CRM application. Our analysis and predictive targeting model increased the overall lead rate from 3.8% to 6.0%, an improvement of 158%.

*Karla Blalock, [PointClear](#)*

## GAUGE YOUR MOBILE AUDIENCE

After another year of waiting for mobile marketing to explode, many in the industry are still unsure of whether to target smartphone and tablet users. Average mobile site traffic and email readership are way up, but not every company is average.

To find out how much you should care, segment your website and email analytics to gauge the size of your mobile audience. If you're at 2% to 3%, perhaps revisit the stats every month to keep an eye out for sharp growth. If you're at 9% or 10%, you might want to start taking this channel seriously.

*Adam T. Sutton, [MECLABS](#)*

## IT'S ALWAYS WORTH A TEST!

One of my clients was not receiving the traffic volume they needed from AdWords and adCenter, so we decided to test different social media networks like Facebook, Twitter and StumbleUpon.

Ultimately, we found that StumbleUpon was a viable platform in not only generating new visitors to the site but the residual traffic we received from StumbleUpon was invaluable! The moral of this story is, it's always worth a test, even if it is just \$500!

Heather Schwartz, [Anvil Media, Inc.](#)

## DON'T HIDE YOUR VALUE BELOW THE FOLD

In the B2B online marketing space customer logos is an important part of the decision making process for new prospects. Over time we had been adding more and more logos to our "Customers" page to highlight to visitors some of our more well-known customers. When checking the user behavior on the page we noticed that there seemed to be a negative correlation between the increasing number of logos and the user engagement on the page.

As we were adding more logos users seemed to be paying less attention to the logos rather than more. To test this we substantially reduced the length of the page, removed some of the lesser known logos and reduced the image size of the logos. We expected an improvement but the results were very surprising.

We found that scroll reach increased 6.2% down the page with user engagement increasing 25.5%. There was also a 15.1% improvement in visitors continuing to another page rather than leaving the site and an ultimate improvement in conversion!

Marc Kenigsberg, [ClickTale](#)

## CATER THE STORY TO THE CUSTOMER

I've learned in testing that you can't ignore the fact that different groups of people may like you for entirely different reasons. That means that you have to find a way to speak to them differently in channels where they are often lumped together.

It's a challenge I'm having with one of my Research Partners now. We've been able to significantly increase their leads with product-based clarity of value. In doing so, though, we've attracted a group of individuals that expect something the product really can't deliver well, and doesn't deliver well when compared to some direct competitors in their industry. In the end, we've found that those leads are not nearly as likely to transact.

Knowing full well that we can't alter the product so quickly to meet this larger (quantity) group's demand, we're having to change focus to prospect groups that have more money to spend and are used to and willing to deal with issues up front to get a superior experience at the end (something the product does well).

Too often we shove everybody into the same sales pitch, walk them down the same path, and expect them to figure out how our products and services fit into their specific story. Instead, we should expect to meet them halfway. Isn't that what they expect of us?

Jon Powell, [MECLABS](#)

## BENCHMARK SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS FOR SUCCESS

Up until this year, we'd jump on a certain marketing initiative, and then basically play it by ear. Usually, we would notice a little too late when a particular initiative had lost its effectiveness and was costing us money rather than generating revenues. Now, all marketing initiatives come with a specific set of goals, with 30-, 60- and 90-day benchmarks. We have been able to save money by instituting this tracking system.

In the end, what we learned from some of our shortcomings regarding goals for 2011 is this: There is nothing wrong with falling short of a goal. We set the bar high on purpose, so if we fall a little short, there is no need to consider anything a failure.

We realized why we weren't able to achieve a few of our goals in 2011, and have kept a few of the goals from 2011 for the coming year now that we learned what we were doing wrong. We are learning along the way, which is much better than never "taking the leap" at all. You can research an idea to death to make sure you'll never make a mistake, but in the end, it is not productive.

We took our chances on some things in 2011, and many have worked out thus far; we're excited to see what 2012 brings!

Andrew Schrage, [MoneyCrashers](#)

## THE TRAVEL BUSINESS ENTERS THE POST-DATA AGE

By all accounts 2011 was the year of mass migration. Marketing budgets migrated online by incredible percentages, and 2012 looks to be more of the same. One of the main reasons is audience data. This business has reached the point where nothing less than reaching the right customer with the most relevant message is acceptable.

Now the travel business enters the post-data age.

A recent annual client meeting with major travel brands showed us that three developments would follow the comfort level that travel brands have with audience data.

1. **Premium Advertising:** Precision audience targeting gives travel brands access to their best prospects, at scale in a safe environment. It's not about remnant inventory purchased via a general network or exchange. Data has been secured to the point where brands should feel comfortable with the ability to cross-pollinate loyalty programs and share other non-personally identifiable information.

2. Mobile: Mobile ad partners cannot own a space on the mobile interface. But they can enhance branded app experiences through uses of an embedded browser. Several companies, including Adara Media, are working with several leading local deal aggregators and national advertisers to optimize the mobile experience with user data and online campaign performances.
3. Optimization: Data is useless unless it is refined and made actionable across channels. Travel brands have access to a cross-channel email and display ad channels to effectively deliver against marketers' objectives. The cross-channel approach provides a complimentary, non-intrusive method to reach exact, desired customers on third-party websites. It can individualize and personalize messaging, because display ads are delivered to known customers, and messaging can be tailored.

Layton Han, [Adara Media](#)

## TAKE TESTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL THROUGH WORST PRACTICES

Strong testing starts with strong ideas. Generally you would have a newsletter, change some things to meet best practices, and (if you are lucky) test it. Nobody actually thinks, "Hey, will this really add to conversion?"

I ran a test plan for a major business where we added an "ugly" version of each design we made. On one test, instead of using clear and short copy and highlighting benefits, we ran a long, non-paragraphed intro. People just skipped the boring text and went right to the landing page (there was a strong call-to-action) where they actually converted 23% more often.

Always try worst practices, it can boost results.

Jordie van Rijn, [emailmonday](#)

## WORK WITH CLIENTS TO EXAMINE TARGETS

Our performance-based campaigns tie marketing activity to profitability. In one B2C campaign, we were tasked with hitting a specific percent of revenue for customer acquisition. While hitting this target, we reviewed lifetime revenue trends and discovered that repeat buying activity was 4 to 5 times higher than the customer believed.

Presented with this research, our client gave us permission to test a higher cost-per-acquisition in order to increase lifetime profitability. The experiment worked, with 55% of clients engaging in repeat buying activity at a significant increase in volume as higher CPA targets resulted in improved ad positions.

This example of marketing tied to projected profitability and the corresponding reduction in risk enabled the client to safely move to an unlimited advertising budget, constrained only by their ability to profitably acquire new customers.

Always work with clients to examine the assumptions behind their targets, as they may be leaving profitable business on the table.

Soren Ryherd, [Working Planet](#)

## KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE LEADS TO ROI

In 2011 we experimented with behavior-based and 1-to-1 personalized marketing efforts. They have proven to provide a positive return on investment; therefore, we will be expanding and increasing these efforts.

We will be undertaking such behavioral-based marketing directly on our website, through detailed product recommendations based upon: customer browsing patterns; 1-to-1 personalized email marketing campaigns; personalized display advertising campaigns, and through social media marketing.

Erik M. Fox, [Shoplet](#)

ARE **YOU** MEASURING YOUR WEBSITE?  
Only 69% of marketers are,  
according to [Marketing Grader](#).



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## CHAPTER 5 GENERAL MARKETING WISDOM

As marketing practices continue to splinter into increasingly specific silos, one would think that the entries for our annual section on general marketing wisdom would begin to dwindle. And each year, you prove us wrong, as you continue to share stories related to “the bigger picture” in marketing.

Whether it was by using social media to create personal relationships, the integration of high-tech and traditional print marketing, or just a reminder to shake hands and smile, your stories serve as a sound reminder that in the end – high-tech, low-tech or no-tech, we are ultimately marketing to *people*.

And, as we always say, those are the marketing tactics that never go out of style.

To see how today’s marketers are integrating these timeless best practices, or for a chance to find a new position and make a difference of your own, be sure to [subscribe to the complimentary Best of the Week and Marketing Careers newsletters](#).

DO YOU HAVE A MOBILE VERSION OF YOUR WEBSITE?  
42% of websites ran in [Marketing Grader](#) do.



## GRASS ROOTS MARKETING STILL WORKS

I try so many types of marketing for ENA's driving school. The one that has worked best (for the past seven years) was distributing flyers at targeted high schools. Social media didn't work well in my case, and newspaper ads were not worth the cost.

*Rajendra Hariprashad, [ENA's Driving School](#)*

## REMEMBER WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT ASSUMPTIONS

I hired an intern from Baruch College this year, and most of my biases went right out the window when I interviewed my first candidate. I wanted a marketing student who was born in the US, assuming he/she would speak and write perfect (or close to perfect) English. My first, and only, interview was with a young man who had been born in Hong Kong. He has an accent, and his English isn't perfect (but close).

I immediately assumed (and was right in making this assumption) that this young man had a superior work ethic than most of his peers at college. The fact that his English wasn't perfect suddenly became irrelevant. He knew how to work hard and was extremely proactive. I wound up taking him on as my intern, and he's been with my firm ever since.

I'm guessing that working for me is comic relief after working in the family restaurant. Several college students I've taken on in the past miss this important element. They are still learning how to work in an office environment. My firm is too small, and my patience too limited, to teach someone this life skill. This young man already has it.

*Sandra Holtzman, [Holtzman Communications](#)*

## GROWTH IN THE AGE OF RECESSION

As an agency, it's hard to find growth these days. We've had some success with what we call "concierge marketing." Many of our new clients have started small, I mean REALLY small. But we said yes, built a relationship, answered every call for assistance no matter the size or type of request, and kept the team lean and mean so we could be flexible and fast.

The results have been good, very good: Over 200% growth (one small starter got big quickly). Good numbers for any year - but especially this year. It's the "new normal" for us. So far, so good.

*Chris Cavanaugh, [Taft and Partners](#)*

## TECHNOLOGY CHANGES ... PEOPLE DON'T

In the whirlwind of new apps, websites, social networks, etc., we sometimes forget that what motivates people remains the same. Our primal desires, urges, and wants out of life mostly remain unchanged during the rapid progress technology brings.

Step back from the shiny new toys and look at what your consumers really want. What do they really care about? What's motivating them to purchase your product?

There you will find the core of what makes you great and a message to leverage through technology.

*Ben Nesvig, [BenNesvig.com](http://BenNesvig.com)*

## TOUGH TIMES ARE THE RIGHT TIMES TO DEVELOP CONNECTIONS

The biggest lesson I learned was to keep all responses personal. Respond to people on Twitter and Facebook and develop relationships with them and use automated options only as a part and not as the whole.

Due to the recession, people like to connect with real people where they have a go to person. I have therefore also learned that I need to be the face behind my business and not just a business entity. I believe this has helped me with keeping sales coming in, and even increasing, despite some of my other small business colleagues reporting a very slow season.

*Monica Collins, [TG Bears](http://TG Bears)*

## BE CREATIVE, EVEN IN AREAS THAT USUALLY AREN'T

Often, when funds are low, the market research budget gets pulled. My words of wisdom are to think about partnering with a creative market researcher. I had a number of constrained budget projects this past year that we were able to come up with a different structure to accomplish the goal by working backwards from the budget.

A client should not always assume that there is only one way to skin a cat.

*Martha Guidry, [The Concept Queen](http://The Concept Queen)*

## ALL BUSINESS IS LOCAL

We saw some success this year with a campaign for a law firm client celebrating its 125th anniversary. The firm had a very limited budget, so we used an integrated campaign that was heavy on one-on-one touches, social media, and included some press releases. The campaign started 125 days before the actual anniversary date, with daily activities meant to spark interest and generate awareness.

We sent out a few press releases for larger/more visible items (sponsorships, recognition of one of the

partners for his 50th year in practice, etc.), offered free articles and seminars (with limited promotion done using geographically-targeted Facebook ads), and posted fun things to do locally.

We also researched and sent recognition letters to local businesses and individuals for their work in supporting the community and recognized them on Facebook and on the firm's website.

The campaign ended in early October with an open house to celebrate the anniversary but the client is still getting comments from those in the community who saw the activity. Website traffic was up during this time frame by about 25% and the firm was the subject of several news articles and a short TV segment, generating more interest and several new cases.

Jeanne Frazer, [vitalink](#)

## WHEN CONSIDERING YOUR CURRENT APPROACH, IT HELPS TO START WITH “WHY”

Before you can properly position your brand across channels, you need to be crystal clear on why people should engage with you in the first place. What's your mission? Why choose you? Targeting your marketing is easier to do when you sharpen the purpose behind the approach. How do you compare against the competition? Why do you stand out? Boil the 'why me' into one simple truth. That truth becomes the foundation for you to build a memorable campaign across channels. *Why now?*

Once you have your core brand purpose identified and clear, it's time to release control to your customers. Instead of a focus on push, shift to consideration of the end user. How can you serve them best with the channel-specific experience? Is it an in-store mobile experience connecting them to product reviews? Is it an app that tracks funds left on a gift card or shipment information? Asking 'why now?' will help you evaluate the right message for the right channel at the right moment. Regardless of where the customer engages with your brand, the experience must be a positive one. Remember that tiny messages build upon larger messages -- and all are important for building a meaningful brand experience.

Patti Renner, [Knotice](#)

## NO RISK, NO REWARD

During the course of growing our firm, Slingshot SEO, from a three-person shop to 110+ strong, we learned a number of lessons about inspiring confidence, taking risks, and thinking ahead.

1. Growth is about people. You may not be able to pay top salaries right away, but find good people and give them a chance. Offer unique perks they can't find elsewhere. We are based in Indianapolis; to attract and keep top talent, we offer a four-day work week and support a distributive workforce. Their job is to excel; your job is to build their confidence. Unleash them, and strive to change their perception of what they can do.
2. Think ahead. Never forget about scalability - How would I do this if we landed 10 more clients tomorrow? Leverage existing technologies, or build your own, that make your team more

efficient. Our distributive workforce model works for us because it allowed us to hire talent that couldn't come to our office; to pay for performance; and perhaps most critically, scale up and scale down based on our client needs without layoffs.

3. Finally, take risks and be confident. You never know if you don't ask. I landed the head of our R & D department by approaching him at a conference on the West Coast and simply asking if he would be interested. You never know until you ask.

Jeremy Dearing, [Slingshot SEO](#)

## WHENEVER POSSIBLE, SPEAK IN DOLLARS, NOT PERCENTAGES

Someone told me years ago, "People don't deposit percentages in the bank, they deposit dollars." I was reminded of this recently when pitching a brand on our attribution modeling services.

For months, we'd been telling him that he was wasting 54% of his online ad dollars – at minimum. Our PowerPoint presentations spelled out the value in a way that was clear to me, but the brand had taken no action. Then it hit me – our proposal expressed all its value in terms of percentages.

I later found myself stepping onto an elevator in Manhattan with the very same brand, and rather than giving him the usual elevator pitch, I asked, "Did you get the \$1.6 million deck I sent you?"

With a single brash question, I got to put a price tag on my value proposition. Most companies don't quantify a lack of measurement. They're just thankful when they can finally see the results of what they're spending. My question cut right to that point.

The outcome? Not only did we get the brand's attribution analytics business, but I was wrong on the numbers -- the value proposition I mentioned in the elevator wasn't worth \$1.6 million to him. It was worth \$5.2 million.

Mark Hughes, [C3 Metrics](#)

## IT'S OKAY TO TOSS OUT THE PROVERBIAL RULE BOOK

I'm kind of a contrarian when it comes to following the rules. Sometimes I just follow my instincts, and sometimes I listen to what my instincts have to say and then do exactly the opposite. Just *because*.

But it has nothing to do with the rules. The marketing world doesn't always like this. Business draws a stark line between rewarding and punishing those who fail to follow the rule book. Sometimes a new idea is demonstrably crushed, but sometimes it becomes an enormous success.

I prefer to think creatively in every aspect of life. Even when raising my kids, I take the "free range" approach. We take to the playground as often as possible, rain or shine. I let them take risks that make other parents turn white. They can out-jump, out-swim and out-climb kids three times their age. By the time they go to kindergarten, they will both have completed a Presidential traverse in New Hampshire's White Mountains. Did I mention they are three and four years old?

Recently my little girl was pushed by an eight-year-old at the park. It may have been on purpose, or maybe not. But she got right up and kept running after him. Sometimes the big kids let my little ones chase them; sometimes the big kids demand they stop. My kids are not the ones who cry for 20 minutes after being pushed. They get up and keep going. I teach them to keep playing.

That's what the adult world is; a place where nobody wants to play with you. We're taught to follow the rules. That means if somebody tells us what they want us to do, we do it. We go along to get along. I say let's toss out the rule book.

My kids know that when someone tries to tell them what to do (including me), it's a test. To pass it, all they have to do is continue pushing. They know the big kid with the tennis ball will eventually start tossing it to them. They know the older kids on the balance beam will finally step aside and give them a turn. They know the kid who pushed them a few minutes before will help them up a few minutes later.

The most important thing they've done for me is teach me to keep pushing. Keep trying. Keep advancing. Keep playing even if others have told you to stop. And that's what marketers should do. We are the "Department of Yes." Let *others* be the ones to tell us we've gone too far.

The latest social media statistics do not matter. Pretty landing pages do not matter. The best email template does not matter. Engagement does not matter. "Conversations" do not matter. "Brand consistency" does not matter. Only your craziest envelope-pushing ideas matter.

I am loved by my kids because I let them play and color outside the lines, and I let myself learn from them. Bring your best, every day.

Tom Bishop, [NetAtlantic](#)

## THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A FIRM HANDSHAKE ...

The "holy grail" of marketing is the one-to-one relationship. Leverage everything: social media, friendsourcing, traditional marketing, messaging, public relations, and other people's money.

Jeffrey Hayzlett, [The Hayzlett Group](#)

## TAKE OWNERSHIP OVER RELATIONSHIPS

We have to move our approach from push to pull. That's what we are headed now, and it will be key in the future. Your customers must trust you, buy from you, recommend you, and subscribe to you. Our job is to build that relationship.

Frederik Trovatten, [Trovatten](#)

## PRESERVE YOUR BRAND'S VISION

In every campaign, all communications you make need to ooze your brand's ethos and vision. When your brand is clean and untainted you cannot afford to taint it. For example, if a bucket of full of clean water gets a small amount of dirt in it, we say the water is dirty. It is important not to let small things damage your brand, by thinking that they are too small to damage your brand.

*Elvis Sekhaolelo, [Pimp My Book](#)*

## SALES-MARKETING ALIGNMENT REMAINS CRUCIAL FOR SUCCESS

Marketing can optimally impact an organization when Sales and Marketing are aligned and collaborating. Often, companies diminish their own marketing investments by leaving Sales out of the loop and unable to continue the dialogue that Marketing has started. With so many more channels available today, marketers have ample opportunities to present their brands to an audience and set their expectations.

Once the audience is nodding along, the sale should easily follow. But sometimes that's where things fall short. Marketers spend time crafting and honing the message, ensuring it is fitted into the appropriate channels to be heard and received at the right place and time. However, they don't account for the Sales team being able to articulate that message or being focused on the in-market activities at the time.

We have seen best-in-class organizations begin to recognize that Sales is a critical secondary audience in any marketing initiative, and that they need to invest in the creation of internal materials for the success of their campaigns. Sales enablement is often overlooked as an objective, but addressing it can significantly maximize the impact of your efforts.

Basically, Marketing can set them up, but Sales can't knock them down unless they can complement and reinforce the marketing message. Well-informed, and well-armed, sales forces can successfully take the company in the right direction. Forward.

*Tom Jacobs, [Jacobs Agency](#)*

## IT ALWAYS HELPS TO KNOW MARKETING 101

I have learned that many small businesses place great emphasis on creating a brand and generating leads. The problem is that they want to create a brand without truly understanding what branding entails; that it's so much more than creating a logo and tagline.

They also spend a lot of time generating leads – and letting those leads fall cold – because they have no plan on how to nurture the leads they generate. Most do not even know that they need to nurture the leads. They seem to think that they will go from generating a lead to closing the sale with no steps in between and wonder why they do not have more sales.

People tend to start a business without realizing how really difficult it is to actually create a successful and profitable business. Telling your friends and family you have started a business will only take you so far, at some point you will have to market your business.

Take some time to learn about marketing, create a plan that you can implement and be willing to hire someone to handle the tasks you are unable or unwilling to handle. There is a wealth of information available if you are willing to take the time to find it, read it, and take action.

Jennifer Woodard, [Wordzopolis](#)

## PICK UP THE PHONE!

We tested phone response time versus conversion to sales ready lead for a client this year. We found about 60% of the Web inquiries converted to sales-ready leads if we called the contact within 24 hours. This helped us more efficiently focus our calling efforts and resulted in more sales-ready leads for the client.

Craig A. Mullenbach, [MECLABS Leads Group](#)

## DON'T WORK FOR THE WEEKEND

If you hate your job, quit. Seriously. Quit right now. Or at least start looking RIGHT NOW.

If you've tried to make it work, and you still hate Sundays because they lead to Monday, and hate Saturdays because they lead to Sunday, work is taking over your life, or what's left of it.

If you've tried to make it work and it isn't, it probably won't get better. And it may actually get worse.

If you're certain that the problem isn't you, but your job, or your boss, or your co-workers, or the environment you're in, it's not your fault if you concede defeat and move on. But it is your fault if you stay and continue to concede defeat every day of your working life.

Now, it may just be that you're having a bad day. If that's the case, wait. If tomorrow is just as bad, or even worse, wait. But if the good days have become an anomaly, don't wait another minute. Quit. Or at least start looking for something new. Now.

I'm not trying to encourage people to risk their ability to support their families, but I also hate seeing people continue to do work that kills their spirit, brings out the worst in them, and ultimately prevents them from doing the things they're truly capable of.

And, it's also probably hurting your family more than you realize. Supporting your family, after all, is about more than bringing home a paycheck. And it's probably not worth whatever you're being paid.

If this sounds familiar, start looking for something new. NOW. If you believe in yourself and your abilities, you can do better than a job that sucks, and sucks the life out of you.

Move forward instead of staying put. And by "move forward," I mean "quit."

But don't wait another day. If you think it's time, it's time. No one is stopping you except you. Good luck.

Anthony Juliano, [Asher Agency](#)

## LINK, SHARE, GROW!

For micro businesses with small annual advertising budgets, developing creative joint promotions with other businesses who share your market can lead to exponentially more successful marketing. Joining creativity and dollars gives you more market exposure with more compelling offers for a smaller investment and a higher return!

Jeri Vespoli, [Collaborative Marketing Services LLC](#)

## PEOPLE AREN'T LOOKING FOR CONTENT ... THEY ARE LOOKING FOR VALUE

I was recently thinking, "Is our content inviting to look at, memorable, or fun to read?" If not, then we are missing out on a key opportunity to provide real value to our audience. And chances are, these audiences found what they wanted elsewhere.

One of the ways I have tried to implement value across all my marketing efforts is to clearly define the value proposition. It truly has impacted everything I do and has helped me answer this question "If I am your ideal customer, why should I buy from you rather than any of your competitors?"

Justin Bridegan, [MECLABS](#)

## LOOK BEYOND STANDARD TACTICS

Consumer and B2B marketers will need to look beyond their standard set of tactics and view engagement holistically, understanding that to be part of the customer's decision-making process is to be part of their everyday world.

Today's marketers need to refocus on their objectives instead of chasing the sprawl of ever-growing tactics.

Marketing objectives will help drive the appropriate mix and spend of integrated vehicles. Companies should task agency partners to fulfill marketing objectives vs. executing tactics if they hope to deliver messages how, where and when they need to be delivered, not where they don't.

Tom Jacobs, [Jacobs Agency](#)

## TIMING IS EVERYTHING

In John Maxwell's bestselling book *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, he outlines "The Law of Timing." A power quote regarding this law is "When leaders do the right things at the right time, success is almost inevitable."

I was reminded this year that "The Law of Timing" is essential in marketing as you strive to optimize campaigns and meet the needs of your ideal customer. For me, this applied in two areas:

1. Real-time Marketing: applying the principles of author David Meerman Scott, we took a proactive approach in replying to questions and comments on social media platforms, dealing with industry issues and building our brand.
2. Event Marketing: In-depth planning and testing on the timing of our promotions for events and product launches resulted in higher response rates and efficiencies across our various product lines. We weren't planning on hitting a game winning, three-run homer but instead strived for multiple singles with understanding that if we kept having small success, we would win the game.

In 2012, we plan to continue testing and learning, applying "The Law of Timing" as we go.

Todd Lebo, [MECLABS](#)

## LEADERSHIP IS LEADERSHIP, REGARDLESS OF VENUE

I just finished a two-year stint leading an alumni organization which was quite successful. But, I learned two things:

- 1) The ability to listen and adapt your plans can be beneficial.
- 2) If you don't get full support from the higher-ups, you will not become truly successful.

It doesn't matter if you're President of the United States, or President of an alumni group, you never finish everything you wanted to do when your term is up.

Kevin Lockett, [KevinLockett.com](#)

## OLDIES ARE STILL GOODIES

The best way I got through in 2010 for 2011 is advertising in the newspaper and sending out postcards. Many companies want to know if you are registered with the Better Business Bureau (BBB). I guess this makes them feel secure about your company's product or service and reputation. To register with Better Business Bureau you have to be in business for at least one year.

Referrals and word-of-mouth are the best marketing tools in any industry.

Sharron Dark, [5 Star Virtual Assistants](#)

## THE “ARTISAN BURGER” LESSON ON MARKETING

My mother has always had a special appreciation for hamburgers from McDonald's. For her, the specific taste of a Big Mac reminds her of some of her favorite memories: moving to the United States, watching her children grow up, feeling “American.” She doesn't eat them very often and the onset of diabetes made the treat even more seldom.

So, when she decided to visit me and my sister in Portland, the first thing she asked when we picked her up at the airport was if we could stop by McDonald's to get a hamburger. However, we wanted to take her some place nicer, something unique to Portland, and with better quality food. After throwing out ideas for a few minutes, we decided to take her to the Matchbox Lounge.

I was looking forward to introducing my mom to an artisan burger since she rarely tries new restaurants or food, especially any food that isn't Chinese. When we got the restaurant, we ordered her the signature, award-winning burger. It featured gourmet quality local beef, pancetta, manchego cheese, and aioli. When she took a bite of this mouthwatering dish, she looked disappointed. She said “It isn't like McDonald's.”

We were shocked: How could anyone prefer a mass-produced fast food hamburger over a fresh artisan burger? The answer was that she wasn't looking to try a new hamburger. She wanted to have something familiar and comforting. She had a specific need that no other burger could fulfill.

The easiest type of customer to attract is the one that is dissatisfied with something. The owner of an old, unreliable vehicle is a much better sales prospect than someone who loves his or her car. A hungry person is more likely to go to a restaurant than someone who just ate. Most people wouldn't even consider the second person as someone who was in the market.

One of the easiest ways to gain new customers is to target ones who are actually looking for something or who are unhappy with what they currently have. That only seems natural: catering to a natural interest or curiosity or need. It doesn't matter if the new product actually contains new, superior features or is more efficient: the customer has to believe that the current one they have is not solving their problem.

Therefore, wouldn't it make sense to spend your resources on marketing to those who had a need rather than a general audience who might or might not have one at all? If you want to target a wider audience, you'll have to convince more people that what they currently have is not satisfactory.

*Simon Tam, [SimonTam.biz](http://SimonTam.biz)*

## THE GOLDEN RULES – 2012 EDITION

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*[Actuate Marketing](#)*

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Everyone wins when there's kindness involved.

Lisa Metwaly, [The Q Kindness Cafe](#)

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Growing your database can seem daunting with the number of tactics at your disposal. Thankfully, marketers have been running list growth campaigns for years. Check out this blog post to see a chart of 10 popular tactics, starting with the most effective on top, pulled from the all-new MarketingSherpa 2012 Email Marketing Benchmark Report.

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*As seen in MarketingSherpa Blog email updates*

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