



TEN DEADLY Marketing Mistakes and How to Correct Them

Take this test to see how you can boost your organization's productivity through a new marketing focus.

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To be an effective marketer, you need to follow a philosophy called the “marketing concept.” It states:

The way to fulfill your organization's objectives is to satisfy the unfilled needs of your customers better than competitors.

To be sure the marketing concept is working, you must follow three rules:

- **Be customer-oriented** in all matters.
- **Stress long-term** rather than short-run performance.
- **Coordinate marketing functions** with other business functions.

Are you using the marketing concept correctly? Answer the following 10 questions. If your answer to any question is “No,” use the remedy suggested to correct it.

1 Does everyone in your organization understand the marketing concept?

Everyone in your organization is—or should be—a marketer. Thus, it's crucial that all employees (paid and unpaid) understand the marketing concept.

View your employees as a second audience for all promotional efforts, especially advertising. These materials affect employees' view of the organization, who they believe they should be, and how they relate to customers.

Remedy 1: Take time to clear up any misunderstandings about the marketing concept. Post the marketing concept and its three rules where everyone can see them.

2 Is the marketing concept used throughout your organization?

In addition to understanding the marketing concept, everyone in the organization must incorporate it into their decision-making. Such acceptance is most likely if top management clearly embraces the marketing concept. Unless the marketing concept permeates the entire organization, poor decisions are likely to be made.

Remedy 2: Emphasize that people should use the marketing concept in their day-to-day decisions. Have top management reinforce this lesson often.

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3 Does the marketing concept receive more than lip service?

Some organizations espouse a customer orientation only in their public statements. Their actions, however, are driven by other concerns. Such organizations may be viewed as breaching their ethical responsibilities, and the outcome could be disastrous.

Consider what happened to a youth organization whose board

members placed their personal desires over those of their customers. They allowed prestige, social interaction, and professional contacts to influence the organization's direction. Its mission—to serve local teens—was subjugated by their personal agenda. Because it wasn't meeting its customers' needs, the organization foundered and is now defunct.

Remedy 3: Be sure the marketing concept guides all your organization's actions, especially regarding customers and potential customers.

4 Are You ready to counteract resistance?

Before the marketing concept can take effect, you may need to change your organization's norms, values, and beliefs—your organizational culture. Many cultures resist change. Expect people to balk, and prepare a program to ease the change.

Remedy 4: Keep your organization's culture in mind. Foster a climate receptive to change. Create a plan to ease the transition to your new marketing-centered culture.

5 Are you careful not to oversell the marketing concept?

Don't present the marketing concept as a panacea for all your organization's problems. Promote it as an *addition to* rather than a *replacement for* existing philosophies.

Suppose, for example, that you manage a thrift shop. You shouldn't

tell your transportation department to drop its responsibility of obtaining low-cost transportation. Instead, explain how low-cost transportation helps your organization attract and retain customers, thus fulfilling the marketing concept.

Remedy 5: Integrate the marketing concept into your organization's philosophical base. Don't force it on employees to the exclusion of nonmarketing goals, such as finances, technology, and safety. Show each functional area how its goals contribute to the marketing concept.

Post the marketing concept and its three rules where everyone can see them.

6 Do you make sure the marketing concept isn't overpowered?

Some cultures develop a quality that dominates all others. Cooperative electric utilities, for example, are dominated by an engineering flavor. This situation isn't a problem as long as the marketing concept is present as a distinct influencing factor. At the core, such a cooperative organization exists to serve its members.

Remedy 6: Be sure the marketing concept plays a major role in all the organization's decision-making, not just in the marketing department.

7 Do you take the long view?

Many people implement the marketing concept as if it were a short-run philosophy. Consequently, their focus is on fulfilling customers' short-term needs by manipulating marketing variables (product, price, promotion, access).

Consider a museum using advertising (promotion) to spur short-term interest while neglecting the basic question: Why is attendance low? The museum's leaders are using the marketing concept as a

tactical method rather than a strategic philosophy.

Remedy 7: Emphasize both the short and long view. Plan for such strategic issues as governmental, environmental, technological, and other strategic issues.

8 Do you study the world outside your organization?

Success in generating resources doesn't necessarily lead to satisfying clients. A health clinic may be effective in raising funds, for instance, only to allocate those funds poorly in serving clients. Even if the clinic uses its resources effectively, that doesn't guarantee effectiveness in serving clients. What's needed is a focus on the external environment, especially clients and other relevant publics.

Remedy 8: Focus on external as well as internal factors as you apply the marketing concept. Use surveys and focus groups to keep abreast of your organization's stakeholders, their changing worlds, and their emerging needs.

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9 Do you keep societal objectives in mind?

Nonprofit organizations operate as they presently do because society permits them to do so. If society becomes disenchanted with the nonprofit sector, it may withdraw certain privileges. Case in point: Church bingo games are being opposed as legalized gambling in many states.

Remedy 9: Use the marketing

Useful Resources (available at www.snpo.org/members)

Using Surveys & Focus Groups to Gather Market Data (Vol. 13, No. 3)

The New Marketing Model for Nonprofits (Vol. 22, No. 6)

Adapt to Change to Survive (Vol. 24, No. 2)

Using Your Organization's Culture to Build Productivity (Vol. 11, No. 6)

Also see Learning Institute programs on-line: Marketing (www.snpo.org/lino).

concept to align your organization's objectives with those of society.

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10 Are you patient with the process?

Don't expect overnight changes. You must market the concept to employees from top to bottom, foster a climate receptive to change, and then use this climate to instill a customer orientation throughout the organization. All this takes time to yield results.

Marketing research can be invaluable during this process. Identify employees', clients', and donors' attitudes to clarify the gap between the current situation and your desired outcomes. The greater the distance between your existing culture and the marketing concept, the more patience you'll need.

Remedy 10: Give the change process time to work. Survey your stakeholders on a regular basis to see how far you've come and how far you have yet to go. ■

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