



By Richard D. Czerniawski

TO “TWEAK IT,” OR NOT

Tweak (*transitive verb*) to make unusually small adjustments in or to (*something*)

The word “tweak” is frequently used by marketers when providing direction to members of their immediate team, support staff, ad agencies, and suppliers. Unfortunately, it is often misused and, therefore, promotes misunderstanding.

For one, a small change in the wording of, say, a promotion can make a profound difference in whether it passes legal and regulatory scrutiny. The change could represent the difference in gaining approval to go forward or not and avoiding the wrath of regulatory agencies and costly litigation. Therefore, it would be incorrect to refer to it as a “tweak.”

On the other hand, the change could add clarity, which might justifiably be a tweak. Or it could change an idea, which is not a tweak but significant in its potential for creating impact in the marketplace.

Marketers (and reviewing managers) also use the word “tweak” incorrectly when providing an “overview of work” that is inconsistent with the degree (quantity and extent) of work they require. For example, we may require several significant changes to a strategy, advertising, or execution but package it with direction to “tweak it.” It’s patently false to use it this way. If we want to be true to whom we are directing, we need to state that “(significantly) more work is needed.”

An overview to tweak something that requires significant work can be interpreted in one of two ways to those receiving the direction. One, it doesn’t fool them. They know they have a lot of work to do. And, while we may believe we are being kind, it could undermine their trust in us. Two, it may deafen them, by sugar-coating it, to hearing the direction and adapting the work accordingly. Neither response is acceptable to my way of managing.

There’s another problem with using the word “tweak” when providing direction. It’s vague! What is it that is being asked? Therefore, if you do use the word, follow-up with a clarification. For example, if we ask the agency to tweak the “key copy words” for a campaign, we should follow up with the clarifying direction—“let’s include the brand name in the copy to create strong brand linkage.”

What’s a “tweak” to me? If we can resolve it immediately in my office (or where we meet), we’ll

conclude it. One does not need to go away and rework anything. We take action and make the change on the spot. That's a tweak! Anything that needs someone to go away to do more work is "more work is needed."

We need to be bold when providing direction. Don't shirk from asking for more work when it's needed. Don't sugar coat it but, then, don't ever be rude. Being honest and carefully selecting your words to provide clear direction will enhance your value as a manager and help you get the work you deserve.

Take your marketing management skills to a new level. Coaching is an essential skill for achieving marketing excellence. You can learn more about coaching with skillful means in my new book, **AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing.** Check it out here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>

Stay safe and be well.

Peace and best wishes,

Richard Czerniawski



Richard D. Czerniawski

1812 Yates Avenue
Pensacola, Florida 32503

847-312-8822

richardcz@bdn-intl.com

richardcz@me.com

www.bdn-intl.com