

# **DISPATCHES**<sup>TM</sup>

*Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front*

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## **IMPROVE THE LIKELIHOOD OF MARKETING SUCCESSFULLY**

Marketing and, for that matter, all business is a probability game. A chance occurrence can dash the best thought-out plans and decisions. If you doubt us, think for a moment about the adverse impact Covid has had and continues to have on the economies of nations, businesses, and families.

However, this article is not about contingency planning—which every marketer and organization should engage in as part of their annual planning process. Instead, it is about our decisions and practices, which help drive success and minimize failures, regardless of whether things go for or go against Hoyle (in this case our expectations).

We need to improve our planning and decision-making to improve, not guarantee, our probability of success. We can improve planning and decision-making by adopting proven principles and best practices.

### **Do You Know What Your Marketing is Doing?**

Let's start at the beginning, with a question. Can you demonstrate line-of-sight sales to your KOL Engagement Plan? One of your consumer promotions? How about identifying the lift from your advertising campaign?

Unless you are tracking results against no-effort, or a control that generates an outcome you've experienced and know, then the answer is "no." You don't know what your marketing is doing. What we're talking about here is the need to engage in evidence-based marketing.

If you are not engaged in evidence-based marketing, you are gambling, not investing, precious company resources. Gambling, like hope, is not a successful strategy. In gambling, the house wins. You go home poorer. The marketplace is the "house" and will drain your resources and leave your brand or business susceptible to suffering from unexpected changes in market conditions and/or competitive actions.

If you want to improve the likelihood of predictable success, it is imperative to build an evidence-based culture. Please don't leave it up to the organization to make this

happen. It is unlikely to happen. But that's not the end of it. You can and should institute it for your brand.

### **Does Your Marketing Reflect Proven Principles?**

Okay, here's a proven principle for improving the likelihood of successful advertising—or brand messaging if you prefer a different language. You need a Campaign Idea if you seek success.

The Campaign Idea, which we've written extensively about, is comprised of three parts. There's the "Naked Idea," which is the creative concept—"how" you communicate the benefit promise (the "what"). For example, in the successful MasterCard "Priceless" campaign, the Naked Idea is "the juxtaposition of all the things you can purchase with a MasterCard with that one priceless moment (an outcome from the purchase) that money can't buy."

Another component is the Core Dramatization. In the case of one of MasterCard's thousands of executions, it's someone purchasing home office equipment with MasterCard coupled with that priceless moment of a toddler climbing into the lap of the purchaser. Two visuals—use of MasterCard to buy a printer and the child on Papa's or Mama's lap.

Finally, there are Key Copy Words (KCWs). The KCWs translate the strategic benefit promise (which we refer to as the Key-Thought) into compelling customer language AND capture the Naked Idea. They serve as a post-it note in customers' minds and brand in their hearts. In the MasterCard example, it goes something like this: "There are some things money can't buy; for everything else there's MasterCard."

If your messaging doesn't have a Campaign Idea, it is improbable that your messaging will be successful. We would not put resources against the messaging as the likelihood of success is virtually non-existent. (Unless, of course, you have a cure for cancer. And then, without a Campaign Idea, you are not leveraging this incredible strategic advantage!)

On the other hand, if you have a Campaign Idea, you've improved the likelihood of successful brand messaging. We didn't say "guarantee." Instead, we are stressing "improve" the probability. The quality of the Campaign Idea plays a role in its success.

Well, you might be wondering how we can be so sure of this "proven" principle. In our early years at Procter & Gamble, we had Copy Supervisors who studied our advertising (from the company's 60+ brands) and our competitors. They linked advertising with sales growth—growth, flat, decline. They then asked what is present in those ads that drive growth absent from those where the business is flat or declining.

The answer: A Campaign Idea.

There are many other proven principles. The question for marketers is whether they are aware of them and, importantly, putting them into practice.

Researchers like psychologists Daniel Kahneman (winner of a Nobel Prize) and Amos Tversky shared heuristics with us based on their studies in behavior. These rules of thumb are akin to proven principles. They do an excellent job of predicting the likelihood of an outcome and explaining it.

Then there's psychologist Robert Cialdini, author of INFLUENCE and PRE-SUASION (which we highly recommend). He provides evidence of enhancing the likelihood of success by incorporating principles such as scarcity and social proof, among others.

Undoubtedly, we can all improve the likelihood of successful marketing. Don't gamble precious company resources. Instead, invest by employing proven principles and evidence-based marketing.

**Proposed Action(s) for Implementation** (*Crossing the chasm from learning to impact*)

1. Establish an evidence-based brand. Include initiatives to test in your marketing plan. Learn and apply.
2. Read THINKING FAST and SLOW by Daniel Kahneman or the UNDOING PROJECT by Michael Lewis to learn about the work and resultant heuristics of pioneering psychologists Kahneman and Tversky.
3. Read INFLUENCE: The Psychology of Persuasion by Robert Cialdini to learn how to make your messaging effective.
4. Identify what you know to be true principles and best practices. But don't stop there. Check to ensure you are implementing them. If not, get to it.
5. Please read and encourage your team to subscribe to and read Brand Development Network International blogs DISPATCHES and Marketing Matters. We share proven principles, best practices, and quality processes. It will help bolster your team's performance. All it takes is to register at [www.bdn-intl.com](http://www.bdn-intl.com).

*Are you interested in improving the likelihood of marketing success?* Read Richard's most recent book, **AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing**. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>

Best wishes,  
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