



By Richard D. Czerniawski

RESIST DRIFT

I cautioned my client about the need to “resist drift.”

We completed the development of alternate Brand Ideas. The next step is to investigate the appeal of each in the absolute and relative to each other. This step often requires translating the Brand Idea into a familiar framework for the research organization and client company. It's an inflection point for drift.

Drift occurs throughout the marketing process. It not only happens in translating the Brand Idea into the Brand Positioning Strategy but the actions of relevant support groups. It happens when we assess work against the strategy that guided it. It even happens when we discuss proposed actions. Drift is any deviation from decided and approved direction.

Drift happens! It's not a sometimes but every time phenomenon. It pulls our marketing off course, tossing it about like a ship in a typhoon. Consequently, we miss our intended goal.

To avoid drift, we need to provide sound stewardship in managing our brands. It takes a demanding mindset and considerable discipline to stay on point. It must be backed by non-negotiation when it comes to approved strategy and direction.

I mentioned to my client—a creative, disciplined, and passionate marketer—that changing one word, even one punctuation mark, will trigger drift when translating the Brand Idea. He responded with the following:

***Panda or Cowboy?
Eats shoots and leaves. Eats, shoots and leaves.***

One comma makes all the difference in who it is. Change one word, one punctuation, and we change the meaning.

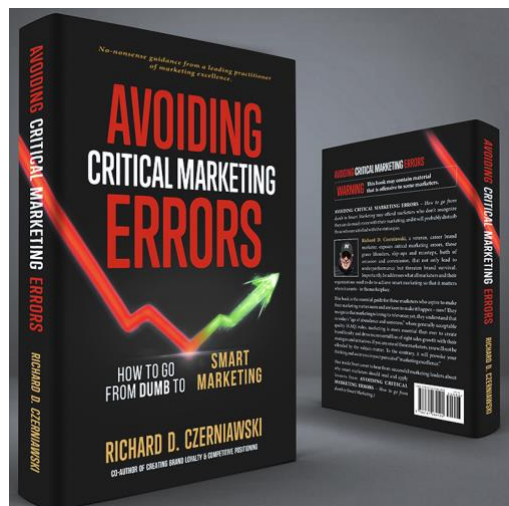
Don't let drift happen to you.

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

1. ***Collaborate with relevant support groups in crafting strategies*** – It's necessary to get their unique perspectives as everyone on the team has an essential piece of the puzzle that we're assembling. Additionally, it fosters understanding and familiarity to dampen—not eliminate—drift.
2. ***Make the meaning clear*** – Our strategic work should be incapable of being misunderstood. Keep it simple to foster understanding. We should also be precise with each word we use. Another sound practice is to create two columns; the first is for the strategy statement on a line-by-line basis, and the second is for the meaning of each line. This practice will further clarify the strategic meaning.
3. ***Communicate the strategy frequently*** – Memories fade quickly. So, we need to keep it top of mind by repetitively communicating it.
4. ***Review the strategy before reviewing work intended to execute it*** – This provides a filter to assess the work.
5. ***Coach to keep the work on course*** - Direct resource personnel on what is needed to get back and stay on course.

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Peace and best wishes,

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