



By Richard D. Czerniawski

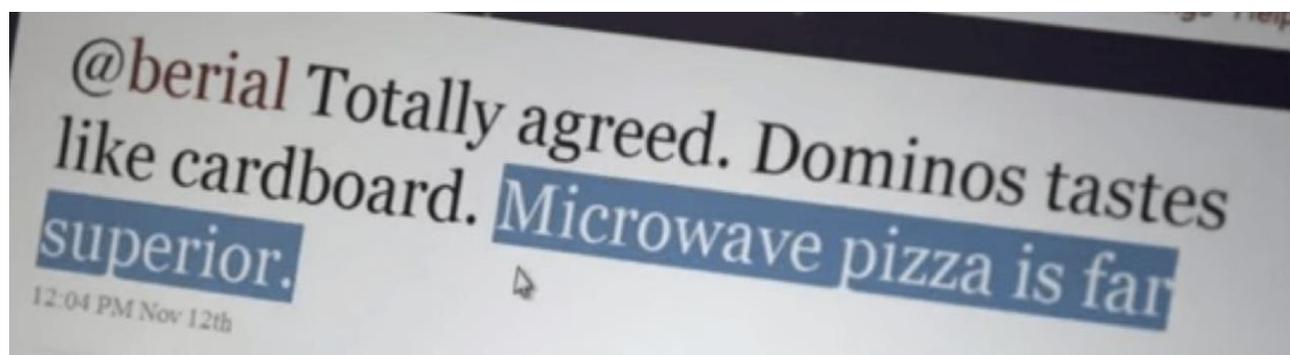
ACHIEVING A SUCCESSFUL BRAND TURNAROUND

A turnaround is quite different from a brand or business rejuvenation and revitalization. A turnaround is just what the name suggests, turning the business around from failing to succeeding. It is not a snapshot in time, although the turnaround has an inflection point. It's moving 180 degrees from failing to restoring viability and promoting success into the future.

While there have been many notable examples of turnarounds, the failures—which are far often the case—are soon forgotten: Pan Am, Border's, Kodak and Polaroid, J.C. Penny, and Sears. As to the successes, Apple may be the most famous of all. If only we had purchased Apple stock when Steve Jobs returned to the company. Once on the precipice of failure, the company's current market cap is over \$2 trillion—a huge success. Other noteworthy turnarounds include Target, Domino's Pizza, and Old Spice.

I'm inspired by all but particularly Domino's. My interest goes beyond pizza being my favorite food. I'm a pizza snob, so you won't find Domino's Pizza in my evoked set. My children have long flown the coup, so there's no one home we need to feed fast with a food item that is a favorite in many households.

What is it about the Domino's Pizza turnaround? Well, food is supposed to be flavorful and pleasing to the palate. Unfortunately, Domino's pizza products didn't deliver a tasty experience! Their pizza product sucked. While customers appreciated the quick delivery, they did not like what they were getting and eating.



It didn't take a rocket scientist to identify the product problems. Customers were direct in voicing their complaints:

- *The pizza crust is like cardboard.*
- *The ingredients are flavorless.*
- *It's bland pizza.*
- *Totally void of flavor.*
- *(Even) Microwave pizza is far superior.*
- *Where's the love?*

Given customers' comments, I'd say, "gag me with a spoon." However, it appears that at the time, Domino's did an excellent job of gagging its customers with its pizza, without the need for a spoon.

What did Domino's do? They made a very bold move. Their U.S. president, Patrick Doyle, publicly acknowledged customer complaints and confessed that customers were right—the product was unsatisfactory. It was bad. He vowed not just to make the product better but to satisfy even the company's harshest critics. He put himself, the brand, and the company on the line.

At the time, many pundits shook their heads. For them, it was as if Mr. Doyle was committing harikari in damning his product in public. But I remembered another product champion from the 1980s who led the Chrysler Corporation through the first government auto industry bailout and turned a failing company around—Lee Iacocca, a charismatic leader who appeared in ads touting Chrysler's quality and dependability. Mr. Doyle was reminiscent of Mr. Iacocca, becoming the face of the company—the one to trust—in driving performance. I reasoned that if he got the product right, he'd be on the way to turning the company around.

The Domino's turnaround story begins here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AH5R56jILag>

Achieving a Successful Brand Turnaround

Finances are crucial. But I'm going to focus on marketing. Here are some steps we marketers should consider taking when faced with a failing business or brand:

1. ***Don't allow the business to fall into disrepair that it needs a turnaround*** – There comes the point where the brand or business won't respond. It will fail, and you won't be able to resuscitate it. Even if the brand doesn't reach that point, it will suffer years of decline, loss of reputation and customers, and untold opportunity losses.
2. ***Listen to your customers*** – Don't just listen; hear what they're telling you about the brand. Don't ignore their complaints. Take them seriously and act on their complaints. Resolve them before they worsen. Remember, we need to satisfy customers better to win them over our competitors.
3. ***Get back to the basics and start over if needed*** – In the case of Domino's Pizza, it came back to the product. We need to consider how everything works together. Make one change, and it may not fix the fundamental problem, lack of flavor enjoyment, but exacerbate it. Instead of piecemealing (excuse the pun), we may need to recreate it from scratch.
4. ***Experiment to find the correct solution*** – Test, test, test until you get it right. What's right? When the customer tells you that you've nailed it!
5. ***Practice Kaizen*** – The Japanese word "kaizen" has come to mean "continuous improvement." A mere 1% improvement can lead to profound change and success. Evolve

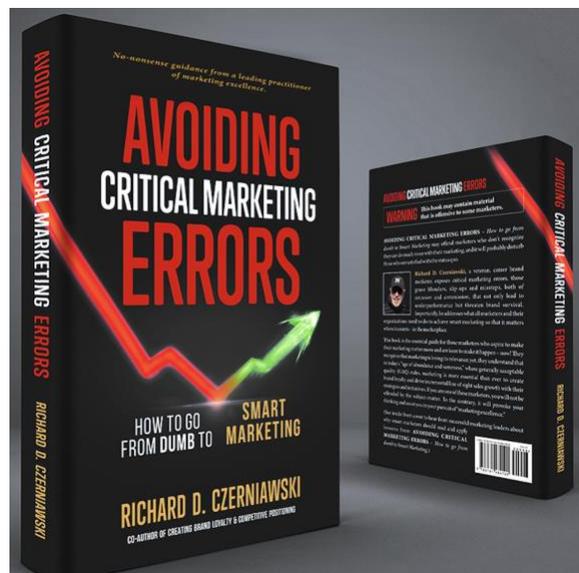
your product, brand, and marketing to go forward, not fall behind customers' expectations or competitors' performance.

The Domino's Pizza turnaround went beyond the product to include new system software to improve delivery, among other changes. **Make your marketing matter more:** follow the steps above.

Found this post informative or thought-provoking? Follow me at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/richarddczerniawski/> as I share my perspectives from 50 years of successful worldwide brand marketing experience each week.

Also, consider registering for DISPATCHES and Marketing Matters, two blogs I publish bi-weekly. Go to www.bdn-intl.com to register.

To learn more about kaizen, read chapter 14, "The Kaizen Way to Smarter Marketing," from my 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>.



Thanks for your interest.

Peace and best wishes in making your marketing matter (even) more,

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