

Top 10 MOST IGNORED Rules of Marketing

#4 - New Customers Need Proof

"We're the best because our new [product or service here] is blah, blah, blah and does blah, blah, blah."

That's what most advertisements look like to prospects and customers. Everybody says they're "the best."

They list all the cool features of their product or service. The better ads may even offer up benefits for each feature.

But, to most people – it's just "blah, blah, blah." It's a bunch of evidence – but no proof.

When we're building a case for our business, we often confuse evidence with proof. We look at evidence as the thing that provides the proof that our product or service is tops.

Our prospects and customers, however, don't see things quite the same way. To them, our evidence is just a bunch of stuff that suggests our product or service **might** be good. PROOF is what makes them CERTAIN a product or service IS good. Evidence suggests... PROOF ensures.

If you're not providing proof in your promotions, I can guarantee you're not converting prospect into customers as often as you could be.

There are many ways to provide proof but I'll break them down into three categories:

1. direct proof
2. indirect proof
3. implied proof

Direct Proof

Direct proof happens when the prospect or customer has direct, first hand experience with your product or service and thereby gains certainty that it's superior. All of your current customers should already have direct proof so your promotions to them need only remind them of what they've already experienced.

But your prospects won't yet have any experience with your product or service. How do they get direct proof? Give those people a test drive. It's work for car dealerships for years. Software companies have also jumped on the "test drive" bandwagon. Most allow a limited free trial of their product giving prospective buyers hands on experience and concrete proof that the product works.

Grocery stores and super markets now have tasting and demo stations where customers are invited to taste or try out new products.

New "scratch and sniff" technology gave fragrance companies a way to drop their fragrance onto a magazine page – providing direct, olfactory proof to each of the magazine's subscribers.

Your freebies don't always have to be the product or service you're trying to sell. A very effective strategy is to give away a lesser product or service – allowing prospects to get first hand experience with your business and become comfortable with how you handle customers. Once you've “proven” yourself with the less significant (and usually less expensive) product, prospects and customers will be more open to purchasing other (more expensive) items from you.

If you can't give anything away for free then offer an ironclad, risk-free, money back guarantee. A well known mattress company uses this technique to sell their “sleep systems.” They actually call it a “90-day risk-free trial” and it lets prospective buyers get the proof they need to complete the purchase.

Indirect Proof

With indirect proof prospects don't experience your business first hand, but do so through others – most often other people that they know, think they know, or can identify with. Indirect proof happens through testimonials, including:

- referrals from family, friends, co-workers and the like
- testimony from celebrities, popular athletes, community leaders, etc. Your prospects don't know these people but they've seen them so often they think do.
- testimony from people just like them. Seniors giving testimonials to seniors, parents providing testimony to other parents, teens testifying to teens, and so on. Whatever your market (or markets) find one or more of your satisfied customers with matching the demographics and have them provide a testimonial for you.

Implied Proof

Implied proof uses the psychological principle of “social proof.”

“...95% of the people are imitators and only 5% are initiators, people are persuaded more by the actions of others than by any proof we can offer.”

Cavett Robert – Sales and Motivation Consultant

Implied or social proof has been used (and abused) for centuries. You've likely been a victim of social proof in the form of:

- TV laugh tracks
- screaming, swooning teen girls at Beatles concerts
- bartenders, or night club singers, and street performers who “salt” tip jars with a few bills
- evangelical audiences seeded with “worshippers” who “spontaneously and enthusiastically” respond to the minister's call to salvation
- beverage companies that pay attractive, outgoing men and women to spend evenings in bars drinking and promoting the company's products
- the wave

Some of these are harmless – even amusing. Some might be considered less than ethical. But, they ALL WORK because implied or “social” proof isn't just a concept. It's a fact.

When it comes to social proof in your business, a crowded restaurant or waiting room could be your best advertisement. Hundreds – or even thousands - of

friends in your business' MySpace or FaceBook account makes attracting new friends that much easier. Comments on your blog entries proves to many readers that your blog is worth reading – simply because other people are doing it.

To build a case for your product or service, make sure every argument is summed up with:

- **Direct** proof – freebies, free trials, and no-risk guarantees
- **Indirect** proof – testimonials
- **Implied** proof – indicators that everyone else thinks you're great

You'll have to provide some evidence to prospects and customers, but you'll never get the verdict you want without proof.