

Top 10 MOST IGNORED Rules of Marketing

10 - Marketing: Fishing Dressed Up in a Business Suit

I'm not the first guy to make the comparison between fishing and marketing/sales and I doubt I'll be the last. The analogy just works too well.

If most small and medium sized business owners fished like they marketed, we'd see a scenario something like this.

Joe the business owner decided he need to get some fish to feed his family. He puts together a plan and:

1. buys a beautiful, luxurious, and expensive fishing boat and blows nearly all of his "fishing" budget
2. drives the boat to the nearest marina
3. leans over the side of the boat and yells, at the top of his lungs, his fishing "sales pitch":

"Aaaahh... my little fishies! You are going to have the evening of your lives. I'm going to take you home, fry you up in a pan, and serve you – along with crunchy, freshly cooked veggies and mounds of creamy potatoes – to my darling, hungry family. You'll be the hit of the meal!"

Of course, after spending a ton of cash on the fishing boat and giving such and inspiring and mouthwatering sales pitch, Joe can't figure out why no fish jumped out of the water and into his ice chest.

So, let's help Joe out.

1 - Boats Don't Catch Fish

A boat may help you catch fish, but beauty and luxury won't do you a bit of good. Joe probably spends all of his marketing budget on fancy Yellow Page listings or maybe even slick TV spots. Unfortunately, pretty, artsy, slick, funny – none of these make sales.

The most talked about commercial of the 2000 Super Bowl featured a singing sock puppet. This spot for Pets.com was interesting, kinda funny, and very expensive. It caught everybody's attention, but it didn't "catch" any customers. Pets.com didn't make it to the end of the year.

Joe needs to quit blowing his fishing budget on pretty, fancy, and luxurious and spend it on equipment that will actually help him catch fish.

2 - Fish Don't Hang Out In Marinas

I don't know of any marina where the fishing is good. Good eating fish don't seem to like all of the activity that goes on there. Joe's got to **take his fishing where the fish are** and forget about fishing where it's convenient.

Remember Joe's Yellow Pages ad we talked about earlier? Let me ask you, "When is the last time you used the yellow pages?" For me it's been over 5 years. If I'm the kind of customer Joe wants for his business, he's fishing in the wrong place.

3 - A Sales Pitch Can't Replace a Fishing Rod

Wow! It's pretty obvious that Joe has really missed the boat here. "Fisherman" Joe has done something totally insane – something a true fisherman would never do. But "business owner" Joe? He does this every day.

- a) **Fish are tuned into different frequencies** – Any fish in the area probably heard Joe's pitch but since it was at the wrong frequency, it wasn't a sound that they were focused on or tuned into. They would have entirely ignored it.

Joe's business customers are tuned into their own frequencies as well. If Joe doesn't re-calibrate his marketing to match what his customers are looking for, they'll just ignore him.

- b) **Fish don't speak Human** – Joe can't speak "human" to a fish and expect it to understand. The problem isn't the language he's speaking. It won't help him to switch to French or German or Swahili 'cause he'd still be talking "human". If he wants to catch fish Joe needs to speak "fish". Just listen to an experienced fly fisherman talk about flies and lures; spinnerbaits, crankbaits, tube jigs, and jigging spoons. It won't be long before you realize he's not just describing fishing tackle, he's talking "fish".

Joe's business marketing needs to change to. He needs to talk "customer" - find out what his customers want and communicate that to them the way they want to hear it. Joe won't catch any customers talking his language. He needs to learn how to talk theirs.

- c) **Fish want dinner. They don't want to be dinner** – Joe's pitch was all about how good things would be for him and his family. Even if the fish understood what he was saying, I don't think they'd have bought it. To catch fish, real fishermen use bait... fish goodies... stuff the fish want. Give the fish what they want and they'll bite.

Joe has to give his business customers what they want too. Joe's like every other small and medium sized business owner. He expects his business to feed his family. To feed his family, his business must make money. To make money, he's got to "catch" customers and make sales. But Joe's sales pitch, "Aaaahh... my little customers. I'm going to catch you and feed you to my family" just won't fly. Joe has to give his prospects and customers what THEY want, take care of THEIR needs, feed THEM "dinner" and in turn they'll provide him with the kind of income that'll put a nice spread on his family's table.

The purpose of fishing is to catch fish. Yes, there are people who fish just to pass the time, but most people go fishing expecting to return home with a cooler full of fresh fish for the dinner table.

The sole purpose of your marketing is to catch customers – good, loyal, paying customers. Good marketing will tactics similar to those of the best fishermen:

- use the right equipment (promotions, business processes, etc.)
- fish where the fish are (right media, right markets)
- give the fish what they want (irresistible offers)

and you'll be bragging about all the "prize" customers you've caught instead of telling stories about the ones that got away.