Amazon Best Seller

42™ Rules of Marketing

2ND EDITION

A Practical Guide to Marketing Best Practices That Ensure Your Messages Are Heard by Your Target Audience

LAURA LOWELL

SECOND EDITION

“42 Rules of Marketing (2nd Edition)” Book Excerpt

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BOOK EXCERPT Table of Contents

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Why 42?

The concept of 42 rules is that almost anything in life can be summarized into 42 distinct ideas that capture the essence of the topic.

I am often asked "Why 42?" In the science-fiction novel turned cult film, *'The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy'*, a computer is built to answer the "ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything." The answer is simply "42." As I approached writing this book, 27 rules seemed too low, but 51 were way too many. Douglas Adams, the author of The Hitchhikers Guide, was on to something when he chose 42. It felt right to me as well.

The *'42 Rules of Marketing'* is a compilation of ideas, theories, and practical approaches I have been collecting over the years. The idea was to create a series of helpful reminders; things that marketers know we should do, but don't always have the time or patience to do.

As you read through the rules, I ask that you don't take them literally. They are interesting stories, anecdotes and observations. Keep the book on your desk as it is intended as an "entertaining antidote" to long, boring conference calls. Don't read the rules in order, but flip through them until something strikes you. If it sparks an idea, then I've done what I set out to do.

Feel free to pass the rules along to anyone you think might benefit from a friendly reminder. Use them to start a discussion about what other people think the rules should be. After all, these are my rules. What are yours?

Rule

3 Plan a Little So You Can Do a Lot More

You need both Planners and Doers in order to get things done

After much observation and questioning, I have come to classify marketing people into two groups: Planners and Doers. This may seem a stereotype, and it probably is, but bear with me. Most people I talk to can definitely place themselves into either one camp or the other.

The Planners: You know these folks. They are endearing for their need to always "have a plan." They think, analyze, request more data and then reassess their assessment. Then something changes—ugh! After a moment of panic and deep breathing, they get to work. They go back to the plan and test their assumptions, review their contingencies and are quite proud to report that the plan is still workable "with a few tweaks."

These folks plan and plan and plan but actually don't do very much. Planners are important and we need them. Without them the Doers would be running around like chickens with their heads cut off! Remember the hit series Friends? The character Monica, played by Courtney Cox, was the epitome of a Planner. She had her life planned out from the time she was 12 years old. Not only did she plan her life, but her friends' lives as well. Everyone loved Monica because she was practical and you could always count on her to "have a plan."

The Doers: These folks, on the other hand, must be doing something. Anything. It doesn't matter what they do as long as they are "moving the needle" and "making progress." They have great ideas, and are excited and energetic. They are generally fun to be around. Because of the infectious spirit of the Doers, others jump on the bandwagon and everyone starts doing things.

The issue is whether the Doers are doing the right things. Are they consistent with the strategy and business objectives? Are they integrating with other activities going on? Are their activities repeatable? Can they grow over time? Back to the Friends example—Phoebe, as opposed to Monica was the quintessential Doer. She did whatever came to mind, whenever it came to mind. Everyone loved Phoebe because she was spontaneous and full of energy.

The point is, you need both Planners and Doers in order to get things done. Not everyone can walk the tightrope between planning and doing. And that's the biggest issue—the lack of balance between strategy and tactics.

Thanks to the Planners, companies can develop brilliant strategies—on paper at least. Thanks to the Doers, companies can spend a lot of time and money without much to show for it. What the lucky ones quickly learn is that developing a strategy is very different from executing one.

When companies try to implement their strategies, they run into obstacles such as channels, partners, technology, infrastructure, competition, or lack of resources. The reverse is also true. Companies can spend so much time executing that they lose sight of the business objective. For example, they might end up with an awesome website, but no incremental sales (see Rule 2.) To be valuable, strategy must be practical, and tactics must be integrated.

Planners and Doers tend to have difficulty connecting the dots between their plans (strategies, objectives, etc.) and their actions (tactics or activities). Lots of time, resources and money get wasted. This is a luxury of days gone by and one that business today can't afford.

My Mom used to tell me "if you slow down, you'll go faster" and she was right. How many times do you wish you'd just taken a minute to think something through before you jumped in? How about you? Are you a planner or a doer or maybe a little of both?

Rule

9

See the Forest and the Trees

It's important to look beyond the walls of your cubicle and get a sense of what is going on around you

Your customers have many options. It is up to you to communicate to them in context of the overall universe of possibilities—the market in which you operate. Your job is to convince customers that your product, service or solution is obviously the best choice for them.

Understanding how your company, product or service stacks up against the competition is a logical step towards creating a message that is convincing and compelling.

Marketing strategy guru Jack Trout said "differentiate or die." That doesn't mean bashing the competition. It does mean knowing your relative strengths and weaknesses and positioning your offer accordingly. It's important to look beyond the walls of your cubicle and get a sense of what is going on around you. It is sometimes really easy to get caught up in the internal perceptions of the market.

For example, you have probably heard people say something like "that new standard will never get adopted—they don't have enough support from partners." Maybe so, but it is a good idea to stick your head out the window every once in a while and see if what you believe is really true. Otherwise, you might find yourself at a distinct disadvantage.

Look for external market influences and how they might affect your company and the competition. Consider the political, economic, social and technical issues surrounding your customers including regulatory requirements and even international trade issues. How about political affiliations? Are economic factors like inflation or interest rates a major concern to your customers?

What are the technological trends in the industry? Can you claim leadership? Do your customers value that leadership? How can you position developments in the category in the best light possible for your customers? How can you make things better for them than any of their other alternatives?

MetaLINCS is a provider of electronic discovery software. They launched their product in 2006 into an established, multi-billion dollar but risk-averse legal and investigatory services industry. MetaLINCS felt their new technology would revolutionize the e-discovery market. To their surprise, their target customers weren't ready to be revolutionized.

The traditional e-discovery business model was built on manual review of electronic documents by relatively low-paid young associates or paralegals. Automating this process cuts directly into law firm and services companies' revenues, and enterprises weren't yet compelled to perform this function in-house. After launching to an intrigued but slow-to-act market, the company found that their highest impact would come from institutional influencers like the Department of Justice. They re-vamped their go-to-market strategy and went after the DOJ and the supplier vendors to convince them to use the MetaLINCS product as the e-discovery platform of choice. Now they are one of the approved reporting standards for e discovery in DOJ investigations. They have increased their penetration rates and their sales funnel and revenue stream is steadily growing.

What started out as a flop has been turned into a huge success. These are the moments when it is more important than ever to take a look around and see the forest and the trees.

Rule

15 Just Say No to Jargon

The point is, make sure what you write actually means something

This rule will empower you to leverage your thinking and step outside the box so that you can help customers find solutions to their problems. Huh?

In an effort to sound smart, different and credible, the language of corporate marketing has taken a turn for the worse. Complete websites, brochures and datasheets are written that don't mean a darn thing. We understand all the words, but when they are put together we don't know what it means. What, for example does "we provide technical solutions for progressive companies" mean? How about; "technical innovation is the foundation of our best-in-class industry leading solutions that exceeds customers' expectations." What in the world does this actually mean?

This type of corporate gobbledygook is not helpful. In fact, it has just the opposite affect. Customers read your brochure (or website or white paper) and are left with more questions than answers. Since it would require effort on their part to figure out what you do, they move on to the next guy—and you've lost a potential customer.

It isn't very often that a customer says to themselves, "I need an innovative solution to exceed my expectations." They probably think "I've been trying really hard to solve this problem and I just can't—maybe someone else can help."

So what is a marketer to do? Well, some clever folks at Deloitte Consulting took it upon themselves to create "BullFighter"[6]—a clever piece of software that looks at all your copy and identifies all the "bull words."

The software plugs in to Microsoft Word and works much like spell-check or grammar-check. You select "Bullfighter" and it finds "bull words" and suggests alternatives. Just for fun, I did a before and after test of several phrases. This is what I got:

Stakeholder: Alternative words were vampire slayer, victim and forks. "Overused to the point of pain by consultants."

First-Mover: "Battle cry from the first Internet boom-bust, one with little remaining credibility."

Empower: "A grandiose word…solidly enshrined in the Consulting Cliché Hall of Fame."

Hatsize Learning Corporation took this lesson to heart when they revised their corporate positioning and messages. Initially their top three messages were: optimize resources & hardware; reduce delivery costs; and increase training revenue. After much discussion the team found the underlying benefits and got straight to the point. Their new message is: more revenue, higher margins through increased product knowledge. The impact was to get away from buzz-words that mean nothing and say what you really want to say.

The point is, make sure what you write actually means something. Make sure it means something to someone who doesn't work for your company. Make sure it means something to your customers and potential customers. How do you know? Just ask them.

Rule

29 Clicks Aren't Customers

Gauging effectiveness doesn't need to be complicated and overly engineered

Without clear objectives, how do you know if you were successful? If you didn't define what success looked like up front—how do you know if your plan worked? It's good to be flexible, to try new things and see what happens—some of the most creative inventions of our time happened that way. But for most of us, most of the time, it's a good idea to know what you're aiming for.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of any type of campaign (online or offline) you have to be able to measure the impact it had on a defined criteria. The measurement could be click through on your website, calls to a 1-800 number, or actual sales volume and revenue targets. Gauging effectiveness doesn't need to be complicated and overly engineered. Some of the most sophisticated analytical models work because they are very simple. Let's take a basic online campaign and do the math.

Assume conversion rates on websites today are about 1–3 percent (meaning about 1–3 percent of clicks turn into customers). Let's say you did an online ad campaign for $5000. The campaign generated an incremental 2500 visits to your site (we know that because you can track against average daily traffic for similar days prior to the campaign). The results of the campaign (affectionately known as return on investment or ROI) would look like this:

Cost	$5,000
Increased traffic	2500 visits
Cost per visit	$2.00
Conversion rate	3% (being generous)
Actual customers	75
Cost per customer	$66.67

This means that in order for the campaign to break even each customer must purchase at least $66.67 worth of stuff as a result of your campaign. Looking at it a different way, it cost you $66.67 to get each new customer.

Depending on your business, this may be good—it may even be great. You'll never know unless you do the math and have a target to measure your results against. Cost per acquisition, or CPA, is a common metric used to track return on investment for this type of online campaign.

For the data to make sense, you need to track enough campaign data to give you some directional guidance. In this example, a campaign is defined as an email with a unique subject, offer and call-to-action. If you executed 30 individual email campaigns you would end up with enough data to develop a benchmark for measuring the success of future campaigns. Once you know your target CPA you have a very clear objective.

This type of model helps you evaluate and prioritize your investments. You'll definitely know when it works and when it doesn't.

Rule

40

Give it a Chance

When you change your message or creative images or branding before the campaign has had a chance to sink in, you are wasting the investment in the campaign

Good marketers have patience. Studies show that it takes anywhere from five to nine exposures for a customers to recognize a marketing message. And that only means that they recognize it as a message—not that they identify it with your company or product.

In order for your marketing to "sink in" customers need to be exposed to your message over and over again. Repeated exposure leads to awareness that the message comes from you. Think about some of the really engaging ads on TV or radio. How many times have you heard people say "I love that commercial, but I can't remember who the company is." This is not what you want to hear.

Creating an integrated marketing plan is one of the best ways to build up these repeated exposures. Not only do your customers need to see your messages over and over again, but they need to see them in different places. The right mix of activities touches your customers at different times and connects with them in different ways.

An email, a phone call, a presence at a tradeshow, partnerships with other companies, editorial articles in trade or business magazines—all reach your customers when they are in different places thinking different thoughts. At some point, the message will be more relevant and in the right context, and will cause the message to sink in.

Managing your campaigns is much like planting a garden. You find the perfect spot to plant your garden. You prepare the soil, plant the seeds and water and care for them until they finally sprout. Then you have to make sure they get enough sunlight and water, and you have to try to keep the bugs at bay. Then, after patiently caring for them, you walk out one morning, and the garden is in full bloom.

Unfortunately for some, the campaigns are changed before they have a chance to bloom. The ideas for the change can come from over-eager executives, agencies or even your team. The team works really hard on the campaign, and it might take you three weeks or three months to get your campaign to market.

If it takes you that long to create the campaign, it will probably take at least that long for your customers to recognize it and connect it to your company or product. When you change your message or creative images or branding before the campaign has had a chance to sink in, you are wasting the investment in the campaign. The time, energy and money used to create the campaign aren't allowed to grow and have the desired impact.

If you change too early or too often, you never build a foundation of awareness. You continually have to start from scratch (preparing the soil, planting the seeds, etc.) This costs more and delivers less.

It takes a strong constitution to stand up to the pressures you might feel to "change things up" before your campaign has truly proved itself. You should always learn as you go and refine your copy and your offers as you go. But leave the core messages, images and tone of the campaign intact.

Once they sink in you will have a foundation to build from. Have a little patience, and give your campaign a chance to grow.

About the Author

Laura Lowell is passionate about helping companies be heard; to get the right message to the right customer at the right time. As a sought after consultant, author, and speaker in Silicon Valley, Laura has shared her pragmatic approach to marketing with hundreds of individuals and companies. Her work on the "client-side" has shaped her approach to marketing. She appreciates what it takes to get things done—in both start-ups and established companies.

Prior to launching Impact Marketing Group, Laura was the Director of Worldwide Consumer Marketing Communications for Hewlett-Packard where she was responsible for planning and implementing integrated marketing campaigns across all HP consumer product lines. Early in her career, Laura spent several years at Intel Corporation where she was on the start-up team that developed and implemented the Intel Inside® branding program.

Laura's degree in International Relations prepared her for work assignments in Hong Kong and London, after which she received her MBA from UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business, with an emphasis on marketing and entrepreneurship. She lives in Los Gatos, California, with her husband Rick, their two daughters, and their dog.

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42 Rules of Marketing (2nd Edition) can be purchased as an eBook for $11.95 or tradebook for $19.95 at:
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"These 42 Rules are gems of advice and gentle reminders that every marketer needs to hear from time to time, packaged in concise, fun-to-read nuggets. If 'marketing' is in your title, you need to have this book in your library."
Chris Shipley, Co-Founder, Guidewire Group Inc., and Executive Producer of the DEMO Conference

"Laura's insights in The 42 Rules of Marketing are invaluable. The book is an easy and fun read, and is a great reminder of many of the things that we marketers know intuitively but may have forgotten in the rush of doing our daily jobs."
Brian Lawley, President, 280 Group & Silicon Valley Product Management Association

It's an actionable guide for anyone looking to improve the quality of their marketing. Laura's rules have sparked ideas with me and my team and have helped us make a lot of progress. Keep it on your desk, refer to it often and tell a friend."
Melissa Johnson, Director, Annual Fund, Walter A. Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley

LAURA LOWELL
is a professional speaker, author and consultant who helps individuals and companies be heard in crowded spaces. She has more than 20 years experience in branding, marketing and entrepreneurship which she has applied to her own businesses, as well as her clients.

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