
Where have all the good marketers gone?

Posted by [Derek A. Lackey, Editor](#) / October 08, 2017

Earlier this year at Advertising Week Europe the legendary Dave Trottsat on a stage opposite four senior client-side marketers in an awkward conversation. He spoke of obsequious agencies pandering to client wishes and of bad briefing from clients leading to poor collaboration and sub-standard creative output. He brought this idea to life with the following (paraphrased) story:

The sole job of the agency is keeping clients happy. If clients were a patient going in to see a doctor (the agency) to ask for a diagnosis, it would go something like this:



Mark Ritson who, hot off his Battle Royale with Byron Sharp at The Festival of Marketing 2017 (#FoM17), often talks about the 'tactification' of marketing the result of dumbing down marketing to its lowest common denominator. On Marketing Weeks Mini MBA course (a must for anyone looking to up their marketing game), Mark quotes Sun Tzu to highlight the challenge with this all-too-common, mediocre (and that's putting it kindly) approach to marketing in our modern world:

Mark's solution to the problem is simple. Not easy, but simple.

If you work in marketing for a Brand, don't let your agency tell you what your strategy is. To channel Mark for a moment; that's fucking idiotic. Recognise that as soon as you step through the door of your business, you lose the right to know what the customer/consumer thinks, feels or wants from you, your products or services. The humility of marketing is central to the idea of market orientation. Don't assume you know it all. You don't.

2. Take the time and make the effort to put yourself in the minds, shoes, jeans, houses or businesses of your customers. **Do some research** use a combination of qual and quant to better understand your audiences and give you fresh insight into

your brand/product in their minds as well as your place in the market.

3. Focus your efforts. Map and segment your market, let this speak to you about where the biggest, most interesting (and achievable) opportunities are. As Mark says; strategy is about choosing where you want to play, as much as where you will. Based upon your resources and capabilities, make smart decisions about where you will choose to play, and where you want. *

4. Develop your positioning. Make sure that you are speaking to the people you want to engage in a way that will resonate with them and make you distinct in their minds. Position your product or service in a way that understands what the customer needs, what your company can offer, in a way that is distinct from the competition.

5. Set your strategy. Develop simple and clear SMART objectives that identify what you intend to do, in what area of the market, by what point.

6. Then spend time to **brief your agency/agencies properly**. Don't try and come up with the answers in the brief. Just be clear about the business and market context, communication challenges and what success looks like. Be clear about the people you want to engage and be as inspiring as you can with the briefing process itself. Then get out of the way and let your agencies do the thing they do best; developing exciting, authentic, relevant, inspiring, measurable (integrated) campaigns.

While a non-exhaustive list, above is the essence of Mark's approach to tackle crappy, ill-informed, tactic-only marketing. Something so important because, as Mark puts it in a recent blog:

Whether you're a brand-side marketer or working in an agency...

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