

by Jay Conrad Levinson

Marketing is not an event, but a process. How long does the process last?

An insight for you to embrace is that a guerrilla marketing attack is neverending. It has a beginning, a middle but never an end, for it is a process. You improve it, perfect it, change it, even pause in it. But you never stop it completely.

Of all the steps in succeeding with a guerrilla marketing attack, maintaining it takes the most time. You spend a relatively brief time developing the attack and inaugurating it, but you spend the life of your business maintaining, monitoring and improving your attack. At no point should you ever take anything for granted. At no point should you fall into the pit of self-satisfaction because your attack is working. Never forget that others, very smart and motivated competitors, are studying you and doing their utmost to surpass you in the marketing arena.

Guerrillas thrive and prosper because they understand the deeper meanings of the phrases "customer base" and "long term commitment." This enables them to reinvent their marketing -- just as long as they are firm in their commitment to their existing customers and prospects. An attack without flexibility is in danger of failing. But that flexibility does not allow you to take your eyes off the needs of your customers.

Keep alert for new niches at which you can aim your attack. Large companies don't have the luxury of profiting from a narrow niche. No matter how successful your attack, never lose contact with your customers. If you do, you lose your competitive advantage over huge companies that have too many layers of bureaucracy for personal contact. Guerrilla marketing is always authentic marketing and never acts or feels to be impersonal, by-the-number marketing. It never feels like selling.

"Marketing Management" author Philip Kotler, says "Authentic marketing is not the art of selling what you make but knowing what to make. It is the art of identifying and understanding customer needs and creating solutions that deliver satisfaction to the customers, profits to the producers and benefits for the stakeholders. Market innovation is gained by creating customer satisfaction through product innovation, product quality and customer service. If these are absent, no amount of advertising, sales promotion or salesmanship can compensate."

Your attack must be characterized by a very strong tie with your own target audience. You know them. You serve them. They know it. Guerrilla attacks do not suffer from your lack of resources, but instead prosper because lack of capital makes them more willing to try new and innovative ideas, concepts ripe for guerrillas but not for huge companies.

Your attack will succeed in direct relationship to how narrow-minded you can be. Guerrillas have the insight that precision strengthens an attack. They know the enormous difference between their prospects and their prime prospects. They are aware of the gigantic chasm

separating their customers from their best customers. This perspective enables them to narrow their aim only to the best prospects that marketing money can buy and the finest customers ever to grace their customer list.

They are fully cognizant that it doesn't take much more work to sell a subscription to a magazine than to sell a single issue. That's why their marketing attack is devoted to motivating people to subscribe to their businesses mentally.

Once they have a customer, they do all they can to intensify the relationship, and they do not treat all customers and prospects equally. Consider the menswear chain with a database of 47,000 names. Mailings are never more than 3,000 at a time. Who receives the mail? Says the owner, "Only the people appropriate to mail to." When he received trousers of a specific style, he mailed only to those customers to whom he was certain they'd appeal -- and enjoyed a 30% response rate.

The cost of his mailing was a tiny fraction of the size of his profits. There's not a chance of reveling in a healthy response like that unless you're targeting your mailing with absolute precision. It's something you're going to have to do in a world where postal charges and paper prices are both slated to increase. Unless you're hitting the bullseye, you're wasting your marketing investment. And unless you're treating your marketing as a continuing process, you're wasting everybody's time, including your own.