

by Jay Conrad Levinson

Marketing is a waste of money and time if you're not attuned to the real world. Reality is not necessarily what you want it to be or what it used to be. Instead, reality is what really is. To many marketers, that's a major problem, but to guerrilla, it's an inviting chance to stand apart from the competition.

Reality to guerrillas is the realization that their prospects are constantly being bombarded with marketing, with enticing offers, with cut-rate and cut-throat pricing, and with innovative products and services. Guerrillas know that they're not marketing in a vacuum, but in a world where many factors, other than their own hopes and dreams, influence the way their prospects will act.

Guerrillas are aware of the reality of the immense role of technology in attracting and serving customers. They know that if they're not keeping up, they're probably falling behind. If they're not embracing current technology that allows them to render superlative service, their competitors may be using it to woo away their customers.

They're aware of the precious nature of time in their prospects' lives so they do all they can not to waste that time. They're aware, most of all, of their prospects' priorities. Often, the top priority is the attaining of profits, but that's not always the case. That's why they learn all they can about what's important and not important to their prospects and customers.

The real world to guerrillas takes ten important factors into account:

1. The state of the economy must always be considered, for it dictates which marketing tactics will work best. In a down economy, guerrillas adjust their marketing by speaking more to customers than prospects and by working like demons to gain referral and follow-up business.
2. The competitive scene is part of reality because competitors have more information than ever before, and they use it to fuel to their marketing. You just can't ignore competitors who are out to win the hearts and minds of your customers.
3. The latest technology is reality because it enables guerrillas to produce more marketing tools, to expose their message to more people, and to reduce their marketing costs as they become increasingly involved with desktop publishing, the Internet, speedy communications and affordable new media.
4. The news of the day has a major impact on reality. Your prospects keep up with the news and they react accordingly. Unless you do the same, expect the worst.
5. Reality also includes your marketing budget because you must live with it and make it stretch to its fullest extent. Now, more than ever, that budget enables guerrillas to market actively but not expensively.

6. Reality is the inevitable clutter of other marketing, the blizzard of direct mail each day, the increasing sophistication of marketing techniques.

7. Reality is knowing that your prospects have things on their mind other than your marketing and why they should buy what you're selling. Guerrillas adapt their marketing to that reality by facing it squarely.

8. Reality is knowing the difference between a motivating marketing message and a clever marketing message. Many marketers haven't a clue as to the difference and often mistake the two.

9. Alas, reality is also a ho-hum attitude on the public's mind when it comes to marketing. They have many things to consider each day and you can be pretty certain that marketing is not one of them.

10. Finally, reality is knowing the value of commitment to a plan, patience with a program and restraint in making changes. Reality is seeing clearly that marketing is not an event, but a process. It's a process that takes time. If you're not willing to invest that time, along with your money and your energy, you're living in an unreal world. Guerrillas strive to live in the same world as their prospects and customers.

Many people entrusted with marketing for their company are still operating in the dark ages. They strive to make a sale with a marketing message rather than aiming to obtain consent to send more marketing materials. They expect marketing to take affect immediately when you and I both know that great things don't happen overnight, especially profits generated by superb marketing.

One of the keys to marketing success in this new century is not to learn everything about anything, but to learn one thing after another. The best place to start is in the real world, here and now.