



Guerilla Marketing: Easy and Inexpensive Strategies for Making Big Profits from Your Small Business

By Jay Conrad Levinson

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- * strategies for marketing on the Internet (explaining when and precisely how to use it)
- * tips for using new technology, such as podcasting and automated marketing
- * programs for targeting prospects and cultivating repeat and referral business
- * management lessons in the age of telecommuting and freelance employees

Guerrilla Marketing is the entrepreneur's marketing bible -- and the book every small-business owner should have on his or her shelf.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jay Conrad Levinson is the author of more than a dozen books in the Guerrilla Marketing series. A former vice president and creative director at J. Walter Thompson Advertising and Leo Burnett Advertising, he is the chairman of Guerrilla Marketing International, a consulting firm serving large and small businesses worldwide.

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What Is Guerrilla Marketing Today?

Marketing is every bit of contact your company has with anyone in the outside world. Every bit of contact. That means a lot of marketing opportunities. It does not mean investing a lot of money.

The meaning is clear: Marketing includes the name of your business; the determination of whether you will be selling a product or a service; the method of manufacture or servicing; the color, size, and shape of your product; the packaging; the location of your business; the advertising, public relations, Web site, branding, e-mail signature, voicemail message on your machine, and sales presentation; the telephone inquiries; the sales training; the problem solving; the growth plan and the referral plan; and the people who represent you, you, and your follow-up. Marketing includes your idea for your brand, your service, your attitude, and the passion you bring to your business. If you gather from this that marketing is a complex process, you're right.

Marketing is the art of getting people to change their minds — or to maintain their mindsets if they're already inclined to do business with you. People must either switch brands or purchase a type of product or service that has never existed before. That's asking a lot of them. Every little thing you do and show and say — not only your advertising or your Web site — is going to affect people's perceptions of you.

That's probably not going to happen in a flash. Or a month. Or even a year. And that's why it's crucial for you to know that marketing is a process, not an event. Marketing may be a series of events, but if you're a guerrilla marketer, marketing has a beginning and a middle but not an ending.

By the way, when I write the word marketing, I'm thinking of your prospects and your current customers. Nothing personal, but when you read the word marketing, you're probably thinking of prospects only. Don't make that mistake. More than half your marketing time should be devoted to your existing customers. A cornerstone of guerrilla marketing is customer follow-up. Without it, all that you've invested into getting those customers is like dust in the wind.

Marketing is also the truth made fascinating.

When you view marketing from the vantage point of the guerrilla, you realize that it's your opportunity to help your prospects and customers succeed. They want to succeed at earning more money, building their company, losing weight, attracting a mate, becoming more fit, or quitting smoking. You can help them. You can show them how to achieve their goal. Marketing is not about you. It's about them. I hope you never forget that.

Marketing, if you go about things in the right way, is also a circle. The circle begins with your idea for bringing revenue into your life. Marketing becomes a circle when you have the blessed patronage of repeat and referral customers. The better able you are to view marketing as a circle, the more you'll concentrate on those repeat and referral people. A pleasant side effect of that perspective is that you'll invest less money in marketing, but your profits will consistently climb.

Marketing is more of a science every day as we learn new ways to measure and predict behavior, influence

people, and test and quantify marketing. It's more of a science as psychologists tell us more and more about human behavior.

Marketing is also unquestionably an art form because writing is an art, drawing is an art, photography is an art, dancing is an art, music is an art, editing is an art, and acting is an art. Put them all together, and they spell marketing — probably the most eclectic art form the world has ever known.

But for now, brush aside those notions that marketing is a science and an art form. Drill into your mind the idea that at its core, marketing is a business. And the purpose of a business is to earn profits. If science and art help a business earn those profits, they're probably being masterminded by a guerrilla marketer — the kind of business owner who seeks conventional goals, such as profits and joy, but achieves them using unconventional means.

A bookstore owner had the misfortune of being located between two enormous bookselling competitors. One day, this bookstore owner came to work to see that the competitor on his right had unfurled a huge banner: "Monster Anniversary Sale! Prices slashed 50%!" The banner was larger than his entire storefront. Worse yet, the competitor to the left of his store had unveiled an even larger banner: "Gigantic Clearance Sale! Prices reduced by 60%!" Again, the banner dwarfed his storefront. What was the owner of the little bookstore in the middle to do? Being a guerrilla marketer, he created his own banner and hung it out front, simply saying "Main Entrance." Guerrilla marketers do not rely on the brute force of an outsized marketing budget. Instead, they rely on the brute force of a vivid imagination. Today, they are different from traditional marketers in twenty ways. I used to compare guerrilla marketing with textbook marketing, but now that this book is a textbook in so many universities, I must compare it with traditional marketing. If you were to analyze the ways that marketing has changed in the twenty-first century, you'd discover that it has changed in the same twenty ways that guerrilla marketing differs from the old-fashioned brand of marketing.

1. Traditional marketing has always maintained that to market properly, you must invest money. Guerrilla marketing maintains that if you want to invest money, you can — but you don't have to if you are willing to invest time, energy, imagination, and information.
2. Traditional marketing is so enshrouded by mystique that it intimidates many business owners, who aren't sure whether marketing includes sales or a Web site or PR. Because they are so intimidated and worried about making mistakes, they simply don't do it. Guerrilla marketing completely removes the mystique and exposes marketing for exactly what it really is — a process that you control — rather than the other way around.
3. Traditional marketing is geared toward big business. Before I wrote the original *Guerrilla Marketing* in 1984, I couldn't find any books on marketing for companies that invested less than \$300,000 monthly. Although it is now true that many Fortune 500 companies buy *Guerrilla Marketing* by the caseload to distribute to their sales and marketing people, the essence of guerrilla marketing — the soul and the spirit of guerrilla marketing — is small business: companies with big dreams but tiny budgets.
4. Traditional marketing measures its performance by sales or responses to an offer, hits on a Web site, or store traffic. Those are the wrong numbers to focus on. Guerrilla marketing reminds you that the main number that merits your attention is the size of your profits. I've seen many companies break their sales records while losing money in the process. Profits are the only numbers that tell you the truth you should be seeking and striving for. If it doesn't earn a profit for you, it's probably not guerrilla marketing.
5. Traditional marketing is based on experience and judgment, which is a fancy way of saying "guesswork." But guerrilla marketers cannot afford wrong guesses, so it is based as much as possible on psychology — laws of human behavior. For example, 90 percent of all purchase decisions are made in the unconscious mind, that inner deeper part of your brain. We now know a slam-dunk manner of accessing that unconscious mind: repetition. Think it over a moment, and you'll begin to have an inkling of how the process of guerrilla marketing works. Repetition is paramount.
6. Traditional marketing suggests that you grow your business and then diversify. That kind of thinking gets

many companies into hot water because it leads them away from their core competency. Guerrilla marketing suggests that you grow your business, if growth is what you want, but be sure to maintain your focus — for it's that focus that got you to where you are in the first place.

7. Traditional marketing says that you should grow your business linearly by adding new customers one at a time. But that's a slow and expensive way to grow. So guerrilla marketing says that the way to grow a business is geometrically — by enlarging the size of each transaction, engaging in more transactions per sales cycle with each customer, tapping the enormous referral power of each customer, and growing the old-fashioned way at the same time. If you're growing your business in four different directions at once, it's tough not to show a tidy profit.

8. Traditional marketing puts all its effort on making the sale, under the false notion that marketing ends once that sale is made. Guerrilla marketing reminds you that 68 percent of all business lost is lost owing to apathy after the sale — ignoring customers after they've made the purchase. For this reason, guerrilla marketing preaches fervent follow-up — continually staying in touch with customers — and listening to them. Guerrillas never lose customers because of inattention to them.

9. Traditional marketing advises you to scan the horizon to determine which competitors you ought to obliterate. Guerrilla marketing advises you to scan that same horizon to determine which businesses have the same kind of prospects and standards as you do — so that you can cooperate with them in joint marketing efforts. By doing so, you're expanding your marketing reach, but you're reducing the cost of your marketing because you're sharing it with others. The term that guerrillas use for this outlook is fusion marketing. "Fuse it or lose it" is their motto. You're watching TV and see a commercial for McDonald's. Midway through, you realize that it's really a commercial for Coke, and by the time it's over, you see that all along, it was for the latest Disney movie. That's fusion marketing. And that's just some of the big guys who do it — like FedEx and Kinko's, too — but most of the fusion marketing in the world, as led by Japan, happens on the level of small business.

10. Traditional marketing urges you to have a logo that represents your company — a visual means of identifying yourself. Points made to the eye are 78 percent more memorable than points made to the ear. Guerrilla marketing cautions you that a logo is passé these days — because all it does is remind people of the name of your company. Instead, guerrilla marketers have a meme that represents their company — a visual or verbal symbol that communicates an entire idea, such as international traffic signs. In these days of record-breaking clutter, a meme says the most in the least time. It is a godsend on the Internet, where people may spend no more than a few seconds at your Web site. We'll talk a bit more about memes up ahead. It's a new word that was coined in 1976. And it's a guerrilla idea that can revolutionize your profit-and-loss statement.

11. Traditional marketing has always been "me" marketing. Visit almost any Web site, and you'll see "About our company." "About our history." "About our product." "About our management." But people don't care about you. Me marketing makes them sleepy. That's why guerrillas always practice "you" marketing, in which every word and every idea is about the customer, the visitor to a Web site. Don't take this personally, but people simply do not care about your company. What they care about is themselves. And if you can talk to them about themselves, you'll have their full attention.

12. Traditional marketing has always thought about what it could take from a customer. Guerrillas have a full understanding of the lifetime value of a customer, but they also concern themselves with what they can give a customer. They're always thinking of things they might give away for free, and now that we're smack dab in the middle of the information age, they try to give away free and valuable information — such as booklets, informative Web sites, brochures, TV infomercials — wherever they can. Don't forget what I said about marketing as your opportunity to help your prospects and customers succeed at attaining their goals. It's also your golden chance to help them solve their problems. Can you do it for free? If you can, you're a guerrilla.

13. Traditional marketing would have you believe that advertising works, that having a Web site works, that direct mail and e-mail work. To those antiquated notions, guerrilla marketing says nonsense, nonsense, and nonsense. Advertising doesn't work. Not anymore it doesn't. Web sites? Get serious. People learn daily that

they are paths to financial oblivion and shattered dreams. Direct mail and e-mail used to work. But not anymore. So what does work? Guerrillas know that marketing combinations work. If you run a series of ads, have a Web site, and then do a direct mailing or an e-mailing, they'll all work, and they'll each help the others work. The days of single-weapon marketing have been relegated to the past. We're living in an era when marketing combinations open the doors to marketing success. I know a small retailer who runs small ads and short radio spots — all directing people to his Web site. That Web site motivates people to visit his showroom, where he sells his \$3,000 beds briskly, effortlessly, and profitably. The ads and spots, combined with his Web site, are the marketing combination that brings home the bacon for him.

14. Traditional marketers, at the end of the month, count money. Guerrillas count new relationships. Knowing that people actually do want relationships, guerrillas do everything they can to establish and nurture a bond between themselves and each individual customer. They certainly do not disdain money, as indicated by their penchant for profits, but they know deep down that long-term relationships are the keys to the vault.

15. Traditional marketing has rarely emphasized technology, primarily because the technology of yesterday was too expensive, limited, and complicated. But that has changed completely, as today's technology gives small businesses an unfair advantage. It enables them to do what the big spenders do without the necessity to spend big. Guerrilla marketing requires that you be very technocozy; if you're not, your technophobia is holding back your small business. If you suffer from that affliction, make an appointment with your technoshrink immediately. Technophobia is fatal these days.

16. Traditional marketing has always aimed its message at groups: the larger the group, the better. Guerrilla marketing aims its message at individuals or, if it must be a group, the smaller the group, the better. Traditional marketing broadcasts; guerrilla marketing narrowcasts, microcasts, and nanocasts. Let's say that you market a product for erectile dysfunction. If you run a TV spot on network television, that's broadcasting. If you run it on a cable channel devoted to men, that's narrowcasting. If you run it on a cable channel program focused on men's health, that's microcasting. If you run it on a cable channel program centered on men's sexual issues, that's nanocasting. The smaller the group, the bigger the bull's-eye.

17. Traditional marketing is, for the most part, unintentional. Although it embraces the big guns of marketing — radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, and Web sites — it tends to ignore the little details, such as how your phone is answered, the décor of your office, the attire worn by your employees. Guerrilla marketing is always intentional. It pays close attention to all the details of contact with the outside world, ignoring nothing and realizing the stunning importance of those tiny but supercharged details.

18. Traditional marketing believes that you can make the sale with marketing. That may have been so a long, long time ago, but that doesn't often happen anymore. That's why guerrilla marketing alerts you to the reality that marketing today can hope only to gain people's consent to receive more marketing materials from you. Most people will withhold their consent, and you've got to love them for doing that, because they're telling you to save your money and not waste it on them. But some will want to learn more, giving rise to one of the newer terms in the dictionary: opt in. A woman operating a summer camp in the Northeast runs ads in the camping directories in the back of several magazines. She does not attempt to sell the camping experience, only to get people to request her free DVD. She has a booth at local camping shows and gives away the same DVD. People view her DVD and see happy campers, trained counselors, beautiful surroundings, and superb equipment. Does the DVD attempt to sell the camping experience? No. It simply attempts to motivate people to call for an in-home consultation, at which more than 80 percent of parents sign their kids up for camp. And not just one kid: sometimes, a brother or sister as well. And don't forget the cousins and classmates who might come along for the summer. And we're not talking just one summer. Summer camp can be for four or five summers or more. And all because the camp director didn't go for the sale. She merely went for consent, and then she broadened that consent. The whole idea is wonderfully described by Seth Godin in his landmark book, *Permission Marketing*.

19. Traditional marketing is a monologue. One person does all the talking or writing. Everyone else listens or reads. Hardly the basis of a relationship. Guerrilla marketing is a dialogue. One person talks or writes.

Someone else responds. Interactivity begins. The customer is involved with the marketing. That's one of the joys of the Internet. Relationships grow from dialogues. You've got to invite dialogue by asking people to register for something, sign up for your newsletter, send for a freebie, enter a contest, vote in an online poll. And you've got to respond to them. Small businesses can do this. Big corporations aren't usually quite as fast and flexible on their feet.

20. Traditional marketing identifies the heavy weapons of marketing: radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, and the Internet. Guerrilla marketing identifies two hundred weapons of marketing, and many of them are free.

The heart of guerrilla marketing is the proper utilization of those weapons you choose to use. A basic precept of guerrilla marketing calls for you to be aware of all two hundred weapons, to utilize and test many of them, and then to eliminate those that failed to hit it out of the park for you. The idea is for you to end up with an arsenal of lethal and proven weapons.

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