

# *The Anti-Venture Capital Guide* <sup>TM</sup>

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Best of the Web Entrepreneurship Articles

## **Guerilla Marketing**

**When customers ask, "So what?"**

By Hal Pawluk

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## **Guerrilla Marketing**

What really works is "Gorilla Marketing" because dominance is what it takes to win.

Our focusing on dominance rocketed a product from the 6% share it had managed to eke out after 8 years of struggling up to 24% market share in just 12 months - and increased the value of the company by \$100,000,000.

We moved a stagnating company from virtual invisibility to second place in their category in one year while increasing sales 75% - with a minimal budget.

And we launched a product and company that almost instantly dominated the marketplace and held that position for over a decade.

*(You might want to print this out and read it later - there's a lot here)*

### **Guerrilla marketing is tactics.**

Sniping at the competition has its place in marketing planning and execution, and everything you've learned about guerrilla marketing is useful after you've decided on your strategy. But it's not the real road to major marketing success:

*To succeed you need to dominate.*

Dominance lowers your cost of sales and increases your profits, allowing you to extend your products and markets while working in what amounts to a financial "comfort zone."

And this doesn't mean that you have to own the entire universe: being a big frog in a small puddle has a lot of competitive advantages.

So if you can't dominate the entire market, pick your spot to dominate a category. If you can't control the category, then control a segment. And if you can't do that, slice and dice the marketplace (and maybe tweak your products, or at least your presentation) to define and create a niche that you can own.

You can do it without spending a fortune, and definitely without even having the best product on the market. (If you don't believe that, take a look at the leaders in any category).

### **So how do you start?**

The toughest part is ignoring what you build and determining what the market wants to buy.

Because the truth is that all of your astonishing specifications, your elegant lines of code, don't really matter nearly as much as you might think. The classic marketing example is that people don't need drills, they need holes. In high technology markets, they don't need hardware, they need horsepower. They don't need software, they need solutions.

They'd pay a premium for 6 pounds of green cheese in a black box, if it solved their problems.

The fact is that they don't care about you at all - they just want to know what's in it for them. And too many business people just don't know how to deal with that.

### **Take this simple test.**

Draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper and in the left column list what's most important about your product. You'll want at least three items, but don't list more than six. Focus on what's most important to your prospects rather than just listing

specifications.

Now for each item listed on the left, use the right-hand column to write down what you'd say if a skeptical user asked: "So what?" Don't think about it too long - just give a snap answer and write it down. Doing it this way, I've found that I knew things I didn't even know I knew, because it seems to bypass that ultra-logical internal censor most of us have peering over our shoulders.

If you do have to make an entry on the right because the entry on the left didn't already answer the "So what," you're on the right track to finding the message your prospects need to hear for you to succeed. It may take a few passes, with feedback from prospects if you can get it, but it's worth all the time and effort.

I use this technique all the time. I've found that the left-hand list tells you what a product *is*, but the right-hand column tells you what it's *for*.

And that's what prospects are looking to buy.

(This is a minor digression, but I don't mean a survey or a focus group when I say "feedback from prospects". The Edsel experience pretty well proved once and for all that what respondents say isn't necessarily what they'll do when it's time to put their money on the line. You need market feedback, but what counts is behavior, so you're far better off doing a store front intercept survey, for instance, rather than a mail or phone survey.)

### **Then define the perfect buyer.**

Now that you have a better picture of what you really have to sell (rather than just knowing what you make), you need a clear, precise picture of who will buy it.

You can't sell 'em until you tell 'em, and you can't tell 'em if you don't know who you're talking to. The "better mousetrap" school of marketing *never* worked.

To focus myself at this stage, I run a mental sales scenario: Assume that I'll succeed if I can make just one sale a year - *but* I'm only allowed one pitch a year.

Now - who exactly should I pitch? Job title? Job? Company size? Level of experience with our kind of product? Age? Prior experience? What is being used now? Why? Etc.

While you're doing this you may find more than one ideal prospect, but each will represent different market segments that you can focus on. There's a lot of software, for instance, that's sold to end-users and to programmers. Their needs and thus your presentations are necessarily different (what they buy), even though both buyers get exactly the same product (what you make).

It's worth taking a lot of time to get all of this right, because once you can define your ideal prospect(s), you've got it knocked. The "perfect buyer" falls in the middle of a bell curve of prospects with similar wants and needs, and the positioning, communications and distribution strategies and tactics developed to sell this one prospect apply to most of your prospect universe.

It works like gangbusters for our clients. Please get in touch to get it working for you.

**Hal Pawluk** is a consultant whose marketing and advertising career has been in the high tech arena, with emphasis on start-up companies and new product launches.

You can visit his site at [www.pawluk.com](http://www.pawluk.com)

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