Top 10 MOST IGNORED Rules of Marketing

#2 - Customers HATE Surprises

They do... BIG time.

If you're not closing as many sales as you'd like, I'll bet it's because your prospects aren't familiar with you, don't know you, don't trust you, and see a big surprise coming. And, for most people, what they can't see and what they don't know is ALWAYS bad.

Not all customers hate surprises. There are "early adopters" who thrive on newness and surprise. They make up 15% or less of the total market and they're the adventurers, extreme sports enthusiasts, risk-takers, and folks who just love NOT knowing what awaits them around the next corner.

If your product or service fits this market then, by all means, go for it. Make sure you spell out all your product's fancy, new, whiz-bang features and let your prospects and customers know that nobody else on their block will have what they've got. I'll caution you, though – while these high octane people get their kicks from winning a triathlon or base jumping off a cliff or closing a huge business deal, when it comes to buying TVs, food, cars, personal services, and the like, **most of them hate surprises just as much as the rest of us.**

So, if your business doesn't have a fancy, new, whizzy thing-a-ma-doodle to sell to early adopters and you want to sell your product to the remaining 85% of the market, you need to stay low on the surprise meter.

And, just so you know I'm completely daft, Rule #X is **Customers LOVE Surprises** which is also 100% true. What happens is that customers only love surprises **<u>after</u>** they hate them.

Still with me? Ok, I'll quit beating around the bush. Here's the rule in plain English...

Customers buy from businesses they're familiar with. They buy from people they know, like, and who make them feel comfortable.

Years ago when I worked at IBM, we relied on this rule. There was a popular saying in the industry, "nobody ever got fired for buying IBM". IBM was the familiar, safe, no surprises option

The only reason people stop buying what's familiar is when the familiar company gives them the royal screwing – awful products, abysmal service, gouging prices or some combination of the three.**

Large customers spend millions on branding. They know when we're subjected to a myriad of options when we walk into a store we'll immediately **reach for the familiar name or logo**.

Your business must be familiar, comfortable, like a favorite easy chair or a perfectly worn pair of shoes. It's an easy see this rule at work... just look around you. The "no surprises", familiarity rule is why:

- incumbent politicians have an overwhelming advantage over challengers
- voters cast their ballots for the guy "they'd most like to have a beer with"
- Coke was forced to bring back Coke Classic
- we stop on the radio station that's playing a song we've heard hundreds of times before
- an animated gecko fronts for a very successful insurance marketing campaign
- star athletes make millions endorsing products
- Oprah Winfrey could talk her way to billionaire-dom
- the top two companies in any industry usually pull in more revenue than the next eight combined.

And it's **why your best customers keep coming back** over and over again.

Your marketing MUST reflect a thorough understanding of this rule. Use the rule and you'll prosper. Break the rule and you'll pay. It just that simple.

Keep your business in front of both your prospects and customers so it stays familiar. They should see your business everywhere – at your location, on your website, in your newsletter, on FaceBook/MySpace/LinkedIn, at businesses you partner with, in Google's local search results, on local TV and radio talk shows, in the newspaper, on pens, pads, calendars... EVERYWHERE.

Your business must become the familiar, no risk, no surprises, sure thing that most of us look for when we're ready to part with our cash.

Just so we're on the same page here, lets cover one more thing. There's a hierarchy we follow when we're deciding on how to spend our money. We go with:

1. the company we feel comfortable with. We stick with the familiar – as long as we're getting a reasonable amount of satisfaction
2. a recommendation from someone we know (or think we know)
3. the company we've heard of before – even if we don't know anything about it
4. the company with the lowest price

As long as your business is makes your customers **comfortable**, takes care of their **needs**, supports their **desires**, solves their **problems**, and remains **positively familiar**, you'll never worry about them running to a competitor to save a few bucks.

We've all heard the saying "familiarity breeds contempt." In business, familiarity breeds a huge litter of great, loyal customers.

**** FYI:** That's exactly what happened to IBM in the late 80's (after I'd left!). The micro-computer came into its own. Unix-based operating systems became more reliable and therefore more viable as enterprise computing platforms. Since IBM's micro-computer division wasn't agile enough to keep up with the likes of Microsoft and Compaq, they lost much of the desktop business. Their minicomputers couldn't match the power and flexibility of PCs networked together with Novell servers – so that division died a horrible death as well. Even their strength – high end mainframes – got hammered since their hardware was prohibitively expenses and their software was bloated. With these uncompetitive offerings and legendary service that no longer provided any benefit, customers that had purchased nothing but IBM equipment for decades began to shed Big Blue (IBM's nickname) like a bad habit.