

What small and midsize businesses need to know about marketing:

Your Questions Answered

How should we measure marketing ROI?

How should we leverage social media?

What agency-compensation alternatives are available to us?

How much should we be spending on marketing and where?

What kinds of skills and talent do we need to achieve our marketing goals?

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INTRODUCTION

■ BY JENNIFER ROONEY jrooney@adage.com

THE TECTONIC SHIFTS taking place in the marketing and advertising worlds are enough to humble and challenge even the largest multinational corporations; that much is clear from the countless missteps and successes in a world in which brands can live or die at the hand of 140-character tweets. The rapid rise of digital communications has given way to permutations of marketing and media that companies from Procter & Gamble to Virgin America, Kraft to Bank of America have been working to understand and leverage.

But what of the smaller marketers, those smaller businesses in smaller markets with smaller budgets? Their needs are no less critical, their challenges no less daunting and their questions as to how to excel in an ever-evolving media landscape no less valid.

In this white paper, Ad Age takes the guesswork out of the most pressing questions for small and midsize marketers by posing them to those who know the answers best: executives at small advertising agencies, who intimately understand the challenges faced by smaller businesses.

For this white paper, we surveyed several of Ad Age's Small Agency Diary bloggers, leaders in the world of smaller clients with big concerns: **Bart Cleveland**, partner-creative director, McKee Wallwork Cleveland; **Marc Brownstein**, president, Brownstein Group; **Eric Webber**, managing partner, Webber/McJ Communications; **Tom Martin**, founder, Converse Digital; **Phil Johnson**, CEO, PJA Advertising and Marketing; **Curt Hanke**, co-founder and account director, Shine Advertising Co.; and **Darryl Ohrt**, president, Humongo.

We asked them each the same five questions that address the topics of most importance to small and midsize companies:

1. How should we measure marketing ROI?
2. How should we leverage social media?
3. What agency-compensation alternatives are available to us?
4. How much should we be spending on marketing and where?
5. What kinds of skills and talent do we need to achieve our marketing goals?

Through their candid answers, this white paper provides insight to help small and midsize businesses continue to navigate the challenges as well as identify and capitalize on the real opportunities that exist for them. And in their answers are directives all marketers, both large and small, can learn from and build on.

1. How should we measure marketing ROI?

PHIL JOHNSON: Before you can measure marketing ROI, you need to identify the business problem you want to solve. Do you need to create more sales leads? Do you need to increase awareness of your company? Do you need to fix a misperception about your company? Measuring ROI is figuring out whether you have been effective in solving one of those problems.

To start with the easy stuff, you can set up campaigns and promotions that can be measured directly. Our favorite local burger chain, B Good, uses Twitter to promote a special offer, like free milkshakes between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. With a little effort, they can see how that promotion increased traffic.

What's more challenging is to measure the ROI across all of your marketing activities. At PJA, we often think about four data points when developing a measurement plan. Each one produces data that add up to a complete ROI story:

■ **Reach.** This is the traditional way that people have always measured advertising campaigns. Reach tells you how effectively you're broadcasting a message. It measures how many impressions you've made on an audience and their ability to recall what you're communicating. Media partners can help you get this data.

■ **Response.** To get more granular, you probably want to know how people have engaged with your marketing campaign. Did people click on banners, search for key words, watch videos, and in general take the action we wanted? By itself, response rates don't measure ROI, but they do provide a lot of data about the effectiveness of a campaign.

■ **Attitudes.** One of the big payoffs of social media is that it makes it possible to measure attitudes—positive and negative—that people have about a company or a campaign. You can look at the tone of blog and Twitter conversations to evaluate emotional responses. Specific tools like Radian 6 can help you get this information. You can also use pre-

and post-campaign surveys to see how you have influenced people.

■ **ROI.** What did I get for all the marketing money I spent? It's the Holy Grail. It's what every company wants. It's what every agency promises. Pursue it, but remember that it's rarely clear-cut and requires that someone do the hard work of connecting the dots between the sales database, Google analytics, and all the data described above. You need to understand where customers came from and why they bought.

It's complex, but don't despair. You can take some small steps that move you in the right direction. Google Analytics is a great tool to measure the effect of outbound marketing activities such as e-newsletters, blogs and Twitter feeds.

ERIC WEBBER: You have to start that conversation very early by defining what success will look like for every project you do. Both sides need to understand each other's expectations. I know that sounds simplistic, but I'm not convinced it happens all that often.

MARC BROWNSTEIN: There is no single answer. Measuring ROI in digital advertising and public relations is much easier than measuring brand awareness, for example. Regardless, at Brownstein Group, we set up a disciplined process with our clients, where we determine the metrics of success and then measure them on a monthly or quarterly basis. In my experience, the hard part is agreeing to the metrics. Our client may want to measure sales/revenue, but if the advertising campaign doesn't fully support a revenue-generating campaign (for insufficient funding, ineffective sales force at the client, or any other number of reasons), then my agency should only be held accountable for results we can control.

DARRYL OHRT: I don't think there's a universal answer to this question, and ultimately it will depend on your marketing goals, your industry and the media

Too often ROI is simply being measured at a transactional level. Brands run a campaign and they measure [its effectiveness] based solely on its ability to drive trackable sales. ROI can be so much broader than that.

that you're using. I guess that sounds like a noncommittal agency response, but I really do believe that every marketing challenge is unique and deserves its own strategy for metrics. Nobody would attach a blanket response to "What should we be doing creatively?" for a campaign. Metrics are just as important and unique to the situation at hand.

CURT HANKE: Virtually every client has more data than ever before. That said, the problem is that these same clients have less time and fewer resources with which to process, analyze or take action based on this data. In a world with so much information, it is far too easy to let the webmetrics go unchecked, the sales reports go unmonitored, and the research benchmarks collect cobwebs.

In terms of measuring ROI, it frankly will be different for almost every brand in every category. Are you a startup or a mature brand? A challenger or a leader? Trying to grow or defend market share? Increasing margins or trying to hold steady in the current economic climate? The fundamental dynamics of your business must drive how you define ROI — and this starts with asking the hard questions about risk and return before you pick up the phone and contact an agency.

With some defined assumptions related to fundamental marketing return, you can then turn to the task of identifying key performance indicators. And don't think of them in generic terms as "indicators of performance," but rather, as "the biggest levers for your business and brand." The key numbers that — if you can make them go north — will make a real difference on your bottom line.

There are a wide range of potential levers out there, varying greatly depending on your category, market position and the like — from foot traffic to web traffic, from Facebook Fans to free-trial users, from search ranking to unaided awareness, from leads to referrals—each of which will ultimately contribute to sales and brand equity.

Bottom line, this means establishing priorities — define what matters the most, and measure and manage it in a proactive manner. Yes, it sounds simple — but it will ultimately mean sacrificing other initiatives further down the priority list. At the end

of the day, it is about making choices for your business and brand — and making sure that they stay top of mind for both you and your organization.

TOM MARTIN: Too often today, ROI is simply being measured at a transactional level. Brands run a campaign today and they measure the effectiveness of the campaign based solely on its ability to drive trackable sales today. But ROI can be so much broader than that. For instance, what if you run an ad campaign that drives an offer and encourages consumers to follow you on Facebook or Twitter? Maybe the campaign doesn't do so well in the sales metric, but what if that same campaign drives 10,000 new followers on Facebook and Twitter? What is the ROI on that future advertising savings as you can now talk to them without paying each time you speak to them? What is the lifetime sales volume of a Facebook fan versus a traditional transactional customer? ROI is about so much more than sales, but companies today are not looking beyond anything other than current sales performance.

BART CLEVELAND: Measuring ROI effectively and realistically depends on several factors, [including] objectives, timeline and current market conditions. This means there is no single answer, except that ROI should be measured and must be designed and agreed upon before the marketing campaign is developed.

Unfortunately, clients can't help but expect ROI to be the cash register ringing immediately. We propose analytics that track effectiveness based on specific marketing objectives. These often include several aspects of effectiveness, sales being one of them. But they can't buy it until they like it, and they can't like it until they know it. There are a lot of points to measure ROI along the way to the cash register.

A particular place ROI should be developed is in social media. Currently, social media is the hot item. Clients may see it as inexpensive and a replacement for traditional marketing. However, measuring the ROI of social media is difficult, even if there is a response component. I heard social-media consultant Jay Baer explain that no matter what anyone says, we're still figuring out marketing through social media.

2. How should we leverage social media?

PHIL JOHNSON: You could write a book on social media, and a couple hundred people already have. There's no shortage of great information on the subject, but let me offer some strongly held opinions.

■ **Social networks like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, and blogs, have changed the way people communicate with each other.** You can't afford to ignore these channels.

■ **Social media is not a panacea.** It does not replace good, traditional marketing. It does, however, work exceedingly well as part of an overall strategy. You still need to do a lot of the hard marketing work around understanding your position and knowing how and where you want to engage people.

■ **One small step that every company should take is to use Twitter to listen to customers and monitor the competition.** You can follow the conversations taking place and then figure out how to get involved.

■ **Content is the lifeblood of social media,** not traditional promotional content. Focus on creating content that people will want to share.

■ **If you haven't done so already, start to develop a mobile strategy for social media.** The overlap between mobile users and the social web continues to grow; more and more users are accessing the social web from a mobile device. By definition, any social-media strategy will need to be grounded in mobile.

ERIC WEBBER: First we have to figure out exactly what social media means. More accurately, we need to be better at defining what the various elements of social media are in terms of what they can (and can't) do for clients. Social media often gets treated like it's the Wild West and anything goes, but in reality, it demands the same discipline and strategic thinking as any other medium—even more so, since the conversation is so direct, personal and immediate. And therein lies the beauty of marketing via social media—the ability to engage with consumers almost as if we're talking to them one-on-one. We leverage

that by making sure we are providing something of value with each contact and aren't just filling the social-media airwaves with noise. Do you have friends who just talk and talk but rarely have anything relevant or interesting to say? Not for long you don't. But that's what a lot of brands are doing with social media.

BART CLEVELAND: The key is to understand what social media is and is not. Then, properly use it, as marketers should any tool of communication. Social media is really nothing more than a conversation between myriad people. The marketer is but one voice in that conversation, even if it's about their product or service. Advertisers who believe social media is a replacement for conventional marketing are in for a rude awakening. Those who believe consumers can be manipulated using social media are in for a bigger surprise. Social media is the consumer's realm. Advertisers may be present, but they won't benefit if they try to wrest away control.

The best course of action is to listen, then join the conversation. Never try to dominate it or control it. Did I mention we should first listen? If advertisers only used social media to listen and respond through other means, such as better consumer experiences, they would be using social media's best advantage.

MARC BROWNSTEIN: It's certainly all the rage now, but I believe in many cases, the dependence on social media for all marketing results has gone too far. I know a CEO of a well-known women's fashion brand who cancelled his traditional media spend in favor of an all-social-media effort. I believe his brand will suffer as a result, since he is only marketing to his existing customer base on Facebook, while his competitor continues to spend with an integrated marketing effort—building the brand and maintaining a dialogue at the same time.

[This is] how we leverage social media at our agency: We chart the digital strategy, create best

Any business that hopes to succeed in the social-media arena must find the right way for their brand to leverage the Facebook platform to its fullest potential. Period.

practices for social media, help our clients start and maintain a dialogue with customers online, then incorporate all of that into a media mix.

DARRYL OHRT: Things you shouldn't be doing: Don't second-guess every decision. Act, and then move. Don't leave this to a committee. Put people in charge, and let them make decisions. Don't have legal approve every tweet. (I know of a brand that actually does this.) Don't assign this to an intern. (Would you have an intern give a quote on your behalf to *The Wall Street Journal*?) Set goals and have a purpose. You should not add a social-media marketing campaign to your plan because you've "been reading it's the thing to do." What do you want to accomplish? How will success be measured?

Some functions are best handled in-house, and some will likely require an agency with the right experience. For the in-house functions, you should trust this to a capable marketing executive who sports a keen understanding of your audience and the plethora of media outlets available in the social sphere. Then give them a budget. Social media is not free. Let this person make decisions, minute-by-minute and day-by-day. And then regroup regularly to review what's working and what needs course-correction.

CURT HANKE: First, let's ask the question in a way that makes more sense for time- and resource-challenged businesses: How should we leverage Facebook? Because the reality is, at this point in time, there is Facebook and then there is quite simply "everything else." (In fact, even some of our larger clients make this same distinction in an effort to make sure they aren't biting off more than they can chew in the rapidly expanding social universe.)

By way of context, there are more than 60 million status updates posted each day on Facebook. More than 3 billion photos are uploaded each month. More than 3.5 million events are created each month. And more than 20 million people

become fans of Facebook pages each day. The reality is that Facebook is no longer a fringe technology for college kids; it is a mainstream medium whose influence continues to grow.

That said, regardless of how much you buy into *The Facebook Imperative*, any business that hopes to succeed in the social-media arena must find the right way for their brand to leverage the Facebook platform to its fullest potential. Period.

For small and midsize businesses, this means finding the way to not just be there, but to be relevant to your customers and prospects. So in pondering how to leverage social media, we are, frankly, back to the same questions that we ask in *Brand Strategy 101*. In short: Who are your customers? What are they doing on Facebook? What makes you unique and meaningful to them in this context? What can you provide to add value to your relationship? How can you support and sustain this relationship? What do you expect to receive as a return—and by when?

Properly executed, a social-media initiative should increase awareness, preference and referrals—culminating in increased loyalty, retention and sales. In other words, the same results as any other effective marketing campaign, social or otherwise.

TOM MARTIN: You should focus on conversational marketing. Stop worrying about interrupting the consumer and driving ad-awareness scores. Instead, focus on gaining permission from the consumer to enter into an ongoing conversation with him about his life, his needs and, where it makes sense, your brand. Be human. Be small again. Let the consumer feel like he knows you as something more than a logo. Let him feel like he has a relationship with you. We can surely aid you in that goal. But first, why do you want/feel you need to be in the social-media space? Unfortunately, social media today is much like website development was in the late '90s. Every company thinks it needs to be there, but precious few have taken the time to plan how they'll use it once they have it.

3. *What agency-compensation alternatives are available to us?*

PHIL JOHNSON: You can always hire an agency and put it on a retainer. That's the traditional model and agencies love it.

For those of you who aren't Fortune 1000 companies, you've got other choices.

If you don't know what marketing problem you have and where to start, it can make sense to define a limited engagement with a marketing consultant. You might as well pay a small amount to find out the most effective solution.

For the vast majority of situations, companies create specifications for a project or program and ask agencies to bid against it. And most of those agencies will prepare an estimate based on time and materials. This can be perplexing for a company when it tries to compare a wide range of pricing from different agencies. You're not only evaluating price. Consider the quality of the team, its knowledge of your business, the success of its work, and its level of passion to help you.

There's a lot of talk about performance-based models. They depend on long-term engagement and putting metrics in place that can legitimately show what the agency contributed to the bottom line.

We've had a lot of success with guaranteed-lead programs, usually run by publishers, where you only pay for the leads that are delivered.

An agency's value is cumulative. You want a relationship that continues to contribute over time. Pay a fair price, and invest for the long term.

ERIC WEBBER: Since a lot of small agencies are dealing with startups or clients who might have more flexibility in paying their partners, it seems like we as a group are in a better position to explore alternative compensation arrangements. Performance-based incentives can be tricky to arrange and measure, but the idea makes sense. With traditional compensation, agencies get paid the same thing for an idea that doesn't move the needle at all as they do for an idea that, say, brings a huge increase in

sales to the client.

For some clients, we are willing to take stock in lieu of cash, which also gives us a vested interest in the long-term health of the brand. I wouldn't say we work any differently for a client depending on how it is paying us, but we do like the idea of having skin in the game, and it seems like more clients lately seem to understand and appreciate the risk/reward angle.

BART CLEVELAND: The best alternative is profitable compensation. Kidding aside, an agency should be paid for what it does when it does it. Clients should not pay for what they don't need. We charge reasonable prices based on approved budgets. We carefully monitor and report on managing our clients' marketing plans and budgets over the year. We do a review at the end of each client's fiscal year to assess whether there should be adjustments in compensation. We are in relationships we value, and we don't mind investing in our clients. In fact, it's in our nature. I'm sure this is why all our clients want us to be profitable.

MARC BROWNSTEIN: Many agencies/clients talk about their willingness to consider alternative compensation structures, but when it comes down to implementing them, it seems there's always something complicating the efforts. That said, there are a few results-based alternatives, such as pay-for-performance (this is often suggested for public relations and digital ad campaigns); fee plus bonus (where retainer fees are exceeded by bonuses paid for meeting goals); and project-based compensation (where an agency is engaged and paid on a transactional basis).

DARRYL OHRT: We love working on a time and materials basis. I really believe this is a fair model for both agency and client. If budgets are accurately communicated up front, an agency can plan accordingly and remains profitable, and the client gets great value.

Both clients and agencies talk a good game when it comes to new ways of compensation, but the hard reality is that there is still a lot of resistance—on both sides—to truly exploring new methods.

Alternately, designating a flat fee based on the value of a project is always interesting, but ultimately feels less than honest for one side or the other. No client wants its agency working on a 600% margin, and no agency deserves to be working for weeks without fees.

Opinions on this subject vary wildly, and I don't believe there's one sure-fire method that's best for everyone. Ultimately, you need to expect your agency to be profitable on the work they perform for you, and you'll need to feel that you received great value for your investment.

CURT HANKE: Both clients and agencies talk a good game when it comes to new ways of compensation, but the hard reality is that there is still a lot of resistance—on both sides—to truly exploring new methods.

Every client, category and relationship is different. There is no cookie-cutter compensation model, just as there is no one-size-fits-all campaign idea. That said, here are three alternatives to traditional agency-compensation models (hourly rates, retainers, project fees) that we have used with different clients over the past few years:

■ **Equity.** Are you willing to give up equity in your business? At Shine, we have employed this approach for startups in particular—be it a new brand altogether, or a new product seeking to find adequate funding. This creates the most literal partnership between agency and client, given that their interests are truly united. However, it also requires that both parties give the most—for a client, true ownership in its business; for an agency, a longer

compensation time horizon.

■ **Key metrics.** In this approach, the agency “bets” a percentage of its fees on key metrics. This can be anything from awareness and traffic to even leads and sales. The closer the metric to the overall sales figure (read: more things beyond an agency's control), the less the agency will likely be willing to risk (and/or the bigger the voice the agency will want to have in how you run your business). Further, note that if an agency exceeds the defined metrics, it is expected that it will receive “bonus” compensation—beyond what a client would have paid in a typical fee-only relationship. This is where we've seen most clients back out. Their budgets are their budgets; while it makes sense that if an agency exceeds an agreed-upon goal it should receive additional compensation, budgets typically don't work that way.

■ **Value-based compensation.** In short: What is it worth to you? For decades, consulting firms and design shops alike have been doing business in a value-based compensation model. Define what the engagement is worth, as well as assumptions of work scope involved (for example, rounds of revisions). Stay on track, bill the value; enough said.

At the end of the day, agency compensation is all about asking the hard questions up front. What are you trying to accomplish? How much risk tolerance do you have? What are you willing to invest? And what is a fair value for the services an agency will provide? Both clients and agencies can dance around trying to create more complex models, but at the end of the day, it doesn't have to be any more complicated than it needs to be.

4. How much should we be spending on marketing and where?

PHIL JOHNSON: There's no simple answer to this question. Rules of thumb exist. People toss around percentages of revenue as a guide, but that may be too much for some businesses and too little for others.

When John F. Kennedy was running for president, someone accused his father Joe Kennedy of trying to buy the election. Joe Kennedy said that he didn't mind buying the election; he just didn't want to pay a dime more than he had to. That's pretty much my attitude about how much you should spend on marketing.

Given that there's no simple answer, here are some ideas for how to get useful clues about where to spend your money and how much to spend:

■ **The best investment you can make is to understand your customers.** How do they communicate with their peers? Where do they go for content, both for business and pleasure? With that knowledge, you can start to figure out how and where to reach them. Be where they are.

■ **Remember that expression: "Don't bring a knife to a gun fight."** With marketing, most people do the opposite and spend more than they need on firepower. Find the bottlenecks and spend against those specific problems. If people don't know you exist, you need to make your name more visible. If the challenge is how to drive leads and sales, e-mail promotions and paid search may be where you start. Interestingly, a lot of companies try to design a program that can do everything for them, which is like throwing mud against the wall and waiting to see what sticks.

■ **Finally, make the low-cost investments first.** Before you invest in an expensive video, develop a paid-search strategy. Before you build the Taj Mahal of websites, build a good database to support e-mail marketing. Make sure that people can find you on Facebook and Twitter. See what you can accomplish on the cheap before you spend the big bucks.

If you believe that your marketing investment keeps you profitable and growing, you're probably

spending about the right amount.

ERIC WEBBER: How much have you got? That's mostly a glib answer, but not entirely so. In general, clients should follow the sage advice of most personal-investment advisors: Diversify. The most effective campaigns you see are those that combine elements of traditional and new media, which greatly enhances the consumer's experience with the brand. That's easy to do if you have a roomful of hundred-dollar bills to spend. For clients with more modest budgets, the first thing you should do is lop off 10% of your advertising budget and add it to your PR budget, because well-executed, strategic PR can reap great benefits compared to the relatively modest investment. I'd also invest in a social-marketing strategy. I'm talking about a real, honest-to-God plan developed by someone who can put some strategic marketing thinking into it as opposed to hiring some people to pump out tweets or Facebook status updates. The opportunity to have meaningful interaction with consumers for a reasonable price is too easy to pass up, but easy to miss, too, if you don't treat it as a serious medium.

That being said, don't be quick to give up on old friends. There are still a lot of clients who need to be on local radio and in the weekly shopper paper before they need to be taking a crack at viral videos.

BART CLEVELAND: The answer is, everywhere that matters. Integration in marketing is a necessity. Marketers simply cannot afford to be in a marketing channel that doesn't make sense. Unfortunately, some can let ego overrule logic. We once had a client that insisted on being in a mass-media channel that they didn't have a big enough budget to effectively support nor effectively reach the target with. They simply refused to look at scientific fact, irrefutable numbers and common sense in favor of feeling like a player by being on in a high-profile medium.

In the end, budgeting is far too often a missed opportunity to dig deeper, think bigger and search wider for ways to meaningfully grow market share and brand equity alike.

MARC BROWNSTEIN: Agencies should be promoting their clients similar to how they should be promoting themselves: by deploying an integrated mix of media, while taking smart risks with viral/nontraditional ideas. Multiple platforms are recommended. How much? Three-to-five percent of total sales still applies.

DARRYL OHRT: This is a question that your agency shouldn't be answering for you. You'd never walk into a real-estate office and ask the agent, "How much should I spend on a house?" This is a business decision, an operations decision. There's nobody in a better position to understand what kind of investment your firm can handle than you.

Every industry and business is different. I don't believe there's a magic percentage that you can apply across the board. Once you have established this budget, communicate honestly with your agency. The more it understands about your resources (or constraints), the better it can plan for you. Regardless of how tight (or generous) your budget is, it's important that everyone's coming into the game with the same understanding. The last thing you want is for an agency to produce a magnificent conceptual campaign that you can't afford to launch.

CURT HANKE: What is the right dollar amount for us to invest? It's one of the most important decisions that small and midsize clients make. And one that is far too often a *fait accompli*.

Sure, we can trot out all of the tried-and-true paradigms for budgeting—percent of sales, industry norms and the like. But the reality is that we have worked on budgets ranging from 2% to 40% of total revenue—both consistent with and wildly divergent from conventional wisdom. And at the end of the day, like anything in business, it all comes back to risk

and reward.

What is your acceptable baseline for success? What is your appetite for risk? Would you rather have a high likelihood of conservative growth, or a lower likelihood of radical growth? What are your business objectives for the year—and what role does marketing play in helping you reach them? Before you send out an RFP for a multimedia campaign or a flashy new microsite, you need to answer these fundamental questions—and create alignment behind this vision throughout your organization.

From there, build a series of different investment platforms—including a wide range of strategies and tactics. "Try them on" with financial assumptions and expectations. To be clear, this is an exercise of equal parts science, art and common sense. When done properly, it creates not just clearer expectations of client priorities, but marketing platforms that are connected directly to these fundamental desires.

And don't think that when you push the "Print" button on your plan that your work is done. Modern-day marketing and brand plans must be organic and evolve based on the changing world—including what is working (and what is not). Define, track and optimize key performance indicators on a regular basis. Identify likely thresholds where increased spending will generate incremental return. Build benchmarks and articulate milestones—and manage this conversation in real time, both internally and with your agency partner.

In the end, budgeting is far too often a missed opportunity to dig deeper, think bigger and search wider for ways to meaningfully grow market share and brand equity alike.

5. *What kinds of skills and talent do we need to achieve our marketing goals?*

PHIL JOHNSON: Pay attention to these six rules and you'll probably do pretty well:

- **Get senior people involved early in the decision making process.** The people who run the company need to set the direction. Then they need to trust the person who implements the program.

- **Think like your customers.** What is important to them? What media do they use?

- **Figure out who you are, what you care about and how you're different than your competitors.** Make this knowledge the cornerstone of all your marketing.

- **Whatever you do—advertising, direct mail, social media—stick with it for at least a year** before deciding that it doesn't work. Most marketing fails because people jump from one program to the other before anything can work.

- **Have the courage to be original** and reveal your corporate personality. If you look like everyone else, no one will notice you.

- **What makes marketing great is that it makes a human connection with real people.** You don't need a huge budget or a big agency to put your company on the map.

ERIC WEBBER: Nimbleness and adaptability. Willingness to get out of our comfort zone. The ability to sometimes take no for an answer.

BART CLEVELAND: An agency doesn't need to be a jack of all trades. The idiom of being the master of none holds true. Like any business, those who narrow their focus and their audience flourish. The first step of knowing what skills and talent you need is to determine that focus and audience. The answer to the question then becomes self-evident. For example, our core is marketing integration. The elements of strategy, media and creative now have many tentacles that can't be mastered by any one entity. Those who try will become lumbering beasts that are too inefficient to compete. However, the integration of those

elements must be centralized if a brand story is to be effectively expressed. Large clients must do this internally. Small companies cannot, and that is where an integrated marketing provider is invaluable.

MARC BROWNSTEIN: Agencies can no longer afford to employ talent that is all-traditional, meaning no digital skills. We hire only "digital hybrids"—those who can create both online and offline. In addition, public-relations professionals need to understand the nuances of social media. We also need to hire those with skills for analytics and measurement.

DARRYL OHRT: Experience in your industry isn't as important as you think it is. In fact, sometimes an outside perspective is exactly what you need to shake things up and ask the questions that haven't been asked in a long while. Sometimes, industry experience equals industry "blindness." You'll never get great creative from someone with blinders on. That said, there are plenty of vertical agencies that do great work, too. Keep an open mind, and hire based on talent, not industry experience alone.

Make sure that the agency you're hiring has experience doing the work you're hiring it for. Don't expect an identity-design firm to pull off a brilliant social-media campaign. And a media-strategy firm isn't going to produce a killer brand identity for you.

More than anything, you want an agency that you can trust is going to generate work that's perfect for the voice of your brand—and that you'll enjoy working with. Nobody wants to work with a jerk.

CURT HANKE: In staffing a small-to-midsize business, there are three key attributes for any marketer.

First and foremost, individuals can no longer simply be marketing experts; they must also be marketing advocates. They need to be a true believer in the power of marketing—and willing to represent this point of view throughout the organization. They must be able to articulate the value of marketing—

what it can bring to the table—and to proselytize on behalf of upcoming initiatives and campaigns, often in the face of skepticism and incredulity.

Second, they need to be entrepreneurial. Passionate. Hungry. They need to constantly be on the lookout for ways to not just optimize what's already in place, but to build entirely new platforms for the business and its

brands. They need to run the business as if it were their own—with an intense commitment to success.

Finally, they need to have a strong work ethic. Simply put, there is no room for tagalongs in a small or midsize business. Everyone needs to carry his fair share of the water up the hill—and to do so with enthusiasm and gusto.

CONTRIBUTORS

These small-agency executives provided answers to small and midsize businesses' biggest questions.

MARC BROWNSTEIN | BROWNSTEIN GROUP



Marc went to his first client meeting at the age of three when his father, founder of what was then Brownstein Advertising, had unexpected babysitting duties and brought Marc along. Since then, Marc has had a love affair

with the business and the art of advertising. After graduating from Pennsylvania State University, Marc set out to test his mettle in New York. He spent one-and-a-half years as a copywriter at Doremus/BBDO and six-and-a-half years at Ogilvy & Mather, becoming one of the youngest members of Ogilvy's new-business-development team. He has created award-winning campaigns for AT&T, American Express, Sports Illustrated, Hershey Foods, Hallmark, Campbell Soup and Time Warner.

In 1989, Marc—with heredity now sharpened by experience—joined the firm his father founded and assumed the responsibilities of executive creative director and, later, president-CEO. In the years that followed, Brownstein Group experienced fivefold growth in both staff and billings, adding a Seattle office; a digital-marketing division, in 1998; and clients such as Microsoft, Comcast, ESPN, the Wharton School, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Majestic Athletic, Callaway Golf, Siemens, Gore-Tex and Ikea.

Marc guided his agency to top industry recognition when Brownstein Group was recognized with "Best of Show" in creativity in the 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2008 ADDY Awards.

➔ For more information, visit www.brownsteingroup.com

BART CLEVELAND | MCKEE WALLWORK CLEVELAND



Bart is creative director-partner of McKee Wallwork Cleveland. Over the last two decades, his work has included branding campaigns in markets across the globe for Coca-Cola, CNN, Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co. and Dow. Bart previously worked at agencies

such as Fahlgren and Saatchi & Saatchi, and in 1998 joined Sawyer Riley Compton as senior VP-executive creative director. He is a frequent guest lecturer at many of the country's leading creative advertising schools. Bart's work has received hundreds of awards for creativity both nationally and internationally, including The One Show, CA, D&AD and the Clios.

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DARRYL OHRT | HUMONGO



ANDREW WALKER

Darryl is the prime minister of awesome at creative agency Humongo, the digital creative hot shop of Source Marketing. Darryl is also chief contributor of the greatest blog in all of the land, Brand Flakes for Breakfast, and a regular member of the Humongo

Nation tour, the first-ever social media road tour. He calls himself a punk rocker, an internetologist, and digital explorer, and knows just enough to be dangerous. He's probably tweeting, blogging or otherwise breaking the rules of the internet as we speak.

➔ For more information, visit www.humongoagency.com

CURT HANKE SHINE ADVERTISING CO.

Curt is the co-founder and account director of Shine, a 31-person advertising and interactive agency headquartered in Madison, Wis., serving clients such as Harley-Davidson Motor Co., Carver Yachts, Wisconsin Cheese, Kaplan

and Winston Fly Rods. Recently identified by "One.a.Magazine" as one of "a new wave of regional creative shops coming to prominence," Shine is sought after by national consumer brands looking for fresh thinking in every part of their business.

Over the past fifteen years, Curt has spoken at conferences across the country, including iHousing and Outdoor Retailer, and has appeared in publications including The New York Times.

➔ For more information, visit <http://shinenorth.com>

TOM MARTIN CONVERSE DIGITAL

Tom is a 20-year veteran of the marketing industry. During his career, he began to sense that traditional advertising was failing to connect with consumers and was growing less effective as a brand's primary marketing tool.

Therefore, after spending most of his career working as an advertising executive with larger regional, national and global clients, he formed Converse Digital to help companies and ad agencies understand how to monitor, create and engage in digital conversations with their customers and prospects.

This is Tom's second company; his first, Brandmarken, a consumer-insight planning firm, was forced to close after hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Tom speaks both domestically and internationally on various marketing topics and authors his own blog, Positive Disruption at www.tommartin.typepad.com/.

His previous experience includes Temerlin McClain Advertising in Dallas, where he developed direct marketing, retail and corporate branding programs for various American Airlines service offerings. Additionally, Tom served as VP-business development at Peter A. Mayer Advertising of New Orleans. He also spent the years between Katrina and now as the president of Zehnder Communications, where he led all client strategy and built the firm's social-media practice.

➔ For more information, visit www.conversedigital.com

ERIC WEBBER WEBBER/MCJ COMMUNICATIONS

Eric is the managing partner of Webber/McJ Communications, an Austin, Texas-based agency specializing in communications consulting, public relations and reputation management. The firm opened its doors in January 2007 and is quickly assembling a

roster of clients in industries including hospitality, beer, public affairs, financial services, travel, film/audio production and advertising. Eric began his career as a research assistant at ad agency GSD&M in 1981 while a student in the advertising school at the University of Texas. He eventually left for stints in New Orleans, Indianapolis (twice) and Fort Worth, working in development and public affairs. In 1998, he came back to GSD&M to become the agency's communications director, responsible for all internal and external communications. He held that position for nine years and was with the company as it grew to be one of the largest, most respected ad agencies in the country with 900 people and annual billings of \$2 billion.

➔ For more information, visit <http://webbermcj.com>

PHIL JOHNSON PJA ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Phil Johnson is CEO of PJA Advertising and Marketing. Phil founded PJA in 1988 to provide companies with an agency that understood the unique demands of marketing complex products to sophisticated business

consumers. PJA has grown into one of the leading, nationally recognized technology and health-science agencies with offices in Cambridge, Mass., and San Francisco. A four-time Ad Age B-to-B Agency of the Year winner, PJA has worked with many great brands, including Yahoo, J.P. Morgan Chase, Trend Micro, Novell, EMC, Juniper Networks, GE Healthcare, Boston Scientific and Infor. He serves on the board of the Boston Museum of Science, Partners In Health, BPA Worldwide, Cambridge Community Foundation and the New York Chapter of the Business Marketing Association.

➔ For more information, visit www.agencypja.com

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