

Marketing

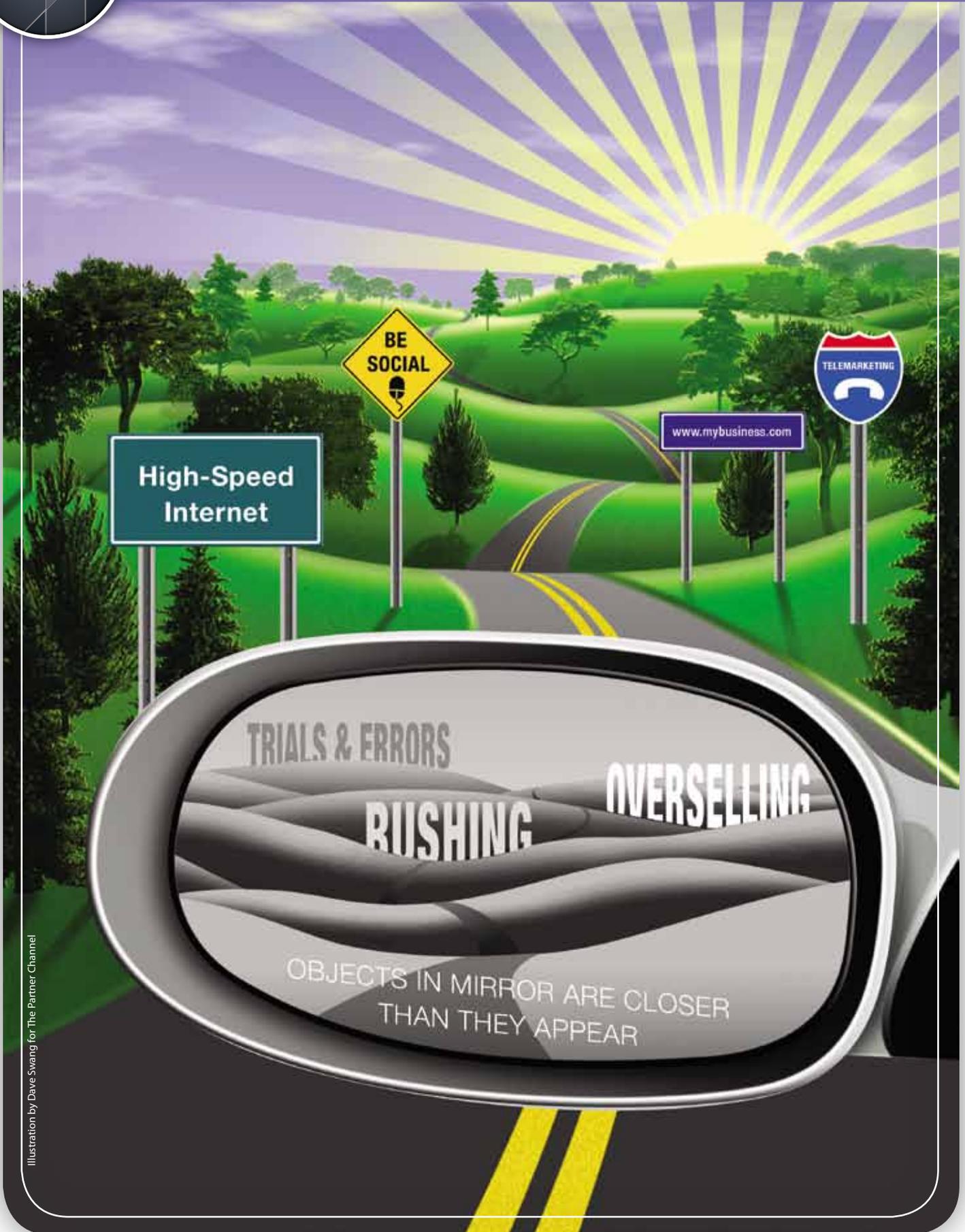


Illustration by Dave Swang for The Partner Channel

Objects In Mirror Are

CLOSER

Than They Appear

 The Partner Marketing Group

Learning from your past is a way of life. (Sometimes your past even catches up with you!) Some try to run from it, but the smart ones learn from their successes as well as their failures. Whether you've made a lot of mistakes or have had some really good ideas, it's important to remember what works and what doesn't on your way to the "land of expertise".

We asked three of our marketing experts – Bethany Foyt (BF), Cheryl Salazar (CS), and Michelle Glennie (MG) – to reflect on their past marketing experiences in hopes that you will find tips and insight that help you on your path to marketing success.

Q: *What is one marketing mistake you have made?*

BF: I try not to think of marketing mistakes as actual mistakes but as trials and errors. To find the right marketing mix, timing, and resources, you must test. For example, if your e-newsletter's open and click-through rates were at an all-time low last month, try sending the newsletter on a different day and time next month. Sometimes testing can get frustrating, but it is ultimately worth the time you invest. I try to think of it as a strategy game, and let me tell you, I've been in checkmate more than once, but I'm no quitter!

CS: I think that companies often make the mistake of overselling the products they represent. I believe that potential customers are much more interested in how you can solve the issues they are dealing with first, and they want to talk about product later. The goal of

marketing is to get your foot in the door for having that initial conversation; a marketing campaign that focuses on the value you can deliver versus the product that you can sell will be better received.

MG: Rushing is a mistake and trap that we can all fall into. We have multiple things on our plates each day, so in our fast-paced business technology world, we have a tendency to rush a project or campaign because we always feel behind the eight ball. With all things, and especially in marketing, the more you repeat a process, the faster you become, but you need to be careful that you are reviewing each step of your campaign or marketing activity. I am not saying that you need to over-analyze things, but this is your brand, your company's image that you are putting out there, so be sure you are satisfied with the impression you're making. Just be sure you do not skip steps to rush something to market.

Q: *What is one piece of advice you wish others had told you when you first started in marketing?*

BF: I wish someone had told me at the very beginning that marketing is an engine to share value with your customers and prospects.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to sell more products and services. But in order to get there, you must establish relationships through marketing. That's why all of the marketing engines out there today, such as social media, blogging, and e-newsletters, excite me.

CS: Keep it simple! We as marketers are used to the jargon we read and deal with every day, but our potential customers are not – they have their own lingo. Ensuring that you always use language that customers can understand, language that is not ambiguous, will help your message be memorable.

MG: Consistency and patience are key! Do not give up on a campaign too soon just because you do not get an initial response out of it. Like my colleagues have said, building a relationship with your prospects is important, but it also takes time. Prospects will not necessarily remember you after just one mailing, especially if you are changing your message (and your graphics) every time you reach out to them.

Q: *What marketing activity do you see as risky but worth the effort and reward?*

BF: I work closely with blogging every day, and I perceive it as a risky activity because a lot

Becoming a Marketing
Expert in Retrospect

of companies just don't understand the basics of blogging. If it's done right – and you take the time and effort to create a valuable and interesting blog post (with good links back to your website) and include an offer such as a white paper or video – you have the potential to go far with blogging. In addition to writing a good blog post, it's important to have a good blog site that can give you the most benefit possible. One proven way to do this is by joining a group blog. The Accounting Software Review Blog (<http://accounting-software-blog.com/>) and the Distribution Software Blog (<http://distributionsoftwareblog.com/>) have openings for more VARs and ISVs interested in trying out the group blogging scene. By joining these group blogs, you also have the support and training of blogging and search engine optimization (SEO) professionals. Turn this risky marketing activity into one that works for your company.

CS: I would have to say social media. I was one of the biggest skeptics when it comes to this medium. However, I have watched it work and reap huge rewards. You need to have a good agenda that you are prepared to drive consistently, a persona that resonates, and issues that are of concern and interest to people. It takes a long time to pay off in most cases, but it builds communities and creates healthy dialogue. If you stay the course and are well versed, you will be perceived as the creator of markets and the person to whom people will listen.

MG: Telemarketing. Most people envision the annoying telemarketing calls we get at home in the evening and do not want to be part of it. But, when it comes to business to business telemarketing, this activity can really help your business grow. I was a skeptic myself, but at the very least, telemarketing will help you clean up and build your prospect list which is essential to success in all other areas of your marketing. If you are still a skeptic, try telemarketing with your existing customers – you will be amazed to see how many of your customers do not know about other products you offer, need more services, need help but didn't want to call, or are having great success that you can turn into a testimonial, case study, or blog.

Q: *Since social media is a newer and evolving marketing tool, what lesson have you learned from it, and what is your favorite part about it?*

BF: I'm not going to beat around the bush: social media sites are difficult to keep up with. Every time I check back into LinkedIn, something has changed. Granted, the changes have been for the better, but they require me to attend and seek out more training. I attempt to stay as up to date as possible by attending marketing webinars given by hubsport.com or buddymedia.com. They also offer extremely valuable white papers about the changing social media environment and tips and tricks on how to stay "with it".

In the same breath, this is what I like most about social media. It's an ever-changing vehicle and makes for an exciting marketing engine for companies. There's always something to learn and interesting ways to stay connected in the virtual world we live in.

CS: What I love about social media is that it takes people out of the "hallway conversation" and makes that conversation a public one where complete strangers can contribute. It prevents us from becoming myopic and helps open our minds to new ideas and concepts. It is the friend of entrepreneurs and without it I think that my life certainly would be a lot less. I don't always have time to consume it, but I can read it in bite-sized pieces and absorb as I need. If it becomes the focal point of the day, it can be very counterproductive. However, it has spurred many a marketing conversation for me, so I see it to be an enabler. If it weren't for social media, I wouldn't be enjoying the work as much as I do today.

MG: My favorite part about social media is the ability to stay up to date on where people are or what they are doing. With our busy daily schedules, it is hard to connect with everyone all the time, but through tools like LinkedIn, I can see not only where they are working, but also what is going on at their organization, what event they are going to be at, and when I might be able to connect with them in person. One lesson I have learned through these tools is to also bring value. You should post things that are going to help the network of people you are connected to – whether it is a tip, white paper, PowerPoint, or comment on a question that people have posted. Readers do not want to be inundated with useless information, so try to bring value.

Q: *If you could only have three marketing tools, what would they be and why?*

BF: I would say Microsoft Word, access to the Internet, and a telephone. These three tools can create a very robust marketing plan for any company. Microsoft Word is your brainstorm "engine" to create amazing blog articles. The Internet is your engine to share what you have to say on blog sites, social media, email, and more. Finally, the phone is your engine to close those deals that have been following you online. Who would have thought marketing is this easy? (wink)

CS: Internet, Internet, Internet – it's a great source of information. It has changed the paradigm of how we work, what we have access to, and how we can execute.

MG: It is hard to narrow it down to three, but I would have to say a website, a social media tool like LinkedIn, and an e-newsletter. A website will make you visible to the world, and you can convey a lot of information on it. With a tool like LinkedIn, you can post your company happenings in real time, whether it is an event, a customer success through a recommendation, or answers that help others with the questions they have. And finally with an e-newsletter, you can stay in regular communication with your customers and prospects, allowing you to share your knowledge. All three tools can help you nurture, stay current, and build your relationships.

Trying new marketing activities can be scary or intimidating because most of us have a fear of failure. In a recent blog post from Seth Godin, he said, "You can't have success unless you're prepared to have failure. As soon as you say, 'failure is not an option,' you've just said, 'innovation is not an option.'" How timely! In closing, some of our greatest successes have come through activities we were not afraid to try and fail at.

Go forth, have no fear, and find marketing success! 🌟

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