

SMART MARKETING

In Marketing, Even Little Mistakes Can Hurt a Lot

Success sometimes creates a feeling of invincibility. You accomplish big things. You start to think you can do no wrong. But fate, or the Lord, or whatever, has a way of grounding us idiots.

I can tell you from experience that you remember falling off a mountain much more than standing at the summit. I remember my mistakes and disappointments much more than my successes.

ONE BIGGIE

I was hired almost 20 years ago by a well-known local professional. His firm was losing money every year. We suggested a heavy advertising and PR plan. To his credit, he risked it all and followed our direction. Soon he became the market leader, and was actually taking home a million dollars in personal income!

But making his firm a huge success is not what I remember when I think about that account. I remember the day he fired me.

He felt he could get similar services cheaper out of town. He subsequently hired me back a few years later, and we're great friends...but the day he fired me still haunts me.

MATERIAL THINGS ARE JUST A BLUR

Sure, when someone reminds me, I remember bringing home a new Lincoln with a giant bow on it as a gift for my wife. I have a photo of the three BMW's I bought in one day. The dealer sent it. It just collects dust.

LOSSES SHOW UP IN HIGH DEFINITION

I can't forget when one of my largest and favorite clients sold their business to an out-of-state person who had a friend at another agency. We were canned.

NOTHING HAUNTS YOU MORE THAN MISTAKES

Losing business is not fun. But if you're proud of your work and pride yourself on doing things right, nothing — and I mean NOTHING — in marketing haunts you more than your mistakes...even the little ones.

I consider myself fairly brave. I can speak in front of an audience. I can be interviewed on TV without notice and never break a sweat. I've jumped out of airplanes at 11,500 feet, driven a car at 155 mph and a motorcycle at 85 mph. But a few weeks ago, ONE WRONG WORD in one newspaper ad knocked me flat on my ass.



George Farris

It literally kept me up all night. The art department at Farris Marketing, staffed by people who are about as good as you can be and still be human, made a very rare, and seemingly minor, error. One word was wrong. But this ONE word embarrassed two of my clients, and that absolutely devastated me.

There was not a darn thing I could do about it. We ran corrected ads, and no long-term damage was done. But I know it's another thing that will visit me during low times.

MISTAKES ARE AVOIDABLE — AVOID AS MANY AS YOU CAN

No one is invincible. Everyone makes some mistakes. But mistakes can cause serious problems if they crop up in your advertising. They can cost money and ruin relationships.

So proofread three times yourself, and have someone else proof the finished copy again. Double- and even triple-check placements. Make sure ad copy, headlines and design are approved. Make sure they go to the right publication on time.

You can't avoid disappointments, but mistakes are a different story. In marketing, there is no room for mistakes — because even one "little" mistake can hurt a lot.

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