

# 1 Success In Marketing Depends On Your Answer To This One Question

30

By Alan L Tarr

Author of *The 7 Deadly Sins Of Marketing* and  
*Win The Marketing Game And Stop Wasting Money*

*If the success or failure of your business were to ride on one question  
– this would be it.*

People often ask me for help in marketing and advertising their businesses. Some are seeking free advice while others ask with the intention of retaining my firm to do some creative work for them. My answer is always the same: “Before I can help you, you have to answer one question”.

“No problem” is the usual reply. I then suggest they wait to hear the question before they make any assumptions.

I have found that one question is the key to any marketing program, any advertising campaign and even any decision to start a business. If you, as a businessperson, cannot answer this question immediately and without grasping for thoughts, then you have the basis for an effective, successful marketing campaign. If you can't (and I warn you, way more than half cannot) you need to go back and find an answer before you do another thing.

## **The Most Important Question Your Business Can Answer Is...**

“In what meaningful way are you different than your competition and how does that difference benefit your customer?”

When there is little or no significant difference between products or companies, the consumer – rightfully – makes his choice based mostly on price. If the first words out of your prospect's mouth are “How much does it cost?” you have not differentiated your business from your competitors in the mind of your prospect.

## Failure To Differentiate Can Be Fatal

This lack of differentiation has killed many a good business because without it, your marketing and advertising has no power. No power to educate, no power to solve a problem, and no power to persuade. No less authority than Raymond Rubicam, chairman of Young and Rubicam agency cautioned: "...the beginning of greatness is to be different and the beginning of failure is to be the same."

### Find Your Differentiating Idea Now, Before Another Moment Goes By

A differentiating idea is something your competitors cannot or do not say. It can be product related or it can be related to how you do business. Here are some examples:

- > The milk chocolate melts in your mouth, not in your hand. (M&Ms)
- > Tastes great, less filling. (Lite Beer)
- > When banks compete, you win. (Lending Tree)
- > If you're ever dissatisfied with one of our tires, feel free to bring it back. (Discount Tires)

So, before you run one ad, before you print one brochure, before you write one sales letter, or send one postcard, determine your differentiator. Then include it in every thing you do. Teach it to your employees and to your children. So that whenever someone asks "Why should I do business with you when I can go up the street to Joe and get it 5% cheaper?" - you'll have an answer that will turn the tables in your favor.

Differentiate and win.

# # #