

Courage Builders for the Marketing Meek

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If it's your job to market your company's products and services, you have good reason to feel a little timid these days. Competition is tougher. The playing field changes daily. Job security is a relic of the past. The marketing budget is constantly on the chopping block. And management is like a pack of hungry wolves ready to attack the minute you make a mistake.

How can you possibly do your job effectively under these conditions? Well, it won't be easy or happen overnight. But if you commit the following wisdom to memory, you'll be well on your way to becoming one of your company's most valuable assets.

IT'S THE RESULTS, STUPID.

Direct marketing. Relationship marketing. One-on-one marketing. Guerrilla marketing. For management's sake, clear your mind of all the marketing hoopla and fill it with one word. Results. Did it work? Did it increase business? What was the ROI?

You may have done a terrific job last year with the annual report. The newsletter may be your best one yet. Unfortunately, neither boosts sales and profits in a tangible way. What management wants from marketing today is accountability. They want proof the company's coffers are being spent wisely. Now just imagine if you could prove not only that but verify your efforts are revenue producers? That would certainly dumbfound the powers that be. Play it smart. Focus on results.

BASE DECISIONS ON THE COMPETITION, NOT YOUR CAREER.

More often times than not, the best marketing strategy is killed because it's not politically correct. "It's not worth losing my job over." Sadly, the result is efforts that blend in with everything else. The middle may be a good place to position yourself in politics. But in marketing, it's the worst place to be. To sell, you have to stand out and get noticed.

How can you take risks without risking your job? Reputation, my friend. If you're known for getting results, few will question your methods. You can also endure failure better. Just look at Kevin Costner and the movie, *Water World*. The guy can bomb and bounce right back. How? Reputation.

To build yours, develop as many high profile success stories tied to sales as you can. Start small if you have to. Then use them to push the right marketing strategy for your products and/or services, not simply to please the higher-ups. Your victories will surely mount. And before you know it, you'll be calling the shots.

PRACTICE THE ART OF SELF-PROMOTION.

You're spread thin enough as it is with day-to-day stuff. However, it's imperative to make time to tout your successes both internally and externally.

Management has a short memory. They need constant reminders of the importance marketing plays in the success of the company. So give them all the good news they care to hear and spread the credit around. You're not there to boast, just to elevate your job security and decision-making ability.

Also, self-promotion outside the company is essential. Your goal should be to become a marketing expert for your industry. Write articles. Give talks. Work the trade show booths. With expert status, if you don't make it there where you work now, you'll have a chance to make it anywhere. Marketing savvy companies will seek you out. If that's not a courage builder to take bold marketing moves, what is?

In the history of marketing, one principle is abundantly clear. To be successful, you have to be willing to go outside the norm of what's been done before. Vision isn't required to be first, just courage to take action. You may not have it today. But if you develop a reputation for getting results in the right circles, you soon will.