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For firms new to marketing, it's best to take it one day (and project) at a time

Marketing is starting to get its due attention in the profession. Firm leaders understand the importance of consistent, frequent communications with prospects and clients in order to grow a successful, profitable business. However, while many are stoked about starting a marketing program, initial enthusiasm can quickly turn to frustration if more is bitten off than can be chewed comfortably. That would be referred to as *marketing lockjaw*. And no one likes that.

The general rule for marketing is to start from square one and build from there. That

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marketing plan. All you need is that first campaign and the courage to hit the "Send" button. To help you get going on an initial project, you have to ask yourself (and know the answers to) a few simple questions:

1. **What is the purpose? What is the intended outcome?** This can be anything from breaking into a new client niche to providing valuable information to existing clients. In other words, you need to know "why" you are sending the campaign.
2. **Who is my audience, and am I sending the campaign to prospects or existing clients?** If prospects, am I sending to all prospects in my database or do I want to identify a specific industry (e.g., veterinarian clinics)?
3. **What's my mechanism for delivery?** Print campaign, email blast, hand delivered welcome kit?

Once you've answered these questions, you can start to develop your campaign and GET IT ON THE CALENDAR. Setting a deadline for launching the campaign makes you more accountable for seeing it through. After the first campaign is out the door, start to identify and add other initiatives to the calendar. Before you know it, you have a good start to your broad marketing plan.

Question by Question

To help firms along the marketing path, here is a bit more information on each question and what needs to be done to ensure a successful, on-target marketing initiative.

What is the purpose? You must determine a purpose for each campaign. In other words, once your audience reads your campaign, ideally what do you want them to do? What is the intended outcome? Do you want them to visit your website to sign up for an event? Are you simply generating awareness or introducing your firm? Are you

trying to transition prospects to clients? Defining the outcome for each campaign

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Who is my audience? Think of your marketing audience as a client. You would never enter a client meeting without reviewing the client's file and having an up-to-date understanding of their needs. Each audience you market to deserves the same consideration. Approach your next marketing campaign by first determining who you want to reach. Start with the basics. Are you communicating with current clients or prospects? Current clients already know you so there's no need re-introduce your firm. Prospects don't know a lot (if anything) about you so you need to invest ample time to explain who you are and the value your firm can provide.

Next, dig a bit deeper. Are you trying to reach a unique niche? For example, if you are trying to enter a new niche, physicians for example, you want to make sure that you communicate your niche expertise within your campaign. Your message should emphasize your industry knowledge in such areas as billing routine and compensation rates. It's SO important to know your audience.

What's my mechanism for delivery? What is the best mechanism to get your campaign or marketing piece in the hands of your intended audience? Will you send an electronic communication or a print campaign? Be sure to take cost and timing into consideration. Print campaigns can be expensive and require extended production time for printing and mailing. In the end, you need to decide what delivery method will be most effective.

There's no shame in starting from square one when it comes to marketing. In fact, you are more likely to build a successful marketing program by starting simple and taking the time to learn what is takes to be a successful marketer.

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