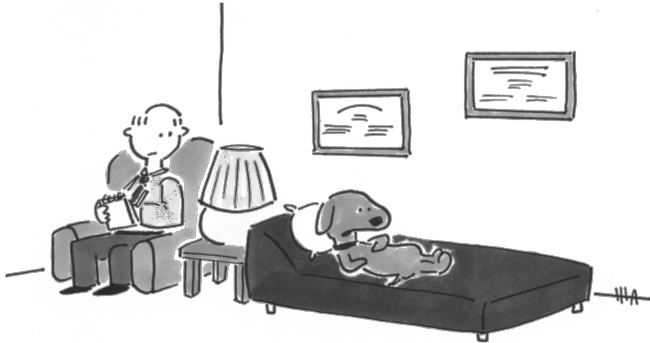


# Marketing at early startups: Deep, not wide

by Jason Cohen on December 9, 2014

Go deep on one marketing strategy that you already know well; spreading thin won't be successful.



"I dunno, maybe deep down I *want* to bark up the wrong tree."

Watch a bunch of interviews of founders of successful companies, and here's what you *don't* hear:

We tried eight different marketing channels—AdWords, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, social media, events, retargeting, SEO, guest-posting, PR, and so on. All of them worked a little bit, so together it was substantial—a trickle from each that added up to a river. Then we optimized each of them, improving each a bit more every month, and sure enough revenue doubled every year.

That's never how it works.

Spreading your precious money and even more precious time over many channels doesn't get a company off the ground. Typically, successful companies find **one channel that really works**, and then plumb it to its maximum inventory before layering on additional channels.

How to pick the one channel? Especially since "spray and pray" isn't a good way to find the answer?

Start with the handful of channels that you *personally use and understand*. If you're a Twitter person but rarely use Facebook and can't comprehend the interest of Pinterest, then spend a few months trying to build a corporate Twitter presence and buy Twitter ads. If you think Twitter is all trash and politics, but Pinterest is a cornucopia of heavenly visions, then build shareable images and buy Pinterest ads.

Why? Because success in social marketing channels arises from a resonance between your personality and the norms and language of that channel.

The best chance you have for developing that resonance is when it arises naturally, not because you A/B test your Twitter persona (should I be more humorous and sarcastic or more serious and profound? Or just give up?). If you're baffled by the Facebook culture, because you think people pretend to be thoughtfully happy and thoughtlessly witty but are simultaneously depressed because that they're not *actually* as happy and thoughtful and witty as all their "friends" apparently are, then you're not going to just jump in there and develop a presence and language that resonates with people who you're predisposed to despise at worst and just not understand at best.

So, stay with what you know, where you're comfortable, and focus on doubling your business on that channel. Sometimes, getting outside your comfort zone is wrong. Spreading yourself thin is even more wrong.

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