

# The seven pitfalls of DIY marketing. And how to fix them.

How to avoid fails and wastage for your next  
B2B marketing idea



**SenseCheck**   
The power of a second opinion



## Introduction

Big companies follow a simple formula to minimize the risk of marketing failure. They test. They test a LOT.

They test their advertising. They test their products; they do research on research. It's seen as the lifeblood of a successful market-oriented firm. But in small business life, things are trickier. Hence the dangers of these 7 pitfalls.

**First**, we feel reluctant to spend a lot of extremely precious money (our own money) on just research. We want every pound to be working hard for us influencing and winning clients.

**Second**, in business to business as a small company it's difficult to **near impossible to undertake research with clients**. Why would they want to give us feedback on our marketing if they aren't even willing to have a conversation with us in the first place? Maybe you can pay them hundreds of pounds to do so, but that doesn't feel good value. Even if you can get hold of them, that is. Most corporate managers (who we target) have barely the time to deal with their most pressing and urgent priorities every day, let alone spend time on ours.

It's maybe a little easier to talk to existing clients about why they buy from you - a good idea by the way - but near impossible to talk to prospect clients. And these are the ones you most care about in your marketing thinking. In the absence of validation with real clients the **7 pitfalls below are all the more dangerous**.

A third issue is that many of us work in businesses with few (if any) professional marketing people. Maybe we only have a handful of colleagues of any kind. And not all of those we would expect to help with marketing. That means **we tend to develop marketing on our own**. It often falls to the owner or CEO. And part of that responsibility is around taking a DIY approach to validation and testing. In summary, in SMEs we have to be pragmatic. We take the risks on our own shoulders, and we deal with the demons of doubt and uncertainty.

But we still face those fundamental challenges all big firms know about. The reason they do so much testing. How they avoid their own pitfalls, which might be different to the 7 we suggest here are the risks for a small business.

How do we, in reality, get our marketing "right". What messaging will resonate with our clients? What copy and images "work" best? What's the right balance of eye catching versus credibility? Is it different enough to stand out? In short, how do we optimize our marketing investment, make better decisions and get **better results for our money**?

The default position is that we make these subtle judgements ourselves. Or translated: we guess.

Therein lies the problem. Are we best placed to make that guess? Guessing that creates the risk of the 7 pitfalls of DIY marketing below.

Sensibly, many of us will ask around the office, or get a friend to comment. It's the best we can do. But in our hearts, we know that every time we put our hard earned money on the marketing table, we risk wasting it. We yearn for a way to be **more confident and comfortable in our decision making**. Help with validation.

With this set of challenges in a small B2B business in mind, let's look at how we can minimize these 7 risks without spending a fortune. How to seek some kind of better validation to reduce our chances of expensive marketing failure.

# The seven major pitfalls of DIY marketing and how to tackle them.



1

## Seduced by our own enthusiasm

You are rightly proud of your business. You love your product. Probably you helped invent it, it's your baby. It's only natural you want to talk about how good it is. But that's often not good marketing. The biggest risk factor is **we get tempted to put too much of "us" into our marketing**. And conversely, we miss the crucial thing – how we impact them, i.e. our customers. Our product's characteristics are only relevant when the customer understands how it helps them solve their problems.

### The solution

Don't write a single word until you have thought through the main problems your intended audience have that your specific product or service helps with (better than the alternatives). Look at your marketing and ask "is it written about my client's world or mine?" Any marketing should be read by the prospect and understood immediately as being **about their problem** as they currently recognise it. That's the only reason they will pay any attention. If in doubt, ask someone unconnected with your business to do that for you. Ask "do you see what problem we promise to solve here".

2

## Mental blindspots

The human brain is a marvelous machine. It spends its life trying to make life simple for us by not bothering our thought processes with more work than is absolutely necessary. If your subconscious thinks you have some information absorbed already, it will just pass over it. It's why you can drive to work on your usual route without noticing a single turn you had to make. No need to think.

Unfortunately, that backfires in judging communication. Particularly communication you wrote yourself. **Your brain won't notice even otherwise glaring omissions** if you yourself already know that information. Your wonderful advert or web page may talk about benefits a, b and c but you don't notice you didn't mention you sell software not training.

### Solution

First, sit on it for 24 hours. Put it in a drawer then re-read a day later. That gives your subconscious time to forget what you were thinking about and look at it afresh. Second, before you look at the idea, take time to write out the crucial things you **MUST** say for a client to be able to take the desired action when seeing your marketing. A check list, one that is common to all your marketing. Tick them off for each marketing concept. **Have you mentioned the basics?** Is it written in their language not ours?

## Ownership bias

Don't take it personally. This is another fundamental human trait we all have. We naturally tend to "like" our own ideas better than other people's. We will fight for something we came up with over and above any real logic. **We invest emotion into our ideas and therefore care about them.** They become emblematic of our self-worth, not deliberately, subconsciously. The risk is you give the thumbs up to your own suggestion even though to a neutral observer it's clearly not the best. Worse, you get upset if it's criticised!

### Solution

In big companies the boss would rarely put forward an idea. They know that harms the process. Instead, they ask that of their juniors, their suppliers and agencies. They can then authoritatively sit in judgement. For us in SMEs, we probably don't have those people to rely on. The next best thing is just to keep reminding yourself when you come up with ideas that **the ONLY thing that matters is what works.** It's more important to you it actually works, than it's your own idea.

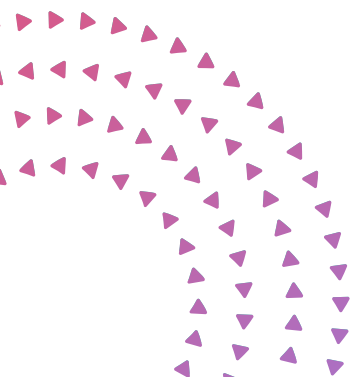
One of the benefits of tools like Facebook advertising is that it's quite cheap to put things out to test. Test your message in the hard-nosed world of social media, and pay attention to the hard numbers coming back. Be willing to be wrong. Embrace it. After all mistakes are what build learning that leads to success in the end.

## The Game of Thrones problem

If you remember, the problem that many of the kings had in the TV series was they lost connection with what was happening on the ground. And ultimately that led to disaster. No one wanted to pass on bad news. Feedback. For obvious reasons: upsetting the boss there was a life limiting risk. You yourself may not be a murderous warlord nor do you carry a readily sharpened axe, but you are still the boss. You hold others' careers (and cash) in your hand. **Your team may be reluctant to criticise** something they think you believe in. They worry you might take it personally. And as in point 3 above they are probably right. Don't you enjoy someone telling you that your idea is great?

### Solution

Show ideas without saying who came up with what. Give people options to choose from. Don't say "here is my marketing idea, do you like it"? Ideally ask someone without political power to do the asking on your behalf. And don't tell them which was your idea. Its always better to **develop 2 or 3** choices in any marketing campaign. People are always more comfortable making comparisons than giving a yes or no.



## The complexity trap

When you know a lot about something it's tempting to explain everything. For your business, you want to show all of what you know, and how expert you are, and you think detail is important to the explanation. But complexity is the enemy of communication. Your prospects don't want to know much at the first time they meet you, **they just want to know whether its worth finding out more**. When you look at your business from the inside every detail is fascinating. Because you are already in it. For a new client, they haven't yet made that step, so too much information is as bad as nothing at all. So many marketing efforts (especially websites) fall into this trap. This forces you to be ruthless in what you choose to say.

### Solution

Invest time thinking up front about the single more important message (ok maybe a message and a supporting point!) that will most likely win the interest of your prospect. Then focus in on that. Ask other people if that simple point is coming across. If your marketing has several points, push yourself to rank them in order of critical need. Then delete all but the top one or two. Be ruthless. Consider testing different versions to find out which is truly the most interesting message to use. At first glance all your prospective clients need to know in simplest terms is **what problem do you solve and how you help them solve it**. Job done.

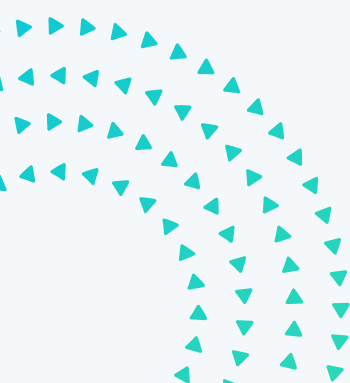
## The optimism dichotomy

If you run your own business, certainly if you created a business from scratch, then you are undoubtedly one of nature's optimists. It's a tough path and you have to believe in the possibilities to overcome all the obstacles. But in one aspect of your journey optimism has a bad downside. In your marketing you can fall into the trap of hoping just a bit too hard that your next idea will work well. And in that hope, you can be less critical than you need to be.

Research has shown that to cut through and get any kind of action marketing can't just be "ok", it has to be excellent. The competition is too tough. And when you think about how much cash it costs to put your marketing in front of prospects, to undercook the content makes little sense. Don't hope for the best. **Expect the worst and work from that perspective.**

### Solution

Be tough on your idea. Very tough. Ask for feedback that isn't sugar coated. Look at it through the eyes of the most skeptical viewer. Put it through the "caveman" test. Would the most ignorant and 'underpowered' reader understand what you are saying. In a few seconds. Simplicity and clarity are very hard to get, but they are your goal. Don't let your personal optimism get in the way of **clear-eyed ruthless assessment**.



## Losing interest too early

An odd one to finish with. Great marketing is surprisingly detailed work. You are a busy manager; you have a thousand things to worry about. And you are squeezing marketing into that mix. So, it can be tempting to think “job done” when in fact the job has only just started. Most notably you have come up with the marketing line that you are happy with. So, you think the heavy lifting is over. But as you move onto another task, you **give scant thought to some crucial execution elements**.

For example: what is the creative idea (or prosaically the image. People remember 50% more through seeing than reading). How often do you see a half decent bit of marketing given a terrible boring samey stock image? The visual idea is half the battle of getting attention and interest, not an afterthought. Or another common “miss”: the call to action. After all you only run the risk of making some money if a prospect does indeed take some action. Is it **easy for prospects to do something as** a result of the marketing?

### Solution

This could be as simple as reminding yourself of the cost benefit equation of getting marketing 100% right. When in reality 70% right is probably, well, wrong. A great piece can be rocket fuel for your sales, a bad one can be a total waste of money. Second, **give yourself a deliberate second look** (maybe 24 hours later) before pressing “go”. And show someone the image without the copy and ask what impression it makes?

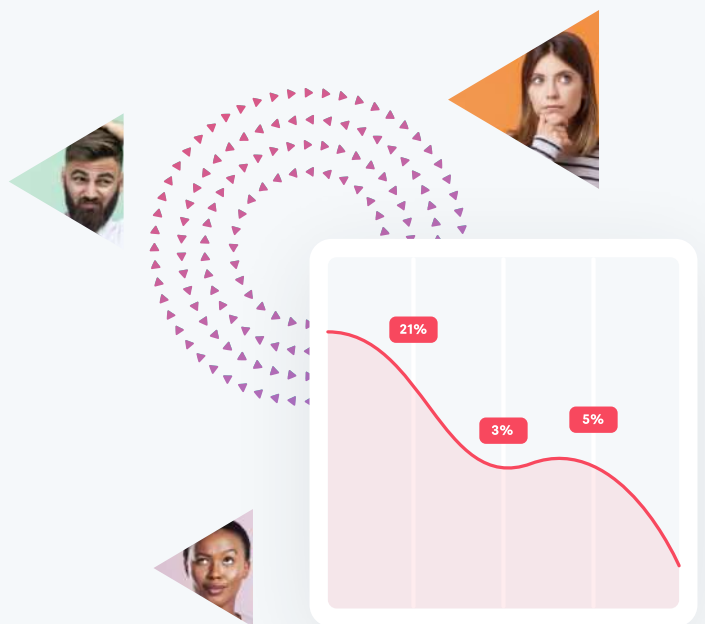
## CONCLUSION

## Getting a second opinion

Reviewing the seven “validation” pitfalls above, a common theme is asking for a second opinion. This perspective needs to be as informed and detached as you can find.

Colleagues are often limited by the same things you are. And they might just want to be nice. Friends and family for sure are more concerned about keeping you on side than the success of your marketing. Nor may they be particularly business savvy.

That’s why we created Sensecheck. A new route to getting arms length experienced professional feedback on your marketing ideas. **A second opinion that really makes a difference.**



Written by

**Roger Jackson**

SenseCheck Founder



## Are you ready to get your marketing idea SenseChecked?

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