

EXCERPT

Get **DIFFERENT**

MARKETING
THAT CAN'T BE IGNORED!

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Introduction

Yeah, no.
Introduction schmintrroduction. Let's cut to the chase.
You and I have a crucial job to do—as in the life or death of your business kind of crucial.

You offer something people need, something a lot of people will love. Or at least something a lot of people *would* love, if only they knew about it.

What good is your offer if no one knows it exists?

The lack of marketing—good, effective, *different* marketing—is the driving reason for small business mediocrity and stunted growth. Too many great products and services languish in obscurity. We will not stand for that. By the end of this book, we are going to make sure you get noticed and get results in a crowded market—no matter what.

Are you ready?

Let's market the shit out of your business!

CHAPTER ONE



Your Responsibility to Market

I *did* inhale.

Yanik Silver blew a cloud of pot smoke right into my face.

I had only one option: breathe it in.

I never anticipated that my greatest lesson in marketing would come during a game of billiards, capped with a ganja exclamation mark. It was the contact high that lasted a lifetime.

Yanik is considered by many to be the godfather of internet marketing. He helped innovate the use of email marketing in the early days, when people still looked forward to hearing AOL's iconic notification "You've got mail." Back when people thought an innovative website was one with an animated "under construction" GIF, he pioneered long copy sales pages with professional product images and clear call-to-action buttons. Yanik's marketing savvy yielded the company of his dreams, Maverick1000. He

created a global network as a manifestation of his life's purpose: to help support visionary entrepreneurs grow their businesses and have a bigger impact on the world.

I had just launched my first book, *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*, and I had bought into the belief that a “great book will sell itself,” hook, line, and sinker. I believed it so much that I feared I'd run out of copies during the first month. After all, if you build it, they will come, right? So I scratched together money through friends, emptied my “break only in case of an extreme emergency” emergency savings account, and ordered twenty thousand hardcover copies—all of which were now sitting in a fulfillment center, gathering dust. My book launch flopped. On release day, I sold zero copies. Zippo. Nada. Zilch. Do you feel me? My own mother didn't buy a copy that day. Ouch.

Defeated, I had two choices: learn how to market effectively, *fast*, or abandon my dream.

But where to begin? The strategies touted by some successful marketers at the time nauseated me. Marketing online by 2005 had become so commonplace, people doing it had a title: infomarketers. At least to their faces they were called infomarketers. Behind their backs, the smarmy ones were called names I won't repeat here. You know the ones I'm talking about. Some guy stands in front of a private jet (that isn't his) on a tarmac (that he sneaked onto), leaning on a new Bentley (which he rented for a few hours), and promises you the world. Their methods were gross and inauthentic at best, manipulative and predatory at worst.

Yanik always played a bigger game beyond the tactic of the

month, and he didn't need to "prove" he knew his stuff with disingenuous pictures and messaging. Yanik marketed authentically, genuinely, real-ly, and *that* is why I sought out his advice.

I desperately wanted people to notice my book, but I didn't want to use those gross info-smarm-eter tactics. So instead I had tried to follow "book-marketing checklists" in the way all traditional authors are told to market—send out a press release, throw a launch party, start a blog, get a big-name endorsement—and yet all my efforts failed to generate anything beyond onesie-twowie book sales.

Twisting my cue stick, I shared my frustrations with my new confidant.

"Five ball. Corner pocket."

Moving through the table with ease, Yanik called out shots, and the balls rolled into the pockets at his every command, all the while listening intently to my story. He capped the game by sinking the eight so expertly that the cue ball slowly rolled back to the exact spot for the start of the next game. Meanwhile, I stood off to the side like a potted plant. A potted plant that over-shares its story of struggle, but a potted plant, nonetheless.

The game finished, Yanik motioned for me to grab my beer and head outside to the deck with him. After looking out over the rolling hills of Maryland for what felt like one of those dramatic crescendo movie moments, he asked, "Is your book better than the stuff everyone else offers?"

"Yes."

"Does your book serve the reader better than those infomarketers?"

“Hell yes. It is everything I know. It will serve entrepreneurs.”

“If customers buy the infomarketer stuff and don’t buy yours, what will happen?”

“They will be swindled, Yanik. My book is better than all that crap. I really believe that to my core.”

Yanik smiled, as though I had finally given him the answer he wanted. “Then you have a *goddamn* responsibility to outmarket them.” On the little table next to him, Yanik started rolling a joint. “If people are buying shit,” he continued, “it may be *their* problem, but it’s *your* fault.”

Despite the warm weather, chills ran down my spine. He was right. It *was* my responsibility, and if I felt I had a viable alternative to the crappy business advice out there, it was my own damn fault if people didn’t know about it.

Yanik let me sit with the truth bomb he just dropped as he finished rolling his joint. Then he said, “People will buy, that is not the question. But they can only ever buy what they are aware exists. If your solution is better, you have to *make* them notice.”

Then he took a hit off the joint and inadvertently blew the smoke right into my face. It was a profound moment. I breathed it all in, including the ganja cloud.

Yanik leaned back in his chair and contemplated the horizon. “Mike, what’s your greater why?”

“My *greater* why? What do you mean?”

“Why are you here on this planet? What impact are you meant to have on our world?”

Damn, bro. I just wanted to sell some books, and sensei Yanik wanted to talk about the meaning of life. Then again, who am I to question a marketing savant?

Maybe a superior force intervened. Maybe in my heart I had always known the answer. Or maybe it was just the weed. But then I uttered the words that I have used ever since to define my life's purpose. The words that get me out of bed each morning and drive the long, hard days. The words that jack me up before every speech I deliver. The words that guided me as I feverishly wrote this book for you.

"I'm here to eradicate entrepreneurial poverty," I told Yanik. "That's my greater why."

"Entrepreneurial poverty," Yanik said, as if testing the words on his tongue.

I shifted to the edge of my chair. "Yes. I believe entrepreneurs change the world. They are innovators and problem solvers. They can fix some of our biggest issues. And yet, most of them are just getting by. If I could help business owners get out of entrepreneurial poverty, they would be free to do those big things, the big things the world is starving for."

Yanik took another hit off the joint and said, "Then that's all that matters. If your books will help you achieve your greater why *and* they serve entrepreneurs best, you *must* find a way to market them better than anyone else."

My call to arms began with a contact high. Yours happens right now.

Your mission to market isn't about you alone. It is about something much, much bigger. It is about you, your family, your community, *our* world. If you offer something that serves, you must make everyone aware. We need you, but we don't know you exist. And that "not knowing you exist" part is your responsibility to fix. Starting immediately.

6 { Get Different

Quick, name something you do better than the competition. Are your services more thorough? Do you provide a better customer experience? Are you more available to your clients? Does your product last longer? Does your stuff make your client feel better than the competitor's? Do you understand the client's needs better? Maybe there are multiple areas where you are the winner. I suspect you were able to identify at least one "better" pretty darn fast. Probably multiple. So, it is likely verifiably true. You are better.

And if your offer is better than the alternatives, in any single way, you shouldn't *try* to market to your prospect, you *must* market to them. You have a responsibility to beat competitors, big and small companies alike—the unscrupulous companies, the companies who give less, and the companies who care less than you do about the people you serve. Otherwise, you are letting your customers get ripped off. You have a responsibility to treat your customers and prospects right by marketing the hell out of your company. If you have a better option for your clients and prospects, yet they don't know it exists, they are forced to settle. That may be *their* problem, but it is *your* responsibility to fix it.

Great Offers Need Different Marketing

That day at Yanik's house, he reminded me of my life's purpose: to eradicate entrepreneurial poverty. Far too many business owners were (and still are) building businesses to gain financial freedom and control over their lives, yet were (and still are) in a

constant cash crisis and feel exhausted. Fixing that gap between the dream of freedom and the reality of struggle was (and still is) my life's purpose. That's why I wrote my first book, this book, and every book in between. *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* wasn't a "better business card." It wasn't for "lead gen." It wasn't to make myself rich. I wanted to help my readers make real, lasting change. And yet somehow I had lost my way.

Looking back, I am still pissed at myself. I knew better. Building my first two businesses taught me that the *only* way to get in front of the people who need you is to master marketing, and that has nothing to do with mastering a marketing plan. Any plan is just fiction if you can't get prospects' attention in the first place.

The simple truth is marketing happens in milliseconds, not months. According to *Time* magazine, the average website holds visitors' attention for a mere fifteen seconds. Instagram reports people spend less than ten seconds on a post. And what about more tactile marketing? I'll bet you riffle through your junk mail at warp speed.

According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau, an ad must have viewer attention for at least a second for it to have any chance of success. If a prospect moves on from your marketing in less than one second, in the milliseconds, you've lost them. While a marketing plan is a wonderful tool to schedule what you know works, your number one priority is to first figure out what *does* work in those millisecond moments.

Try this. Right now, blink as fast as you can. That blink you just did, that took longer than a tenth of a second. The average blink, according to the—get this—Harvard Database of Useful

Biological Numbers is two hundred and fifty milliseconds.* According to *The Christian Science Monitor*, thoughts can be spawned and acted upon in less than one hundred and fifty milliseconds. In other words, it takes longer to blink than it does to cognitively notice something *and* consider what to do with it. The takeaway? Successful marketing happens in a mere blink. Your prospect blinks and moves on or, if you do it right, stays. You need to win the blink, and to do that, you need to master the milliseconds of marketing.

The key to successfully marketing in milliseconds is simple: Be different so that people *must* take notice. Be different enough that the hardwired part of the human brain forces the prospect to contemplate and consider what they are seeing.

The irony was that while I had used out-of-the-box marketing ideas to beat the competition and grow my businesses to millions in profits, when it came to marketing my book, I had fallen in line with the status quo. I did the *exact* thing that guarantees invisibility: I marketed like everyone else in my industry.

It took me a few weeks to realize why I followed the industry standard: I didn't consider myself to be "a real author." I wrote a book, yes. But I was just a newbie, and though I had confidence in my work, I didn't have confidence in what others might think of it.

It felt like the first day of high school, and I was the new kid from out of town. I was fraught with insecurity. Would I find my clique? Would they find me? Would I be welcomed? Or would the bullies give me an atomic wedgie? Just like the first day at a

* Milo et al. Nucl. Acids Res. (2010) 38 (suppl 1): D750-D753.

new school, launching a book, indeed making any meaningful stance, is a tenuous moment. The truth is, I wanted to get noticed without being noticed. I wanted to reap the rewards of attention without the risk of getting attention. What if people thought I was too out there, too goofy, too Jersey? I had settled for the dull comfort of being unnoticeable rather than taking the soul-shaking risk of being unignorable.

It finally clicked. Sitting there on Yanik's deck, I realized that our own fear of standing out is the number one reason why we struggle to get noticed. People lose the game of marketing because they play by the rules—rules that don't even exist.

Once Yanik finally got my head right, I went back to the one strategy, the only strategy, that consistently works: market differently.

I thought about some of the infomarketers who were the real deal and didn't fall into the smarmy category. The common denominator? Ultimately, the good guys in the info space stood out by being different. Jeff Walker, for example, marketed one and only one product, Product Launch Formula (PLF), for more than a decade and counting. He became *the* industry authority by doing what the others didn't. With no staged mansions, Jeff created videos from his Colorado mountain home, the same one he has had for twenty plus years. No rented Bentley. Instead, he continued to drive his very used 1997 Ford F-350 pickup truck, because he loves it. When the competition zigged with smarm, Jeff zagged with realness. Different is not doing more of what they do. Different is doing more of you.

In my heart, I knew my book served others better than the alternatives, but so what? Better doesn't matter until you get

noticed. And you won't get noticed until you are different. Atomic wedgies be damned.

Listen: You have something great. It's made of your imagination, your sleepless nights, your sweat, and your determination. It's a big deal, this thing. It's *the* thing. You know people—the right people—will love this thing. They need this thing. The problem is, you built it, and despite what the movies promised, no one came. Maybe not even your mom. And few will ever come, until you do different.

Maybe you have already invested in marketing strategies the presumed experts told you “everyone” must do to compete. Maybe you bought into copywriting courses. Maybe you hired copywriters. Maybe you even sent those copywriters to the same courses you took. You did all that and more, and now all you have to show for it is a depleted bank account.

You can't afford to advertise like the big boys. And you shouldn't (just sayin'). But you've got to peddle your stuff somehow, right? So you buy cheap media ads, Amazon ads, Google ads, Facebook ads, an ad company to run all the ads on all the ad platforms. And the cycle continues. You take another course to learn how to use advertising more effectively. You try direct mail. YouTube tutorials. Holiday promotions. And when that still doesn't work, you indulge in desperate wishful thinking: “If only I could run a Super Bowl ad, everything would change.”

Despite all your efforts and hopes, you just can't seem to land enough prospects to meet your goals. There you are, sitting on this great thing, wondering if you'll ever reach enough people who will love it, need it, and celebrate it—the people who will *buy it*. They lose out, and you lose all.

Sadly, this struggle is justified in many self-deprecating ways. “I just don’t know how to market.” “Maybe this thing isn’t as great as I thought it was.” “Maybe those other things are better.” “Maybe this thing I created isn’t even worth marketing.” “Maybe it’s a dud.”

I call BS.

The problem is not your thing. I know it’s not. You are here, after all. You are reading this book looking to market what you have. What you have is great. It is needed. The problem is not with *what* you offer. Nor is the problem a lack of trying. Hell, you’re pouring your heart into your business, doing everything you can to spread the word. You are doing what you think works. And *that* is the problem.

I know that may seem confusing. What I mean is that you’re doing the marketing that already works for everyone else, which is the surefire way for that marketing to *not* work for you. If you mirror your competition, you are doing the one thing that guarantees invisibility. You must overcome your fear of being judged, step outside the box, and do different.

Look, the main reason marketing fails is because it falls in line with what “works” in your industry. Business owners keep doing what *other business owners do*, and that means everyone is trying to outdo each other using the same methods, just better. But when everyone is using the same methods, nobody stands out. A better version of the same approach is still invisible. When your marketing is like your competitors’ marketing, you lose in the millisecond. The prospect sees some version of something that was deemed unworthy of their attention in the past, now repeated by you. A blink and they move on.

Why do we gravitate toward the so-called tried-and-true marketing methods? At the heart of it is a fear of standing out. We want to look just as good as everyone else, so we act like everyone else. We don't want to look like we don't know what we're doing. We think these established businesses all do it this way, so it only makes sense to do it the same way. We equate survival with conformity.

The problem is, if we focus on fitting in, how will our prospects ever find us?

Imagine you are in a room with five hundred people wearing identical gray suits. One of these five hundred people is your soul mate. How easy is it to identify your perfect match in a sea of gray? Hard. Nearly impossible.

Now imagine there's someone wearing a red suit. That person caught your attention—in a millisecond. So instead of going one by one interviewing the five hundred other folks for the next eight hours, it's just easier to start with the red suit person—and heck, you may even convince yourself that they're the one for you simply because they stood out to you right away. This example is for a soul mate. A friggin' soul mate. And the idea of wading through a sea of gray suits for hours on end is still exhausting. So just imagine how little energy prospects will spend to seek you out in your gray suit of invisibility. What chance do you have of ever getting noticed, even if you are their soul mate?

Most businesses don't wear red when the dress code is gray. Instead they try to be a *better* gray option: a darker gray, or a lighter gray, or a grayer gray. Even if they actually *are* better, how would anyone know? They're all wearing the same color.

Trying to do the same marketing as everyone else, over and

over again, just better, will make you super frustrated. It's no wonder so many businesses think marketing is a waste of time and money. Who would be good at riding that merry-go-round? No matter which seat you hop on, they are all just painted horses on poles, going around in circles—going nowhere.

Do whatever it takes to remember this for the rest of your life. Write it down, post it on your bathroom mirror, tattoo it on your ass cheek. For God's sake, just don't forget:

Better is not better. Different is better.

Different is where you stand out within an instant, within the marketing millisecond. Arriving in red when people expect gray. Driving an old Ford F-350 pickup when everyone else shows off their (rented) Bentley convertible. Different is where you are undeniably noticeable, when you show up outside the context of what people expect.

Since my marketing epiphany, I have given keynotes to hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs. I use these events to share what I know, of course. But the hidden gem is that I also use it as an opportunity to point out the danger of the status quo. I do this through live surveys, and this one in particular is my favorite.

"Pair up and share your most effective way to bring in leads," I tell them.

After a couple of minutes, I get out my flip chart and markers. "Everyone hold up your hand. Keep it up until you hear your lead gen idea."

Like the final round of *Wheel of Fortune* when Pat Sajak grants the contestant five popular letters before they can add a few of their own in an attempt to solve the phrase, I jot down the

“big three” gimmes on the board: “word of mouth,” “client referral,” and “website.” About 95 percent of the hands go down. I ask people with their hands still up to shout out their unique approaches. “Content marketing” is a big one; when I add it, most of the remaining hands go down. People shout out a few more ideas, such as “paid ad” or “trade shows.” By the sixth or seventh idea, we’ve exhausted them all.

A room full of hundreds, sometimes thousands of business-people, all competing with each other to some degree, and they have the same six ideas. The same six ways they try to outdo each other, the same “gray suits.”

In that little demonstration, they make it clear that they are all marketing in the same way. They all answer the same questions using the same language, they all follow the same “best practice” marketing models and strategies, and yet somehow they still believe they are different from everyone else. Even *seeing* a sea of hands drop at “word of mouth” or “content” doesn’t tip them off that they are all the same to the world of prospects. Because even though they all do identical marketing, they *feel* as if they are better at it, that they stand out.

Or, worse, they take pride in the fact that they get most of their leads from client referrals. They’ll say, “We don’t need to worry about marketing; word of mouth is our lead source.” The wishy-washy word-of-mouth strategy is no strategy at all. It is putting your marketing efforts in the hands of your clients so they do it for you, at their whim.

Waiting for customers to refer you isn’t marketing. Word of mouth is a wonderful, albeit haphazard source of opportunity when it happens. The key words being “when it happens.” If a

large percentage of your new business comes through referrals and word of mouth, you aren't marketing. You are crossing your fingers that clients will market for you. You don't have control over your company's growth; your clients do. Word of mouth should be the icing, not the cake.

Marketing the same way as everyone else is white noise. The only way for you to control your lead flow—where you can throttle up leads or, if you want, throttle them down—is to market in a way that is different from your competition. Do different. That's the cake.

Max Durovic was bored. Like, really bored. As part of his job working for a California deli, he had to stand outside holding a sandwich board for hours on end. But what if he didn't just hold it? What if he spun it? Sure enough, a spinning deli sign was far more entertaining for him than standing still. So he spun it on his finger. And with that, Max stumbled into different marketing.

That summer, Max invented "sign spinning," which is basically doing acrobatic tricks with arrow-shaped signs to advertise businesses. He says it is "as much a performance art as it is outdoor advertising." Have you ever seen a sign spinner? It caught your attention, didn't it? You see signs all the freaking time. The sheer volume of signs makes them invisible. The human brain is efficient at ignoring the inconsequential. But with a little bit of magical *different dust*, and a flip, spin, and twist of a sign, now you're staring at something your mind would have otherwise ignored.

In 2002, Max founded AArrow Inc., which has grown to more than thirty offices in ten countries worldwide, booking

thousands of sign spinners. They even have an annual competition in Las Vegas. Different, done right, goes big.

A prospect's first experience with you, their first impression *of you*, is your marketing. If it is the same as every other business in your industry, your prospect can only assume you are the same, that you are just another ignorable sign. Different is marketing in a way that *no one else in the room does*. It is uncommon, unexpected, and unignorable.

Market differently. So differently that your ideal customers can't help but notice you from the sea of "top six marketing" white noise techniques your competition uses.

This is your call to arms, damn it!

You *must* market differently, because the world *needs* to discover you. Listen, you've navigated this pretty crazy journey called life to get to this moment. You might be doing this as a solo entrepreneur carrying all the burden by yourself. Or maybe you are the "new kid" who sits "somewhere in the back" of the industry. No matter your situation, status quo, good-enough, unnoticeable marketing is the risk. Taking the "risk" of getting noticed is the new safe bet.

Are you ready? This is your moment, kiddo.

The Reason You Could Fail at This

The day I emptied the truckload of my books was one of the worst, most exhausting days of my life. Yanik Silver had convinced me that marketing my book was my responsibility, but I still had most of my twenty thousand copies of *The Toilet Paper*

Entrepreneur to contend with. The distribution center charged me a one-thousand-dollar monthly storage fee. Because they weren't selling, I couldn't justify or afford the expense. I had two options: recycle the books, the soft term for turning my book into pulp, or ship them all to my house to save the carrying costs. I chose option two.

One at a time, I carried the boxes off the truck and into the basement, the attic, under my bed (replacing our box spring), in my kids' rooms, in the garage, and in the trunk, back seat, and passenger seat of my car. Sweat dripped down my body. T-shirt soaked and knees numb, I ached in places that I didn't know existed. And yet it was as if each box made me stronger. "Angrier" is perhaps a better word. I wasn't angry at myself; I became angry at my competition. I had twenty thousand copies of a book that could serve twenty thousand lives. I saw it as hoarding my own books from people who needed them. That pissed me off.

At the end of the day, every box unloaded and the truck long gone, I sat on the front stoop of my house and committed to sell each and every damn copy of those books sitting in my house. Not because I needed to sell them; because my future readers needed to read them.

I kept doing different, experimenting with new marketing strategies that would get my ideal reader's attention. Even after I started to get noticed as an author, even after I secured my first traditional publishing book deal, I continued to focus on selling that book. And I did. I sold every single copy. And then sold one hundred thousand more.

I could have thrown in the towel that day and let the books

collect dust. I could have sent that truck to the dump. I could have played it safe and shifted my focus back to businesses I had run in the past. But I knew I had something my readers needed, and I had a responsibility to market the hell out of it.*

Ten years ago I made a vow. I will forever find ways to make every business owner on this planet aware of what I have, even if my competition is bigger or more established or has a boatload of money. Because I believe my offer is the best solution for my readers, I have a responsibility to make them aware. I will never again wait for anyone to find me; I will make them see me.

You must make a vow, too. A vow to serve the members of your community by making them take notice. But a pledge is not enough; you must get past the biggest barrier to effective marketing: fear.

If you give in to fear—of the unknown, of standing out, of being vulnerable—you will not pull this off. Giving in to fear is the ultimate dream killer. You know that, I'm sure. Still, it's important that you understand that this book will help you only if you take action. You have to make the choice, right now, to stick with this marketing system, despite your fear.

Do you want to be safe or successful? This is a profoundly serious question. Ponder this, please, before you answer. I'm guessing you will say “successful,” but do you mean it? Do you really, really mean it? Sadly, most people don't.

Most people choose safety over success and demonstrate that

* If you want to know more about how I marketed my books, you can read about it in the June 2013 *Forbes* article written by Dorie Clark, “How Mike Michalowicz Went from Unknown Self-Published Author to Mainstream Publishing Success.” You can access it on my website at mikemichalowicz.com.

through their actions. They *say* they want to be daring and bold, but they are not willing to discard the security of their commonality cocoon. They are afraid to put themselves out there, to risk humiliation or ridicule. They don't want to spin the sign—not for fear of dropping it as much as the fear of being *seen* dropping it. If you aren't willing to break the rules—which, notably, aren't *the* rules, but are *your* rules—you will also be stuck in the safe-feeling land of the unnoticed.

Marketing is not a game of hide-and-seek. It is a mission to be as obvious and noticeable as a lighthouse. Don't hope to be found. Demand people see you. You're the beacon of the best choice in the fog of mediocrity. I'll say it again, because you can't hear it enough: you have a responsibility to outmarket your competition. Your journey may have you riding the bench at times, or a lot of the time, but unless you try and keep trying, you will simply be that “person with so much potential” who never gets discovered. Dare to step up and stand out. Dare to be different. The world depends on it.

Mission Meets Nemesis

On a hike with my daughter along the rim of the Grand Canyon, I looked out over the expansive chasm and wondered, What would motivate a person to get from one side to the other? A dream, yes. It would have to be a big dream. But would that be enough to stick with it, no matter what the ordeal? Maybe not. Many people have given up on their dreams before completing them.

But what if it were a mission? What if my daughter were on the other side of the canyon? What if her life depended on my crossing? Hiking down one side and up the other for a grueling twenty-plus-mile hike? And what if a villain were crossing the same canyon, with the intent of destroying her? Now it is not a dream; it is a mission. The life of a loved one is in imminent jeopardy. And the outcome is fully in my hands. If I make the extraordinary journey, she lives. If I fail, she perishes and so does my soul.

The clients you serve are in peril. The bad guy is going for them. You have something bigger than a dream here. You have a mission: save your clients. And you must get to them before the villain does, regardless of the challenges you will face and the size of the chasm you must cross.

Without giving it much thought, answer this question: Who is your nemesis? Mine is a guy who is the picture-perfect example of the info-manipulators I loathed when I launched my first book, except he probably *does* now own the private jet in the background of his photos. He promotes bigger houses, more cars, and piles of gold as the definition of success. He defines winning not by serving his customers but by the failure of his competitors. Every time I see a pic of this guy, I cringe. He represents everything I despise about business-focused “thought leaders.” The community his message speaks to and serves uses hundred-dollar bills to light cigars and spits on the “losers” who can’t make enough money to do the same. The problem is, because he markets well, people will listen to him. And if they listen to him, greed wins, and honest business owners lose.

To keep me motivated, I have a picture of him in my office.

Not just any picture—the most obnoxious of all his obnoxious promo shots. Looking at it reminds me that I am on a mission to eradicate entrepreneurial poverty through service. For the good guys to win, I must outmarket my nemesis.

It's not an ego thing. It's an old-as-time, us-versus-them thing. **Coke versus Pepsi. Joe Frazier versus Muhammad Ali. Nerds versus jocks.** And let me tell you, that can be just as motivating—if not *more* motivating—than being of service. I can either throw in the towel or, with an enemy ready to destroy the exact people I am out to serve, say, “It's go time.” Then nothing will stop me from crossing the chasm.

We all need a nemesis. It doesn't have to be a person; it could be another business, an ideology, or something harmful to your community. We all need someone or something to fight for (our mission) and someone or something to fight against (our nemesis). When we have both, we become a street fighter for our dreams.

Want to know the name of my nemesis? Well, I'm not going to tell you. I won't give him that power. You can try to trick me into telling you, lock me in a room, force me to watch hours of “lowlights” of Virginia Tech football history, even give me an atomic wedgie, I still won't tell. This is my battle, not yours. And as much as I can't stand what he stands for, I don't want to send any negativity his way. I simply commit to outmarket him. Relentlessly.

Your Turn

I have compiled a list of action items and considerations for you at the end of each chapter in this book. Each item builds on the next. Don't skip any. Becoming a Different Doer (a person who does Get Different marketing) starts with a mindset shift. That's why the first chapter is a rallying cry. You need to realize that your mission is bigger than your fear. I am not trying to void you of fear here; I am trying to give you courage as you build marketing grit. To build your marketing grit, you need to start taking action immediately.

Don't bullshit yourself with an "I'll get back to this in a little bit" comfortable lie. Do the end-of-chapter actions. In most cases they will take you less than fifteen minutes. Just fifteen minutes. For permanent change. Permanently better marketing. Don't delay. Do.

1. Answer each of the following questions:
 - a) Why must you outmarket the competition?
 - b) Why is it more important for you to take the risk of getting noticed than defaulting to the comfort of going unnoticed?
 - c) Are you willing to do whatever it takes to step up and stand out?
 - d) What will happen to you, your business, and your clients if you don't?

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2. Next, identify your nemesis. Who or what is hurting the community you are meant to serve? Is there an unscrupulous person or company that is winning prospects' attention? Is there a whole group of marketers selling crap to your clients? Is there an ideology that needs to be squashed once and for all? What do you stand for and who or what do you stand against? Nail down your nemesis.
3. Commit to your marketing mission by committing to me. Doing different is scary, I get it, but allowing your mission to fail as your nemesis becomes victorious is way worse. Are you ready to commit to your responsibility to market, regardless of the fear it may evoke in you? I want to know! Email me with the subject line "I'm a Different Doer!" (so I can easily find your message in my in-box) to mike@mikemichalowicz.com. Share your mission in your note, and mention why different will serve you and your community. And, if you feel compelled to share your nemesis, I promise not to tell.
4. Download the free resources at gogetdifferent.com. The tools there will help you deploy all the techniques you are about to learn.

CHAPTER TWO



The DAD Marketing Framework

Gabriel Piña loves cigars. When he arrived at the four-day retreat I facilitated in the Smoky Mountains, he carried with him a backpack and a rolling suitcase. The backpack was for his clothes; the suitcase was for his cigars.

You'd think a guy whose hobby is stogies would have a certain Rat Pack swagger, you know, like Dean Martin or Sammy Davis Jr. But Gabe? He dragged that suitcase behind him like a man at the end of his rope.

Gabe founded Piña Business Services in 2007 to provide accounting and bookkeeping services to local businesses. He marketed using the common methods in his industry: the corner booth at the conferences, email to prospects, free "industry reports." Of everything he tried, he relied heavily on word-of-mouth referrals to grow his company. Despite these efforts, he

struggled to get enough clients to make ends meet. Bills and debt piled up, and up, and up. After relocating to Wyoming from San Diego in 2014, he had to contend with the triple whammy of being virtually unknown in the area, relying on word-of-mouth for new leads, and a looming bankruptcy. To be unknown and unnoticeable is a deadly combo that kills many good businesses.

The few connections that dribbled in were from all types of businesses. And, because Gabe's marketing presence (or lack thereof) wasn't different from other accountants, hardly any of those leads panned out. Being ignorable was crushing Gabe. That's why Gabe decided to go all in on different. Hence the trip to the Volunteer State.

When he arrived in Knoxville for the retreat, he faced two choices: stay the same and finally close up shop or "roll the dice" by doing marketing in an all-new way. Gabe is a fighter, and he was all in on saving—and growing—his business. We quickly decided the best solution would be to niche his offering and focus on serving a community that allowed him to combine his passion with his expertise. When you market to one community consistently, you quickly find the different that works and the different that doesn't. It allows you to do rapid marketing experiments and find effective, different methods fast.

"I want to be the authority in the accounting space for cigar shops," he told me on day two. "But I'm not having any luck getting new clients."

Gabe is a sharp accountant with a stellar reputation, and he knows the cigar world. It shouldn't have been too difficult to attract shop owners, right? In theory yes. The problem was, he

still relied on his clients' referrals. He was unknown *and* unnoticeable. To save his business, he would have to market to his community like it had never been marketed to before. Not through an onslaught of mailers. Not through a desperate "you need to hire me, pleeeeeeeze" campaign. Through high-yielding, different marketing.

At the retreat, I walked Gabe through the same framework I'm about to share with you in this chapter. He came up with a different idea, evaluated it, and then conducted a trial. Within two weeks he completed the testing, within one month he had active and consistent lead flow, and within *six* months he had added six figures of additional annual revenue. That was a big deal for his business health, and worth celebrating with a damn good cigar. In fact, the experiment worked so well that Gabe adopted it as one of his key ongoing marketing strategies. I'll give you the specifics of how he did it in a moment.

Just before I sat down to write his story, I scanned Gabe's social media to check in on him and saw his post about buying his first brand-new car with profit he earned from his business. Now he has that swagger—not because he's the "cool cat" cigar dude—because he has the confidence that comes when you know you have complete control over your growth. You know how to get new clients, and *you* decide how to throttle the leads. To achieve this, you first need to have the essential understanding of *why* this process worked for him and why it will work for *you*.

The Science behind Different

“Crunching leaves are ignored, but the unexpected is watched . . . closely,” Mr. Fordyce, my sixth-grade science teacher said during our first class. He delivered these words as though he were addressing the nation: lab coat, headset microphone, and all (for a room of nineteen students). That began our study of the cave-man mind.

The word “caveman” is a catchall phrase for the prehistoric Neanderthal, *Homo erectus*, and that Gigantor football player dude you knew in high school. Cave people were nomadic and formed hunter-gatherer tribes. For the most part, the men hunted food and the women gathered food. Regardless of whether they were hunting or gathering, their brains had the same objective: to ignore the superfluous and laser focus on the different.

When out and about doing the hunting and gathering thing, if they heard a recurring sound, such as leaves crunching or twigs snapping beneath their feet, their brains filtered out that extraneous noise, while sounds of opportunity, like deer hooves pounding on the ground, immediately captured their focus. Other times, they heard a sound that was a known threat, like the rumble of a woolly mammoth stampede, and they dashed toward shelter even before conscious thought kicked in, their feet spinning and kicking up dust à la Fred Flintstone.

And sometimes they heard a sound they just couldn’t identify—an unfamiliar sound that just didn’t compute. Now their minds paid full attention. It went all tunnel vision on them, scrutinizing the unexpected. Because that sound could mean that they had found their dinner—or it could mean that they *were* dinner.

Back then, prioritizing the different sounds and evaluating unexpected things was a matter of life and death.

Fast-forward to modern times. While technology and society have advanced at lightning speed, our brains have advanced far more slowly. Our good ol' gray matter is still designed to survive at the most primal level. Your mind is extremely efficient at avoiding known dangers, grasping opportunities, and ignoring the inconsequential (which is almost everything). However, one thing trips up the noggin every single time: different. But before we dive into that, let's take a look at *why* we ignore.

Have you ever noticed how quickly you can get over things? How quickly things become more of the same blah, blah, blah? It's called habituation. For example, the very first time you got one of those "Hey, Friend!" marketing emails, you probably paid attention. Who is this long-lost friend emailing me? I haven't heard from "friend" since who knows when. And the fact that my good old friend calls me Friend, as opposed to my actual name, is so cool of them. Oh, Friend, you are just too much!

The next "Hey, Friend!" email ain't so exciting, and by the third one, we have realized that this is simply the newest internet-marketer craze. You're not a "Friend," you're a wallet. Now "Hey, Friend" emails become irrelevant, simply more white noise. Enter habituation, the process of ignoring repetitive, meaningless triggers. Blink—delete.

The habituation process exists within the reticular formation of our brains. The reticular formation is a network that emanates from the brainstem and maintains overall consciousness. It is a net, both literally and figuratively. It's the first line of defense

against the millions of stimuli around us at all times. Right now, you could look down at your hand and spend the rest of eternity examining it. What is skin made of? Who thought of the word “skin”? Gosh, hand skin is just amazing. And on and on and on. There are countless things, right in front of you, always vying for your attention. But your reticular formation is doing its primary job perfectly: ignoring practically everything.

Have you ever seen a baby fast asleep while a fire truck roars by, sirens blaring? I have. In New York City. Many babies are so used to the traffic sounds they sleep right through it. That’s habituation. And when a newborn baby first sleeps through the night without making a peep, the silence will often wake up their mother, who races to the crib to check on her baby. Why? She’s tuned in to the unfamiliar—the silence—and perceives it to be a potentially serious situation. Maybe the baby stopped breathing, for example. Typical is ignored. Atypical is analyzed. That’s how the reticular formation rolls.

Think about your last flight. On the airplane, seat belts click into place; people open and shut overhead compartments. It’s all background noise. We recognize those sounds and our brains know to ignore them. Heck, it can be hard not to doze off as the flight attendants do their safety demonstration.

However, when the dude three rows back start wildly waving his hands and speaking in a booming voice, we all crane our necks to check out what’s going on. We want to know: Is he a threat or free entertainment? Is he going to get the plane grounded or will he make us laugh? We watch what is unexpected—closely.

Have you ever seen the Virgin America safety demonstration? A few years back it created a music video that was so funny and

wild, most people actually watched it. They ignored the flight attendant standing in the aisle, demonstrating how to buckle a seat belt, zeroing in on the video the first time it played. And likely the second time, too, just to make sure they didn't miss anything. By the third flight and viewing of the safety dance video—not the “Safety Dance” video, my fellow Gen Xers—habituation had set in. Still, Virgin had won attention, for a short period of time, by being different. Different is the most effective way to get attention, but the shelf life is short. Therefore, different is not a onetime event, it must become an ingrained practice.

When something is different, the reticular formation triggers a cascading effect in the brain to analyze the situation, and the first priority is threat analysis. If we are in harm's way, it is critical to get out of it. But once the different thing is identified as safe, then our brains look for opportunity. Will I benefit from this? If the assessment is no, then our brains add this different, “Hey, Friend”—typethingtothecategoryoftheinconsequential—something to be ignored. Opportunity exists in that little window between different, when the brain pays absolute attention to it, and the qualification of threats or opportunities, before the brain chooses to ignore this different thing forevermore. In those few milliseconds, you make your millions. Or billions. Or gazillions. And if you fail to respect or cater to this different-opportunity moment in the brain, you will be stuck in mediocrity—and so will your wallet.

The DAD Marketing Framework

We're still cave people when it comes to mental processing. Our brains still filter out the familiar and only take notice when something is different. This is why it is vital that you stop marketing the same way everyone else in your industry does and start "doing different." The reticular formation, the net, captures the endless stream of irrelevant junk and dumps it. When you market to your prospects, you must do so in a way that passes through the net. Fail to do that and you go into the heap of the ignored.

We avoid the threats, grab the opportunities, and tune out the irrelevant—remember, it's all about *finding* dinner and not *being* dinner. To market effectively to our ideal customers, we need to make sure that we get noticed, and that our ideal customers view what we do to get noticed as an opportunity, not a threat. But our work doesn't end there. Getting noticed by the right people takes us only so far. We need them to take action. This is the foundation of the three-step DAD Marketing Framework.

Here's how the DAD breaks down:

	DIFFERENTIATE	ATTRACT	DIRECT
GOAL	Attention	Engagement	Compliance
METHOD	Present something uncommon, unknown or unexpected.	Demonstrate, exhibit or express opportunity or benefit.	Specify a reasonable action to get closer to or gain the opportunity/benefit.

Figure 1.0 The DAD Marketing Framework

1. **DIFFERENTIATE!** *Do different to get noticed . . .*
You've already learned why different works. This first step in the framework is to identify a marketing approach that stands out in a sea of sameness. What will make your prospect's caveman mind stop and pay attention? How can you engage them during the marketing milliseconds?
2. **ATTRACT!** *. . . in a way that attracts your ideal prospects . . .*
Next, ensure that your approach will appeal to the people you want to serve, not turn them off. How will you establish your marketing as an opportunity they will consider instead of a threat they will avoid?
3. **DIRECT!** *. . . and directs them to act.*
Finally, your strategy must compel your ideal prospects to take a specific action you desire. Does the prospect see the reward of doing what you ask as greater than the risk of taking that action? And will their compliance with your directive help you achieve your marketing goals?

To sum up the DAD: *Do different to get noticed in a way that attracts your ideal prospects and directs them to act.* That's it. That's the framework. It's simple, yet powerful. When you follow it, you will land new prospects. Every. Single. Time.

Like a doing the "YMCA" dance, you must do DAD in the exact sequence for it to make sense. If you missed the "YMCA"

dance, that means you either missed the eighties (good on you) or you've never been to a wedding, like, ever. Google is your friend. Look it up. The dance begins with a *Y* up in the air, followed by *M* to your head and so forth. DAD works the same way. You need to it in order. *D* to the *A* to the other *D*. They are the marketing “dance” steps you must master.

Always Differentiate first. You *must* gain attention by marketing differently. Most people skip this step and just try to put their most attractive offer out there. But you can have the greatest, prettiest, bestest offer in the whole wide world, and it will flop if no one notices it. Once you Differentiate, you do the next choreographed move and make it attractive to the people you want to—you guessed it, compadre—Attract. And you wrap things up by telling them specifically what to do next through a directive. Three steps, in the same sequence, every time. D-A-D. Always.

Sometimes, you're sure that your idea will stop people in their tracks, but all you get is crickets. For example, for my last book, *Fix This Next*, I created a parody called *Drink This Next*. It had the same design as my book cover, although instead of the yellow color, it was purple, and we hollowed out the inside so it could fit a flask of bourbon. I *loved* this idea and was sure that it would create a lot of buzz. But when we set up a test website to gauge interest? Crickets. No one wanted it—except my mom, ironically. Sigh. I still love that idea, but it failed to garner any attention. Even though I felt it was different, the actions of the prospects proved it wasn't different enough for them to take notice, so it was off the table.

I've also come up empty with the second step: Attract. I had what I thought was a great idea to garner new applicants for an

open position. In the classified ad, I requested an interview . . . at three a.m. The ad got noticed, but the type of people who showed up at that hour were *not* the right fit for our company. I had thought that I would attract go-getters, people willing to go above and beyond to get the “right” job. Instead, I ended up with people who just got kicked out of the bar, and one UPS delivery guy who was so tired that he fell asleep in the waiting room. Odd interview time equals different but not attractive. It’s important to remember that we don’t want to be different just to be different, or we risk turning away the right prospects.

Imagine you are a criminal defense attorney. (I know. Dream job.) To win trials you decide to do something different to engage the jury. You wear a clown costume to the trial, complete with the big floppy shoes, squirting daisy on your lapel, and that *whacka whacka* horn thing. Yes, that is different. It guarantees attention. But unless your trial is with the clown community, it isn’t attractive. It might be attractive at a five-year-old’s birthday party, though even that is questionable. But man, oh man, the moment you do the second loop in the courtroom on your mini-bike, the jury is squirming to get away from you. No matter the evidence, you have lost the case. Different garners attention. Attraction garners desire.

But the DAD is not complete without a clear, singular directive. Now that you have the prospect’s attention and they are engaged, you need to tell them what the hell to do. When I was talking with Jeff Walker, he explained that marketing is every step you take to get the customer to the buying decision, and the sale is the final action on their decision to buy. So your clear, singular directive should get them to the next step.

Forgetting to include a specific call to action is one of the most common marketing mistakes I've seen, and, admittedly, have done—repeatedly. One of the most memorable—and the most expensive in terms of time and cost—was the One-Nut Guy video I created to promote my book *The Pumpkin Plan*. We cast a crusty old local actor, hired a film crew, and created a series of videos.* The first one generated more than one hundred thousand views, which was awesome. The only problem was, I didn't include a clear and specific call to action. The videos were different enough to get noticed, my readers found them funny (an indicator of attractiveness) and resonated with the message, and yet to this day, I have no idea whether it actually generated any book sales or compelled anyone to sign up for my mailing list. I never heard of anyone buying the book because of it and, double shame on me, had nothing to track to see if it worked.

Along with being specific, the Direct step must be reasonable. Maybe my marketing win is to sell you a house, but, once I have your attention, I wouldn't immediately ask you to plop down a million bucks on the spot. It's way too much, way too soon. It is *unreasonable*.

An excessive ask will cause prospects to walk (or run) away. Conversely, inadequate asks will slow down (or stop) any progress toward the outcome you want. Once I catch your attention with uniqueness and maintain it with relevance, the Direct step must be specific so you know what to do, and reasonable so you feel safe doing it and move efficiently toward your goal.

* You can still find my One-Nut Guy videos on YouTube. Just search for "one nut" and "Michalowicz." Yes, I get my own joke.

I'm no stranger to marketing fails. But I don't regret a single one, because I learned from all of them. Every time I failed, after kicking myself, I would ask, What in the process was wrong? Where did it go off the rails? In hindsight it is always obvious that it was inevitably a failure in one (or a mix) of these three simple steps of DAD.

But, alas, it took me years to “decode” the Differentiate, Attract, and Direct steps. I tested the framework on my own businesses, and those of colleagues, clients, and friends, and refined and simplified it until I knew for sure it would deliver consistent results. None of the steps ever worked on their own. Different always gets noticed, but it can also send people running. Attracting always gets people interested, but without different, it doesn't get noticed. Different takes attracting to work, and vice versa, but in order to get results, you also need to give direction. I had marketing that got noticed and that people consumed—cue the one-nut video—but didn't get results. A Direct fail.

The best solutions always work with humans as they are, rather than trying to force them to change. The DAD system works because it fits with our natural wiring, the way our cave people brains filter, analyze, and act on information. Differentiate, Attract, Direct. That order, that simple, every time. The rest of this book shows you exactly *how* to use DAD with the different marketing system, but just *simply knowing* the three-step process will massively improve your marketing game.

From this point forward, I want you to use the DAD Marketing Framework to evaluate whatever marketing crosses your path. It can be your own marketing, or a TV commercial, junk mail, direct mail, an internet ad, a radio spot, email blasts, a

billboard, product packaging, an elevator pitch, *anything*. Simply ask yourself, “Does DAD approve?”

Try it now. Look at any marketing piece that is around you. If you’re reading this book in the rarefied space of nature, then you can use the cover. Book covers are packaging, and packaging is marketing. Whatever you are looking at right now, ask, “Does DAD approve?” Go through each of the three elements. Does it Differentiate? Does it Attract? Does it Direct? If you say yes to all three, it passes. If you say no to one or more of the three steps, then ask yourself how you would fix that step. It is that simple.

Now I want you to go find another piece of marketing and do the DAD test again. Did you do it? Great. Now I want you to go do it once more.

By the third DAD test, you will have it ingrained for life. You’re welcome.

After Gabe Piña shared that his ideal prospect was a cigar shop owner, we completed the DAD Marketing Framework for him—in minutes. Sometimes, different is something you already do that your competition does *not* do, and you just need to amplify it. This was the case for Gabe. He’d made a practice of helping people for free, without asking for anything in return. His competition did not do work for free, beyond the complimentary consultative call, which was really just a glorified sales call. Gabe did this out of natural generosity, not for personal gain, but he had since noticed that many of the people who received that help eventually hired him. That was our starting point.

Then, we considered how he might provide free assistance on a larger scale to differentiate. Free content, perhaps? A digital download? A direct mail campaign, with helpful tips?

“I don’t want to send a glorified brochure,” he told me.

In our brainstorm, we talked about Gabe’s favorite business book, one that detailed a philosophy and system that he used when working with his clients. He came up with the idea to send that book to ideal prospects.

We ran the idea through the DAD Marketing Framework, checking off the components. He had a different marketing approach that would help him get noticed. Check. That approach would attract—not repel—his ideal customers. Check. And it included a clear and specific ask. Check. DAD approved!

Gabe returned from the Smoky Mountains retreat ready to run a test. He sent ten books with a Post-it on the first page that read “I hope this book serves you as much as it has served me,” along with his name and email.

Getting the gift of a book in the mail is unexpected and different, at least for Gabe’s prospects, so he got attention. However, many people don’t have time to read a book, so most of them shelved it and got on with their day. Gabe tweaked the experiment and tested again.

This time, Gabe added *five* sticky notes. He placed them on key pages with messages such as “This paragraph gets results! Hope it serves you” and “Don’t skip this page!” He knew people may not read the book, but they would look at the sticky notes because (a) it was easy, and (b) humans are naturally curious. The final sticky note pointed to a summary of the concept of the book. On the note Gabe wrote, “This will make your business achieve your goals. Text me and I will walk you through this, gratis.” He added his cell number at the end of the note.

Again, Gabe mailed a book to ten new, ideal prospects. This

time, he had nailed the DAD components. It was different (a book in the mail), prospects were attracted to it (the sticky notes saved the prospects time and built anticipation), and it had a direct call to action (text Gabe to get free help doing it right). Gabe knew that if he could wow the prospect with the free help, they would likely want to hire him for all the future help they needed.

This different marketing approach worked even better than planned. Not only did Gabe pick up a client, seven prospects thanked him publicly for the book and posted pictures of the signed page—not signed by the author, but by Gabe himself. Genius! They added their own messages: “Thanks for helping me improve my business,” and “Gabe Piña is the man!” Not too shabby a result for a second test run of ten books.

The experiment a success, Gabe rolled it out. He now mails an average of five books a week, which lands him two or three clients a month. Sometimes, he gets a call from a prospect who didn’t respond right away, saying something like, “Hey, I got the book you sent a few months back. Can we talk?” If he wants to speed things up, he’ll send out more books. If he wants to slow things down, he mails fewer books. Gabe is in *control of his business growth*. You can be, too.

The effect on Gabe’s bottom line has been nothing short of game changing. And it is all a result of following the Get Different system. The cherry on top? Many of the cigar store owners reciprocate by sending Gabe free cigars. Now his collection is growing faster than ever with gifts from prospects. Do you feel me? Gabe’s marketing is getting him both clients *and* a continual stream of gifts. What marketing does that? Different does, baby!

Different Is Just a Series of Steps

I'm not going to sugarcoat this: You are up against a powerful force that could take you down before you finish the next chapter. That force is the pull toward sameness. You're human, so that means you are more comfortable doing what you've already done and what other people in your industry already do. We humans have a constant need to conform. As much as we want to get noticed, we are also terrified of doing something noticeable. Fear is the number one obstacle to creating remarkable marketing.

The only way to beat that gravitational pull toward sameness is to take action. You need to punch fear right in the nose. You must do, regardless of your trepidations. And the best way to get yourself to take action, no matter what, is to break down the steps into itty-bitty “you won't quit-ty”—size steps.

Justin Wise is a marketing genius. I wouldn't put it past him that his last name came through Get Different Experiments; he's that much of a Different Doer himself. Wise has a long track record of helping his clients get results. This is why I entrusted him to lead our Get Different Coaching System. Some people need coaching so they won't reject their best ideas, and so they will be accountable to them. Justin and our team walk people through the Get Different system and help implement the experiments.* Here's how Justin explains the power of breaking down the steps required to implement your different marketing:

“What's the first thing doctors do after an organ transplant?

* Go to gogetdifferent.com to see how we can help your organization and ensure that you are doing Get Different right.

They pump you with a ton of drugs so your body won't reject the organ. Your body views the organ as a foreign object and will try to kill it. That's what your immune system is supposed to do. The drugs trick your immune system into believing, 'Hey, this liver is my liver. This heart is my heart.' That's what breaking down the process does for you—it almost outwits you into *not* rejecting a worthy, different idea. Small steps are the antidote to rejection. And, in doing so, your business thrives with its new marketing.”

When I asked Justin for an example I could share with you, he told me about Valerie Donohue, owner of ChatterBoss, a virtual assistant firm based in Brooklyn, New York. “Val called me and said, ‘Hey, I want you guys to run my ads.’ I told her, ‘We can run your ads eventually, but ads are really expensive. I’d rather have you go into ad placement when you are already over client capacity.’ People use ads for lead gen, and when that doesn’t work as well as they’d hoped, they are often told to go bigger with ads the next time. Spending five grand a month, plus an agency fee is not the solution. It’s better to use ads to augment lead gen, not create it.”

In talking with Val, Justin learned that she had wanted to run ads because more than 70 percent of her business came through referrals from one strategic partner and she wanted to diversify her lead sources so she could grow.

When Justin introduced the DAD Marketing Framework to Val, a CEO with a seven-figure business, she was shocked that she’d never thought about “this stuff” before. In one coaching session, they came up with a different marketing idea she could easily try. Like Gabe Piña, Val had a long history of being generous with her clients, and she regularly sent gifts to them. What

distinguishes Val's company from others in her industry is Val's hires are not just task oriented, they are problem solvers. Building both on her generosity and her company's unique positioning, she decided to send custom baseball hats to prospects with the words "Thinking Cap" emblazoned on the front panel and a request to contact Val for a free consultation. It was different from the typical pens and water bottles her competitors often sent. And it was a demonstration of how her virtual assistants (VAs) could do some of the thinking for the business owners they serve. If prospects hired her firm, they could take off the thinking cap and leave it to the VAs.

Within minutes, the fear took hold. "She looked like a deer in headlights," Justin explained. It was fun for her to come up with the (damn good) thinking cap idea, but as soon as Val started to think about actually *doing* it, she froze. She was overwhelmed by all the things she would have to do to pull it off. Or better said, she was overwhelmed by all the things she *didn't* know that she would need to know to pull it off. I call this "the crash"—when your enthusiasm and confidence nosedive. If you don't pull up on the yoke, your confidence plane crashes with a "this won't work" or "let's back-burner it for now" excuse. This is where great, different ideas go to die.

"These aren't hard things to do," Justin said. "But when people hear the word 'different,' it becomes this nebulous concept. They become overwhelmed with not knowing what needs to happen next. In actuality, it's just a series of steps. The same as anything else they do in business every day."

So, Justin helped Val to break down her thinking cap marketing idea into small, "non-rejectable organ"-size pieces. First,

call the swag company and get a quote. Next, make a list of one hundred people you want to work with. Then, get their email and mailing addresses.

“I kept asking her, ‘What happens after that?’ until she had the whole plan in manageable steps, along with who on her team would do each step,” Justin explained.

Val’s first mailing of fifty hats brought immediate results. Clients and prospects sent her pics of themselves wearing them (there is that reciprocity thing again), and she landed two new clients, one who cut her a twelve-thousand-dollar check right out of the gate and the other processed an eight-thousand-dollar payment. Move through the fears, take immediate action, land two clients, collect twenty large? Not too shabby.

To push through that gravitational “sameness” force pulling you down, break your first different marketing experiment into simple, manageable steps. Then, share them with someone who will hold you accountable.



“Your book is great, but it doesn’t apply to me. We are in an established industry. Your different strategy will require too much change and too much time. Good stuff, Mike, but all theory.”

My old college fraternity buddy, Greg Eckler (his nickname, which I am sworn to never share, is Greg Elk-Terd. Oops) owns a real estate agency. He kindly offered to read an earlier draft of my book and share his critical feedback. I sent the book, and twelve days later my phone rang.

“What’s up, My Cow Shits?” he said. Fraternity nicknames die hard.

“Hey, Terd,” I replied.

That’s when he said, “Your book is great, but it doesn’t apply to me. . . .”

You may not be surprised that this is the most common feedback I hear about *Get Different*. You may be feeling that way, too. That the implementation will be too hard. That doing different will take too long. That huge effort is required. And with that, you may “discard” the book into the category of “Oh yeah, I read it. Great book. Reeaaaally great book.” And do nothing. That would be a shame. Opportunity lost.

As much as I wanted to invoke the lifelong fraternity rule of forty-eight paddles by the brothers for insulting an elder—I’m eight months older than he is, after all—I did the brotherly thing of helping a brother out.

“Greg, *Get Different* is not about the big changes or big moves. It is about doing what no one else does, at the most micro level. Look at all the common, industry-standard stuff people do in your industry. Pick the easiest and lowest hanging fruit to stand out. Determine where the industry is all apples and insert an orange.”

“Well, all real estate agents argue the same points. They all are professional. They all are thorough. They all are great. But honestly, we are better than them. I just get frustrated that our customers can’t see it.”

“Dooooood. Did you really read the book? Remember, better is not better. Better can’t be seen. It is hidden behind the cloak of industry sameness. A better apple is indistinguishable

when it is among other apples. You need people to notice you before they can really see you and see why you are better. You need to insert an orange. It is that simple.” Then I added, “Let’s find the different right now.”

It took us less than two minutes to have the first idea.

I asked, “Tell me about the customer experience. Tell me what every real estate agent does to sell a house.”

“A selling agent will list the house online, perhaps run it in a paper, and put up a for sale sign on the property.”

“Hold on, wait, does everyone put up a for sale sign? Does every house get one?”

“Yeah, it’s standard practice,” Greg said.

Big fat hint here: When something is standard practice in an industry, that is an opportunity to be different.

“Tell me how the signs are posted,” I said.

“They are put on the home’s property, nearest the road. The signs are usually a sandwich board type or are a posted sign.”

“How often are the signs posted that way?”

“All the time. It’s standard marketing practice,” Greg said.

“What if the signs were different? What if it was a small wind-mill. One of the tall types that you see in a garden? And what if the sign was mounted to that?” I asked.

“I have never seen that. No one . . .”

Greg paused. Then I finished his sentence for him. “Yeah, Greg. No one does that.”

An orange among apples.

When you, my reading friend, come up with an approach that inspires you to say, “No one does that,” you have found a

different idea. Greg had his first idea: a windmill house for for sale signs.

Different is not some massive change. It rarely is. Small changes that are different win. Different is hardly ever outrageous, but it is always atypical. The key is to break through the white noise of sameness. In many cases it doesn't take much.

Greg is off to test now. Maybe the windmill thing will work. Maybe it won't. The point is, he's off to implement a simple change that, if it tests successfully, he can use as his company's new "standard practice," which is anything but standard marketing in the industry.

If anyone knows different works, it's the police. Think about it. They *have* to get your attention. Otherwise, how will you know you're being pulled over because you were so busy blasting "I Can't Drive 55" by Sammy Hagar that you didn't realize the speed limit had changed? (Not that I would know anything about that.) Here's the interesting thing about those police sirens—they've changed. The lights on the cars have, too. Many precincts have done away with the old pattern of flashing red-and-blue lights and the iconic low-high-low-high wail of the sirens. Now we have randomized blinking lights and chirps, honks, and squeaks. You already know the reason why: our brains are wired to ignore the familiar and notice the unexpected (aka different.)

Notice that the changes to sirens and lights aren't radical, so sometimes they still go unnoticed by some people. I know I've been guilty of it, distracted by a killer tune on the radio, or, you know, by my own brilliant thoughts. But throw in a few more

new sounds, maybe some random chirps, and bingo! Now they have my attention. Now I'm having my "oh, shit" moment. Was I speeding? Is my brake light out? Will I get arrested for playing Sammy Hagar hits? 'Cause I should. (On a profoundly serious note, I'm a white guy, so the thoughts and fears that play through my mind in that situation are likely far different from those of a person of color. I can't even begin to comprehend what some people have experienced, from police brutality and the soul-quaking fear sirens and lights can evoke.)

You don't have to change everything. You don't have to wait for a genius idea. You don't have to do something wild or complicated or expensive. Your different could be *just different enough* to get noticed. A few new sounds. Random patterns. Chirp, chirp. Done deal.

You don't have to be fearless or a superhero to pull off a Get Different Experiment. You simply need a few ideas, a bit of gumption, and the courage to proceed despite your fears. In the next chapter, we'll go deep on ideation. Even if you think you don't have a creative bone in your body, you'll easily come up with something to test.

I promise: you've got this.

Your Turn

Before we move on, let's first find out how other people would describe your different. Being totally transparent here—I want you to see how friggin' awesome and valued you are by the

people who know you. If you don't see how you and your company are unique, that will undermine the DAD Marketing Framework.

You know those fun house mirrors at carnivals that show you a distorted view of your body? Most of us don't see our true selves. We exaggerate flaws and downplay our strengths, which can make it challenging to come up with inspired ideas and even more challenging to take action on those ideas. Let's start to fix that.

Step 1: Identify twelve people who know you (or your company) well. Four of the people should be new relationships of less than one year. The next four should be people who have known you (or your company) for over one year and less than ten. And the last group of four people are people who have known you (or your company) for ten years or more. You don't need to be in active communication or relationships with these individuals. You do need to have a way to contact them.

Step 2: Send the following message to each of the twelve contacts you have listed above:

The author of the book I am reading gave me an assignment I need to complete immediately. I am required to pick someone who knows me well, so I would love your help! I need to know what you feel my "Difference Factor" is: something I do better or

differently than anyone else. Your response doesn't need to be long. A sentence will do. I will use your insights to improve our business positioning. Thank you so much!

If you are trying to identify your company's uniqueness instead of your own, change the text to say, "I am required to pick someone who knows my company well" and "I need to know what you think makes our company different from most others: something we do better or differently than anyone else."

Step 3: Review the responses you receive from the contacts and identify the three most common observations made about your Difference Factor. You need at least ten responses for this exercise to be effective. If you don't reach that threshold, send more messages.

Step 4: With the top three Difference Factors identified in step three, consider how these themes distinguish you and your company.

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