



171. 5 Marketing Mistakes Costing You Customers

Janice Hostager: [00:00:00] Hey, and welcome back to my weekly marketing. Entrepreneurship, oh man, it's hard. You know that, I know that. The only people who don't know that are the people who have never done it. So let me guess at something. When you started your business, you probably started with a passion, something that you loved to do.

Probably didn't have a business degree. Maybe you've taken a business course or marketing course to learn the basics, which is great, but most of us has something that we wanted to share with others. That's what got us into business to begin with. And even if you have had marketing courses or business courses, it's so easy to fall into things that will derail you.

I know that better than almost anybody. After I got out of college and grad school, I worked in the marketing world in several different roles for a number of years. I knew that starting a business was a challenge, but I was pretty confident that at least I had the marketing part down.

I was wrong. Nobody prepared me for a few things. First of all, that marketing is consistently shifting and changing. Social media isn't something I learned about in college or grad school. SEO wasn't taught. Of course, AI wasn't taught. These all had to be self-taught, and I did a lot of Googling.

But I was motivated, so that worked for me. And the other thing is that emotions can derail marketing faster than anything. And when I say emotions, I mean the, "I don't wanna bother somebody with too many emails," , "Nobody clicked on my ad to buy, so I'm gonna give up," or, "I'm afraid that if I send out too many emails, everybody's gonna unsubscribe."

This is a type of emotion I'm talking about. Anybody else been there? My favorite thing is that there is always so much to do that I can't keep up with all of it. It's not really my favorite thing, but it's the thing that I feel the most, and it's also the thing that I hear the most from my customers.

So here's the thing about marketing when you have a new business. It doesn't feel like one thing. It feels like [00:02:00] 100 disconnected little tasks all yelling at you at once. "Post here. Email. Start a newsletter. No, wait, do reels. No, wait, do SEO. So you do a little bit of everything, and none of it ever adds up to anything because your marketing is completely scattered.

You're spending time you don't have, and in some cases, money you can't really afford on marketing that just isn't bringing customers in the way that you hoped. And this is even amplified more right now.

In the US, our economy is rocky, and nobody really knows what's happening with this new thing called AI. And we don't know how it's gonna change our business or even our life. So it's easy to act out of fear and frustration or desperation with your marketing and fall into one of these five traps. We all have blind spots in our business.

And no judgment, I have fallen into every one of these at some point during my career. So I'm gonna give you the five things that I would tell somebody starting a business right now about their marketing. And pay attention to number five, because that one is the one that really gets missed.

All right, so here we go. Mistake number one, trying to be everywhere at once. Nobody sells a thing if nobody knows you exist, right? So awareness is the first step of my trail to the sale, and really of any kind of business, right? But trying to be everywhere at once is a recipe for burnout. I get it though.

You start your business and everybody is saying, "Oh, you should be on Instagram. Oh, you should be on TikTok and LinkedIn, and you should have a newsletter and a blog. And do you have a YouTube channel? And are you on Pinterest? Do you have a Substack?" Yeah, I've heard it all. So you try and you spread yourself across at least five different platforms, and you end up doing all of them badly.

Not because you're bad at doing it, it's because nobody on earth can show up well in five different places at once while also, you know, running the actual business. [00:04:00] So here's the fix. Pick one channel, the one channel where the right people, your ideal customers, are already hanging out, and go deep and be consistent.

And then I want you to stay long enough that people start to recognize you. That's when it starts working. Not in a week or two, not when you're brand new and invisible, and also not thousands and millions of people. It doesn't have to be millions of people on a platform. It can just start out with one.

The biggest names on Instagram have started out with one follower, and that's how we all start out. We just grow one by one. So when you've been consistently good in one place long enough to become familiar, then you can consider adding another platform if you can handle the workload and if your customer is on that platform as well.

So one place done well beats five places done in a panic every single time. This was a hundred percent me when I first started my business, And the reason was that I didn't properly define who my ideal customer avatar was, so I didn't dig deep enough to know about them, where they would be both online and offline.

Did I know I should define my ideal customer? Yes, I did, but I did it in my head instead of on paper. Hey, I'm great at ignoring my own advice. So I just ended up overwhelmed and

frustrated. The remedy for this is understanding your ideal customer really well, something we do in Modern Marketing Mastery.

I do have a free download if you need help defining who that is for you. You can just go to janicehostager.com/customer or check out the show notes for the link. And if you don't know enough about what your ideal customer wants or needs or where they hang out online, the best thing to do is talk to them.

Just invite people for coffee and find out more about them. After being in business for a decade or more, I still do this. Things change, people change, [00:06:00] and if I don't know enough about who I'm creating a product or an offer for, how will I get it right? The easiest and best way to learn about them is just talk to them.

Okay, mistake number two, making it about you and not them. All right, this one stings a little because it's so easy to fall into. You finally sit down to write your website or your bio or that intro post and maybe your About page, and what comes out is you, your story, your background, your certifications, why you started the business, how passionate you are.

And I get it. You wanna impress your customers about how qualified you are and why they should hire you. But your reader, the person that actually wants to hire you, is sitting there thinking, "Okay, but what about me? How does this fit me?" Because they're not reading to learn about you. They're reading to find out if you understand them, their problem, their 2:00 AM worry, the thing they can't figure out.

Once you have that worked out, you can write about how you'll help them. So often we build a business around our skills instead of a business around their needs. It's really the kiss of death when we do that because we put a ton of effort and wake up to realize that you've created something that nobody wants.

The fix is almost embarrassingly simple. Make them the subject of the sentence, not you. Do your homework, like I said before, talk to your customers, and then read your own copy, . So say the thing that they're feeling before you say a single word about yourself. The About page was where you can get off track with this the easiest. Sure. They're there to learn about you, but they really wanna know if you're qualified to help them. So I did a little before and after on an About page. So this is the self-focused before version. It might say something like this: I've spent 20 years helping entrepreneurs grow their business.

I have an MBA from Northwestern University, and I've worked with hundreds of clients across the variety of industries. [00:08:00] I found this company because I believe every entrepreneur deserves their opportunity to succeed. Okay, that's the before version. Okay, now we have the after version, which is customer-focused, and it starts out like this.

You probably don't need another person telling you to work harder. You need somebody who can look at your business from the outside, figure out what's actually getting in the way, and

help you make the right moves next. That's where I come in. I've spent 20 years working with entrepreneurs, so I've seen the patterns, the places people get stuck, the things business owners co- overcomplicate, and the strategies that sound great but don't actually move the needle.

My job isn't to make you more like me, it's to help you build a business that works better for you. Okay. See the difference? Self-focused marketing says, "Here I am, and this is why I'm qualified." Customer-focused marketing says, "Here's what's happening in your world, and here's how my experience and expertise can help you."

And bonus if you can use the exact words that your customers do. Do this, as I said earlier, by talking to them. And if you're just starting out and you don't know a whole lot about your ideal customer, another good way is to mine reviews and social media comments from your closest competitors, and that'll give you some additional insights

Okay, mistake number three, selling the offer instead of the outcome. This is actually a quote that I have permanently stuck on a sticky note in my office.

That's because it's easy to get sucked into the details of what you're selling instead of the transformation they'll receive. This one's a close cousin of number two, but it's different in an important way. Number two is about how we can fall into talking about yourself. This one's about how we can fall into talking about what you're selling.

I see this happening a lot when a business owner has a skill or something that they're passionate about, and they wanna turn it into a business. But what happens is that you create a product that's looking for a buyer. But a successful offer develops a solution to a problem a buyer already has.

That's actually a topic for another [00:10:00] podcast, but I wanna say that upfront. Because When we have an offer people really want, we can still fall into this trap by describing what people buy. It might be six coaching sessions or a forty-page guide, a monthly retainer, three modules, and a workbook. And you can list it all out, proud as can be, because you've worked hard at it, and you are understandably proud of it.

But nobody wakes up wanting six coaching sessions. They want the thing on the other side of those six sessions, whatever that is. It might be finally being able to sleep at night, or an email list that actually grows, or feeling healthy enough to exercise.

Nobody wants to buy a drill. They want the hole in the wall that the drill provides. Now, it's not to say that you shouldn't share the delivery method at all. Of course, you should. People still want to know what that is. But don't lead with it. Keep the focus on what your customer will become after they buy your offer.

So here's the fix. Lead with the outcome. Paint a picture of what their life will look like after they buy your offer. Then and only then let the offer show up as the vehicle that gets them there. The sessions, the guides, the modules, those are the how.

The outcome is why they'd care in the first place. So here's an example of how I talk about my core offer, Modern Marketing Mastery. Modern Marketing Mastery is a small business marketing strategy reset designed to help you stop guessing, focus your effort, build a clear personalized marketing roadmap, and confidently know what to do each step of the way from the moment your customer learns about your business to the point where they buy, love your offer, and refer to others.

This isn't about doing more marketing. It's about doing the right marketing in the right order to reach the right customer. Okay, see how I didn't talk about how many modules I have or the coaching calls? It was all strictly the benefits of the program. Mistake number four, jumping into the proposal before the first date.

This is one I see quite often from people trained in sales. [00:12:00] Somebody finds you, and they're interested, and they go straight from, "Hi, nice to meet you," to, "Okay, buy my thing."

Nothing in between, no proof, no stories, no testimonials, no content that lets them go, "Okay, this person actually knows what they're talking about." The whole middle is missing, but that's where trust gets built, and trust is the thing that people are buying, not an offer. Trust is the real currency.

And if you ask for the sale before you've earned it, it's not likely to work. This is what I tell every salesperson who comes to my door selling pest control or solar panels before I get to know anything about them or about their company. I tell them there's a saying that goes like this, "It's like proposing on the first date."

If I don't know you, I'm not gonna say yes." Instead, build out that middle. Testimonials, case studies, email content, free content that's genuinely helpful. The proof that stacks up until buying feels like the obvious next step instead of a leap of faith.

Yes, this can take time. Sometimes people will follow you for years before they're ready to buy, but that's okay. Give people reasons to trust you before you ask them to take action. This is why there are eight separate steps to my Trail to the Sale framework.

I lead people through all the steps from when they first become aware of you until they buy, buy again, and refer you. It's a process.

Okay, rounding up the list, mistake number five, letting the "not right now" people disappear. This is the one that can really cost you over time. Remember how I said that people can stay on your list for years before they buy?

So you need to keep them interested. Imagine that somebody finds you, and they like what they see. They're interested genuinely, but they're not really ready to buy today. Maybe the timing's off. Maybe the money is tight this month. Maybe they just need to think about it, so they don't buy. But the mistake comes when you hear that "not yet," [00:14:00] and you treat it like a "no" forever.

But they didn't leave. They're right there, probably still on your email list, still opening now and again, and still a little bit interested. They didn't say never. They said not today, and there's a big difference. So you need to determine why they didn't buy and nurture them from that point.

Build a way to keep showing up for those people who didn't buy the first time. Because a not now person is so much warmer than a brand-new stranger. They already know you. They already considered handing you money. They're the easiest yet you'll ever get eventually if you stay in the picture.

That might be a follow-up sequence after a launch or promotion. It might be a separate downsell offer that's not as robust and has a price that matches it. It might be circling back with an offer a few months later when their situation's changed. It might just be continuing to be genuinely helpful in their inbox so that you're still the name that they think of when the timing finally clicks.

The worst thing to do is dismiss them. A no is a not right now with a follow-up plan attached to it. Without the follow-up, it really is just a no, and you may lose them forever. One thing I've done after a promotion or launch is send out an email to people who I can see clicked and checked out my sales page, or maybe they came to my webinar.

These are people who seemed interested but didn't end up making a purchase. The email just has one question, "I see that you were interested in my offer and you didn't purchase. Why didn't you buy?" And the feedback that you can get from something like this can be so insightful.

The people who almost bought are your warmest pipeline. It's important to not write them off the second they don't say yes today. Okay, the recap. So five mistakes: trying to be everywhere at once, trying to make it about you, selling the offer instead of the outcome, jumping from the first date to the proposal, and letting the "not now" people disappear.

But here's what I really [00:16:00] want you to walk away with. These aren't five random unrelated errors that you have to fix one at a time. Every single one of them is scattered marketing, marketing in pieces instead of guiding one person along a pathway from stranger to customer step by step.

What I teach in all my offers is the framework Trail to the Sale. The idea that marketing isn't a pile of tactics. It's a journey your customer takes. And when you can see the trail, you stop asking, "Should I do Instagram or SEO or email?" And start asking the only question that matters, "Where is my customer right now, and what do they need next?"

You can download my free Trail to the Sale Quick Start Map at janicehostager.com/quickstart, I'll add the link to the show notes too. Thank you so much for joining me today. For more information about anything we talked about today, visit myweeklymarketing.com/171 and if you enjoyed this episode, please subscribe and share it with somebody else who might get value out of it as well.

Thanks again. I'll see you next time. Bye for now.