

# Are you a tease?

Nothing is more disappointing than a tease. A tease will always let you down after getting your attention because a tease is nothing more than an **unfulfilled promise**. And yet, we see teases in marketing all the time.

Teaser rates are those rates that sound so great that you are drawn to a financial institution, only to learn that you don't qualify. Marketers love these because they get people in the door, but at what cost? If your potential customers are disappointed, will they come back?

My personal least favorite tease is the blog post or website article that isn't. You see a headline that reads something like this: Learn how to fold sheets in 2 minutes flat. Then, when you go to read the post, there's little more than the headline and a link to an e-book on sheet folding.

To me, teasing readers on your blog with misleading headlines betrays trust. I have stopped reading a great many blogs because the authors of those blogs just want me to buy something. They don't want to share with me.

Now, I understand you can't give it all away for free. You may have a book to sell or a seminar to fill. But don't insult your readers/public's intelligence. They can see that you pulled them in just to sell them something—and they won't come back.

Teases are annoying—and their actions teach others to avoid them.

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# UPDATE: Pepco and reliability

Last Friday, I wrote about how Pepco needs to concentrate on customer service and less on marketing. In fact, the company will have to deal with lots of damage control because the Washington Post published a devastating article on Sunday that finds that Pepco has TERRIBLE reliability and that it has nothing to do with trees and storms but rather with equipment failure. In response, Pepco will have a press conference today to discuss their five-year improvement plan.

Again, Pepco would be best advised to spend money fixing the problem than spending thousands on an ad campaign to make the company appear to care about its customers. In the end, customers don't have a choice when it comes to power companies. I understand the latest Pepco ad campaign is about image...but again, customers will develop an image based on their own experiences. Everyone who suffers power outages frequently (Pepco customers suffer power outages 70% more frequently than counterparts in other large cities) knows Pepco is NOT reliable, and does not work hard enough to restore power quickly. Today's full-color ad in the Washington Post (with the tagline "We're working for you") is not going to change minds.

Do you think Pepco can fix its image? Is image even the problem?

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**Want            to            improve            your**

# marketing? Start with your customer service.

The best, most award-winning ad in the world won't sway an unhappy customer's mind. Keep that in mind as you tinker with your marketing and you don't check in with your customer service.

If you live in Washington, DC or Maryland, you probably have PEPCO as your electric company. And if you were around this past summer or during the massive blizzards of February, you probably lost your power. You tried calling PEPCO only to get bad information or no information at all. Then you found out that PEPCO is rated very poorly among all electric utility companies in the United States. You probably weren't surprised.

Fast forward to the Fall of 2010. PEPCO is busy running a TV commercial featuring the company president assuring the viewers that PEPCO is responding to customer concerns. But, is it true?

Yesterday, I had to call PEPCO. I was on hold for 21 minutes. And there was no emergency. Can you imagine what hold times will be when there are outages?

This is a case where PEPCO is investing money in its marketing without investing money in customer service. This is a major mistake. Customers don't care if you are running a great ad campaign, have well written brochures and a redesigned website, if they cannot get through to an agent to resolve their problems.

**Customers will judge a company on its service, not on its marketing. Marketing may get customers through the door, but it will not retain them or make them think positively about your company or organization (this applies to nonprofits as**

well).

Before you spend any money on a marketing campaign, make sure that you have budgeted for customer service.

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# Marketing that works and marketing that doesn't

There are some people (agencies, businesses, etc.) that excel at marketing, and others, not so much. I want to share two examples with you—one of something that worked well and one of something that didn't.

## **Alchemy Salon—Customizing the Experience (What Works Well)**

A couple of weeks ago I tried a new hair salon. When I arrived, I was asked to fill out a form. I then got my hair cut/styled and all looked good. A couple of days ago I got a HANDWRITTEN card in the mail, thanking me for visiting Alchemy and inviting me to use their online appointments option. Also, they sent me instructions how to access the online “Alchemy Rewards Program.”

The good here:

- Personalized response
- Smart use of online options
- Invitation to a loyalty rewards program
- Follow up/thanking me for business

## **Everything But the Turkey Volunteer Program at the DCJCC (What Doesn't Work Well)**

The Everything but the Turkey programs asks people to sign up

and pay \$10 to prepare the side dishes (yams, etc) for Thanksgiving meals to be given out by a food bank. Hundreds of pounds of sides are prepared and shipped to the food bank for distribution. I have participated at least twice in the past few years. This year, as part of the GENERAL DCJCC events email, I was told about the program. I did not receive any personal invitation. For various reasons, I didn't choose to participate this year, but mostly, because I was not motivated enough to give up an evening.

The bad here:

- Lack of personalization (no acknowledgment that as someone who volunteered before, I may want to volunteer again)
- No follow up
- No burning reason to participate

When you send out any type of marketing piece you are "touching" your audience. You can do so successfully or you can fail to leave a good impression. Think about what you are sending out and what you intend the recipient to do. Now, are you doing something that works or something that doesn't?

And lastly, many marketers do not measure success. In Alchemy's case, if I join their online rewards program, they will have a way to measure whether I responded to their marketing. In the DCJCC's case, clearly, they are not correlating the marketing to the volunteer database, so they have NO way of knowing if volunteers from last year signed up again.

I am interested in specific examples of marketing that works (or doesn't work). Please share with me in the comments.

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# Are you stuck?

At my gym, I see several folks doing the same thing, day after day. Some of these people even use the exact same machine at the same time, every day. Are they getting more fit? Probably not, because to get more fit you have to challenge yourself, you have to change things up.

Those gym rats always doing the same thing are stuck. Stuck in a routine (perhaps best to call it a fitness rut).

Are you stuck in your marketing routine?

- How long has it been since you updated your website?
- How long have you been using the same brochure?
- When did you develop your tagline?
- How long have you had your logo? (Yes, logos need to be refreshed...typography changes!)
- Have you experimented with social media marketing?
- Have you experimented with *anything*?

If you are stuck—that is, you are doing the same things over and over, not changing things up, even a little bit, it's OK. **It's OK if you want to remain where you are and not move forward.**

If, on the other hand, you want to move forward, now is the perfect time to get unstuck. Historically, December is more about partying than productivity, so you will have plenty of time to review and revise. What needs to be changed? What will bring your more value?

If you need some advice to get started, here is a good article from the Business Insider.

What will you do to get unstuck? Please share in the comments.

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# Sometimes, it isn't about marketing

By now, you have probably heard about George W. Bush's new book/memoir *Decision Points*. Bush went on a media blitz to promote the book and appeared on the Today Show and Oprah, among other venues. Many have said *Decision Points* is about trying to recast how the Bush II presidency is viewed. It certainly is a chance for Bush to explain why he did what he did. But the question is—will the book change the public's perception of Bush?

I heard a pundit (I can't remember who or on what show) say that if you liked Bush before, you will like him now, but if you didn't like Bush then, you will certainly not like him more after reading the book. Perhaps only if you had no opinion or were undecided would you change your perception of Bush after reading this book.

Why? Because sometimes it isn't about marketing. Products or services are good or not good, useful or not useful, and no amount of marketing changes that. If you are a Bush hater, no matter how many positive books are written about him and how many accolades he receives, you are not going to change your mind.

Same thing happens with housing. I know a Realtor who is trying to sell a house. The house itself is very roomy, with a great layout and other nice features—except it is very close to a major highway. The Realtor is marketing the house in all the usual ways—open houses, brochures, well worded descriptions, etc. But unless you don't mind having a view of traffic, you are not going to buy the house. It is not about

the marketing. It is about the product.

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## Go check-in somewhere else

If you are on Twitter or Facebook, you will have seen many of your “friends” tell you that they are at Starbucks or at the airport. Some of them are “mayors” and some have “badges.” It’s all about the Foursquare check-in. Many nonprofit marketing consultants, and more for-profit marketing consultants, are advising that organizations/companies should get on Foursquare (or other location-based services). The idea is to have people in the vicinity know you are there—offer those people special deals or more information just for checking-in.

But. There is a problem: only four percent of adults online “check-in” or use geo-location services, according to research from Pew.

To me, the rush to embrace check-ins and geo-location has more to do with the fact that marketers have lots of friends using Foursquare, and less to do with reality. To suggest to nonprofits that they must be on location-based services is based on what exactly? It is based on the desire to be cutting-edge, to suggest something “ahead of the curve.” What it is not is practical. Nonprofits have many many other communications and marketing challenges to fix, other than having people check-in.

In my opinion, the check-in is really great for retail and restaurants/bars, especially if you are promoting a special or a sale or trying to build interest. But, just realize that

there is an element of unfairness to those patrons who don't have smart phones, or don't do check-ins (apparently 96% of the population).

Perhaps people are not so eager to share their locations. It does seem big-brother to me. And this is what the article Tag-Along Marketing in the New York Times talks about.

Will check-ins take off in the future? It's questionable. And you should not base marketing advice on something that is still in the works.

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## Are you hitting the mark?

Are your efforts paying off? Is your marketing achieving results?

How do you know? Obviously, the first sign is that you are generating numbers: sales, impressions.

But how do you know what people think about you, your product, your service and your marketing efforts? This is a harder question to answer. If people don't attend your event, it could be for a myriad of reasons (don't have time, costs too much not interested). Same thing with your product or service. How do you know why people aren't buying?

It comes down to requesting feedback, and to listening to what your audience has to say.

First, you should ALWAYS request feedback from attendees to your event and people who buy your product. Make it easy for people to provide comments on your website. Have an email address specifically for feedback.

Second, listen to what exactly is being said about you in the comments you receive. Also, cast a wider net: check out SocialMention (or other social media monitoring tools) to see what is being said about you or your brand.

Last week, I tweeted to a local marketing networking group that they were sending me too many email messages. In fact, it got to a point that I would just delete rather than read. The organizational response to me via Twitter was to tell me they would be happy to remove me from the list. I told them to take my comment seriously. I was giving them FEEDBACK. They didn't want to listen.

You will not know if you are hitting the mark with your marketing efforts if you don't make an effort to gather feedback. You may get some people to buy your product or attend your event, but you may be missing a host of others.



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## Can you keep your promise?

When you are trying to market your services or your product, you will naturally try to make the product or service look appealing. That's fine, as long as you are not overselling or over-promising. If you oversell or promise something you can't deliver, you will run into problems.

Let me give you an example, drawn from my experience this week with the US Postal Service.

My mother sent me an express package on Monday. It was

guaranteed to be delivered by noon on Tuesday. It wasn't. I called the 1-800 to track it and find out where it was. After some problems with the automated attendant (that is a whole other issue), I got through to a representative. She had no idea where my package was or when I would get it. At one point, she put me on hold. During this interlude, I found out that:

*For delivery you can rely on, choose the United States Postal Service.*

Is that supposed to be a joke? My "express" package arrived more than 24 hours after it was "guaranteed" to arrive. And as I learned from the customer service agent, the guarantee is really about your money. They don't actually guarantee the arrival of the express packages at their destination, but rather, if your package doesn't arrive when they say it will, they will give you your money back.

I guess that when you absolutely, positively need it there by a certain time, don't use the USPS, use Fedex (or UPS). For those of you who don't remember the Fedex ad, here it is

[youtube id=3lyxkSIIn9A&fs=1&hl=en\_US&rel=0]

The quickest thing you can do ruin your reputation is to promise that you will do something that you can't or won't do. And reputation is important in marketing. What do you think my impression is of the USPS?

So, when you are prepping your marketing materials (and especially your tag line), be careful about what you say. Daily Blog Tips has a great post on 10 Tips to Improve Your Sales Copy Today. Note that their number two tip is: **Don't Make a Promise You Can't Keep.**

# An easy marketing tip

Do you want to easily market yourself? I have a great tip: make your content (blog, website, social media stuff) shareable. I don't mean that you should simply create stuff people want to share—which is a given—but make it easy to share. By this I mean have a social media sharing button/widget on your blog or website (such as the one at the end of this post). If you don't know how to get one, here are a few to try:

- Add to any (which is what I have here)
- “Tweet this” button from Twitter
- Add this

You can find other individual service sharing buttons at this Wiki:

- <http://www.sharingbuttons.org/Buttons>

WordPress.com recently started its own sharing widget.

Find one that works with your blog/website and deploy it. By **allowing your content to be easily shared, you will increase your reach**. The word to note is EASILY. There are ways I can share your content without your help...but if you make it easy for me, then I will most likely do it. And that is why you create great content, right?

*Important clarification for WordPress users : If you have a WordPress.org blog (self-hosted), you may be able to find these buttons as plug-ins. WordPress.com users CANNOT use plug-ins, but can add these manually to each post or find the*

*WordPress.com sharing button.*

