

# What my gym's #fail can teach you about marketing

At the gym this morning, we experienced a paper towel fail. There are two automated paper towel dispensers on the main floor, and both were out of paper. Since you are supposed to wipe your machine down after exercising (and some of us, knowing most people don't do that, wipe it down before), and people need the paper to do this, we could potentially be looking at many sweat and germ drenched machines.



Treadmills by Montage H0A  
on Flickr

In any case, I got the last bit of paper out of one, and was able to wipe my machine and start exercising. After me, at least ten people walked up to the machines, waved at them fruitlessly and walked away. Most just left their machines without wiping them off. A couple of people walked over to the other room and got paper there. And then someone finally reported the missing paper to the front desk.

What is the marketing lesson here? There are three:

1. **Most people will not speak up.** It seems to be something about human psychology that most people will not rock the boat, even if something is wrong.

***Marketers should never assume that because no one has said anything, everything is OK. That's why it's so important to measure and check!***

**2. Most people will not go out of their way, even if they know they should do something. It may be laziness or hurry or something else, but most people will not take extra steps or go out of their way.**

***Marketers (especially of causes) have to make things as easy as possible. Too many steps will just make people give up.***

**3. People are completely self-involved. Most people don't notice what is going around them. If so, all those people would have seen there was no paper instead of standing there doing what another person did five seconds before them.**

***Marketers have to break through both the clutter and the self-involvement.***

Comments are always appreciated!

***Need help with your marketing materials? If so, contact me to discuss how we can cut through the clutter and make change happen.***

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**What we can learn from the**

# budget “negotiations”

Last week, our elected officials took the whole country to the brink. Whether you think it was ideology, intransigence, real economic crisis or plain circus, we all got a painfully clear view of what kind of government we have, and it was not a pretty picture.

But not all is bad. We can derive some lessons from this latest governmental crisis that can be applied to marketing:

- At some point, spin does not compensate for the reality on the ground so stop spinning already!
- Repeating the same phrase over and over becomes meaningless (e.g. “we are fighting for the American people,” “we do not want to shut down the government.”)
- Innuendo and doublespeak are not substitutes for clear communication.
- Say what you want unequivocally. You want cuts to Planned Parenthood—say that. Don’t make it a “rider” so that you can sneak it in under the radar.
- Don’t underestimate your audience...they can see through your antics.
- Be prepared for people to question you, your motives and your goals.
- There is a difference between justifying your actions and explaining your actions.

Politicians, like PR or advertising professionals, are in the business of persuasion. And like PR or ad people, they are beholden to special interests (or as we call them “clients”).

What did you learn about marketing from our government’s game of chicken?