

Strategy vs. Tactics

I came across this blog post from copywriter Tim Brunelle regarding tired tactics, and how sometimes strategy is ignored. That got me thinking about the topic. Usually each piece of marketing material is a tactic: the brochure, the press release, even the website. Hopefully, each piece is guided by a strategy.

If you are launching a marketing campaign, it should never start with “we’ll run an ad.” It should start with figuring out who you want to reach, where those people are located and what you want them to do with the information you want to share with them.

A few months ago, a potential client contacted me. He wanted me to write copy for an ad. He was about to open up a new business and wanted to promote it. My first thought was “wait a second, what?.” I asked him who his target audience was. He told me. I asked him where this ad would run. He told me he thought it should run in one of those free newspapers so common on the subway. I asked why. His reasoning was lots of people read that (true) and the cost is relatively low (true). But what this guy was missing completely was a strategy, a vision, a long term plan. Sure, running a “cheap” ad in a mass publication could promote your business. But spending a few dollars here and few dollars there does not further your purpose and it certainly does not strengthen your brand. In fact, you have to think about the larger picture to create a brand personality and make sure that you are not hurting yourself with some misplaced tactics.

People are sold tactics by ad sales reps because those reps are there to sell advertising now and not to tell you how to create a brand image for yourself. Many times, small businesses fall into this trap. The local paper will call and tell them they are running a special and so forth. It sounds

reasonable. And boom, a tactic is launched which may or may not have something to do with your larger strategy.

Save yourself some marketing dollars and think of each tactic as a piece of the marketing strategy puzzle. Instead of blindly following some promotion because it is inexpensive, figure out whether that furthers your overall goals.