

A marketer's obsession

By Gianni Anchois

Are “fast” and “right now” better than “thorough” and “as soon as we have all the facts”?

MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE

Marketers are very familiar with the saying: “what doesn't get measured, doesn't get done”.

Likewise, we are fairly accustomed to spending a great amount of time on data gathering and analysis before making any decision.

On one side there is the need to collect “facts” or “data”: this activity alone caters to our rational inner-self, the side of our brain that wants to be “informed” before making a call. We want to know how big the market is, how many potential customers are sitting in a specific industry sector, how much they spend on products or services similar to those we sell.

Often this process can take a very long time. Just as often, we end up with such a huge amount of data that we struggle to turn into information, and that - in turn - into intelligence.

But that's ok, after six months of analysis we launch pretty much the same thing we would have launched in only 1 month, but we revel in the comfort of having done our (expected) homework.

So when the marketing campaign will fail to produce the expected results, we will have our data-gathering activity results to justify our failure.

Because of course, as a side dish to the six months analysis, we will have developed a beautiful 25 dimension by 7 elements rolling weighted dashboard that will keep us on top of everything.

It's a real pity though that we will spend most of our energy there - slicing and dicing our beautiful dashboard - rather than pushing the marketing campaign we developed in the first place!

FAST, FASTER, FASTEST

To the other extreme, we know that in the current business context, fast is almost always a winner.

There are plenty of examples of companies shipping 80% or so finished products, and then iterating to complete and fix them at a later stage. I think you need a very strong attitude to do that, what with all the bean-counters and spreadsheet-based managers that you have to overcome to just ship!

But I also think that at end you might actually get better results from your gut-feeling based initiative rather than from a full-fledged, research-based, several months long preparation. If nothing else, you can churn much faster and try many different things in the time it took you to go the "safe" way just once.

And about measurement: who cares if you cannot build patterns and paint cause-effect behavioural models, as long as you ship and customers buy what you do? Give your marketing campaign everything you've got first, then figure out a way to measure what happened and turn it into a learning experience.

FORM BEATS CONTENT

“Especially in large corporations, we are losing the ability to pay attention to our instincts, experience, inner-voice or gut feelings, whatever name you want to call it”.

Not only that. Most experienced and battle scarred executives and professionals actually fail to embrace a new way of doing things, effectively putting up barriers to innovation and change. The young breed soon develops the same risk averse mentality and before we know it, they're ruined forever.

I believe that as leaders we need to change this. We need to foster and nurture new ways of accepting, embracing and even seeking risk.

Great ideas are never fully baked at inception, so no matter how accurately you choose the ingredients, you won't know the result until you get your dish out of the oven and in front of your customers. Ultimately, that's what really counts.

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