



## The Seven Deadly Sins of Marketing and Sales

*By Pat McNamara, Marketing Consultant*

Failure to listen to potential customers or clients has sabotaged many a great idea or product, especially among entrepreneurs who lack empathy and act as if they know all the answers. Such a self-centered approach to doing business is bad enough when the economy is booming, but it's fatal during a recession, when thinking about the other guy is essential.

Self-centered assumptions lead some entrepreneurs to commit one or all of these seven deadly sins of marketing and sales:

**It's all about me.** "I may not be much, but I'm all I think about." That slogan on a young man's T-shirt caught my eye on a recent business trip, as did a similar pronouncement on the T-shirt of a woman in my hotel lobby: "It's all about me." Extreme self-consciousness underlies stage fright and is a barrier to successful sales. When a speaker or salesperson genuinely wants an audience or individual to understand a concept or make the right purchase, self-consciousness vanishes.

**We are so much alike.** In truth, we are all very different — in the things we value, how we think and make decisions, the speed with which we walk and talk. Some of us value relationships and strive for collaboration. Others focus on results. Some people make instant decisions, while others ponder for weeks. Appreciating diversity is critical to tailoring a sales pitch.

**I don't know who you are, but let me tell you what I've got.** Ever been in an audience or on the receiving end of a sales pitch and suddenly realize the speaker has no clue about who you are, why you're there or what you care about? Not that it matters. He or she keeps rambling on even though no one is listening.

**I have all the answers.** If facts were all that mattered, the person who knew the most would always succeed. And no one would smoke or drive with seat belts unfastened. Most decisions are based on emotion, not reason, and then reinforced with selective information. So forget your fact sheets for a minute and consider how to be likeable, approachable and trustworthy — someone other people want to listen to.

**Here's the information; let me tell you what it means.** A slide appears, and before you can read or understand it, the speaker starts talking, forcing you to choose between reading or listening. Ninety-five percent of us will do the former. This is a sure way to lose an audience and a sale — especially when the speaker, sensing that audience attention is wandering, adds more

slides to the pitch to get it back.

**After we talk, I'll show you a demonstration.** The old-school sales pitch began with a product description and ended with a demo. But imagine walking into an auto dealership today and being led first to the credit manager, then the service department, and then being invited to test drive a vehicle. Do the demo as early as possible in the presentation or sale. Experiences matter more than words to most people.

**I know what you will ask even before you ask it.** When a speaker jumps on a question before it's finished, he or she has just committed a major communications misdemeanor. Dismissiveness is deadly whether it happens during a sales presentation or at home with loved ones, but the solution is simple. Shut your mouth, open your ears and listen.

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