

Introduction

Don't blow up dogs

A few years ago, I was marginally involved in a television advertising campaign for the wireless phone company where I worked. At that point in my career I was in charge of lots of printed material, but had never done any planning for TV commercials. TV is, of course, the Holy Grail of advertising. It's where the majority of the money is. And in case you were napping during that part of the lecture, more money means it's more important and interesting.

So I would sometimes be asked, as a creative kinda guy who understood our business from the inside, to comment on advertising copy before it went out.

Bear with me, folks. This dog story is the whole book in a nutshell right here. If you can stick with it until the neat heading, "Serious vs. Serious," you'll get the major Tao of this tome in one tiny, time-released parable. Then you can put the book back on the shelf and spend your money on something more fun like, "Feng Shui for Dummies," which may be the most redundant yet truthful piece of marketing writing I've ever seen.

At that time in wireless history, there were some newer providers that hadn't had the time to build as big and robust a network as had AirTouch, where I worked. So we'd do ads that pointed out how large and reliable our network was. Super. I agree with telling people what's good about your product. Unfortunately, our agency at that time seemed bent on doing this not by showing the advantages of our system, but by pointing out flaws and weaknesses in our competitors'. We didn't start it (nanny-nanny-boo-boo), since Sprint had been harping on "the clear alternative to cellular" for a year or so at that point. But we jumped on the "mine is bigger than yours" bandwagon and created a series of ads, over the course of several years, that mostly pointed out the bad side of going with "the other guys." Never named, of course. That can get your ass sued.

So we showed a situation where somebody with "the other guy" couldn't get 24 hour customer service and was left in a lurch. We showed somebody getting the runaround because their "other guy" service didn't have knowledgeable technicians. You get the picture.

I didn't like the ads, because I believe they left a negative "taste" in viewers' minds associated with our service and brand. If we could've gotten our competitors to run ads where they showed how and why they sucked, that would have been great. Meanwhile, we kept ponying up the long green for spots that featured hapless victims of "the other guy" getting it in the metaphorical jimmies.

And then there was Fritzy.

This ad featured a guy out for a walk with his nice, white, poodle dog. And the dog is wearing a satellite dish on his back. Why? Because Mr. Hapless got his wireless service from the "other

guys," and the only way he can use his phone in their tiny, shriveled, prehensile network is by juicing up the signal with the big dish on Fritzzy's back. He explains this to a neighbor, and, wait! A call comes in! His phone rings. We see a visible, blue, cartoony bolt of electricity travel from the phone, through its cable, to the satellite dish... which blows up. Foosh! Smoke clears, dog is standing there, now grey and frizzled and lightly smoking. Implied message: go with the "other guys" and you may end up frying your pooch.

One of the advertising guys shared the concept with me. After he sketched out the plot, I had some questions. Our session went something like this:

"Why are we frying a dog on television?"

"We're not really frying a dog. It's two different dogs."

"What does that mean?"

"The first dog, Fritzzy, the white one, is a poodle or something. After the gag, when the smoke clears, it'll be an entirely different dog. A gray one with short, spindly hair. We won't have to use make-up on a white dog. We just use a very ash-looking dog. Instead of the white one. For afterwards. Get it?"

"I understand that we won't actually be hooking a satellite dish up to a dog and electrocuting it. I suppose the animal actors' union won't allow that, but..."

"There's no animal actors' union."

"I was being ironic."

"Oh. It's the ASPCA."

"What is?"

"That won't let you actually hurt animals on TV."

"If I had said 'ASPCA' it wouldn't have been ironic. At all."

"Ok, ok... But what do you think about the ad?"

"I'll ask again - why are we blowing up a dog on television?"

"We're not, it's really two..."

"I understand. But to the viewer, it will look like we blew up a dog. We'll get calls."

"From who?"

"From people who object to blowing up dogs."

"But we're not blowing up a dog. It's really two..."

"From people who object to pretending to blow up dogs."

"That's not against the rules, though. You can be funny as long as it doesn't really hurt an animal."

"Lots of things that aren't against the rules still upset people. Cartoon savagery upsets some people. And that's essentially ink-on-ink violence."

"Nobody would actually think we're actually blowing up a dog."

"No. But they'll think you're using a depiction of violence against an animal to sell phones."

"Why would they think that?"

"Because that's what you're actually doing."

"Oh."

"And, regardless of animal rights and violence issues, you've got people focused on a competitor's negative, rather than on our positives."

"It is positive. It's the opposite of what we show. We don't do that."

"Do what?"

"Make you put a satellite dish on your dog to get good reception."

"Neither does anyone else. It's a gag. I get the gag. I don't think it's particularly funny, but I get the gag. I just think that when you emphasize a negative aspect of the category, you do more to impress that on people than..."

"Why don't you think it's funny?"

"What?"

"The gag. You said you didn't think it was funny. Why not?"

"Visceral humor relies on the juxtaposition of disparate social and/or psychological elements within a pre-established symbolic framework. The use of inappropriate language, gestures, props, etc. in a manner that is clearly, often dramatically, either over- or under-stated, causes the audience to reevaluate the situation within the larger context. By breaking one part of the institutional framework, we call into question the entire edifice. This leads to embarrassment. But the audience, subconsciously aware of the distancing nature of comedy, feels this embarrassment chiefly as a projection onto the players, rather than a disturbing foray into their own unexamined beliefs. In the case of the exploding dog gag, the established framework is instantly broken by the addition of a satellite dish to the back of the dog. This is so clearly out-of-whack with standard reality that we assume immediately that this man is outside the range of normal. He is, so to speak, a loon. When his dog explodes, we blame it on his eccentricity, not on the weak-ass nature of his wireless network. He's a lunatic with a dish strapped onto his dog. Who would do that? Would you do that? That's not funny. Even before the explosion, it's kinda sick, actually. This guy is not a protagonist. He's a deranged..."

"Would it be funnier if the satellite dish was on the dog's head? A littler one? With a chin strap?"

You get the picture. They shot the ad - with the full-sized, backpack satellite dish - and away we

went. Since it was a brand commercial, and not linked to a promotional offer, we couldn't really track its impact on the market. We could, however, track its impact on our call centers.

Did we get calls? Jimminy Cricket, did we get calls. Hundreds. We had to stop the ad and run an older one. You see, there's a reason babies and dogs are in so many ads. Everybody loves them. But not when you blow them up. That activity is less than well received, we found.

Let's be clear - I didn't have a moral, ethical or religious problem with pretending to blow up dogs to make a good TV commercial. I didn't think, as some of our callers did, that children would see the ad and emulate it, resulting in a string of copy-cat (er... copy-dog?) pet electrocutions across the Midwest. I didn't think it sent a message that "It's ok to hurt dogs." I don't have a problem with humor in advertising. None of these things bother me. So what's my beef?

We spent a boatload of money to explode that dog, and all we got out of it was a bunch of pissed-off people calling our customer service line and voicing their very reasonable objections to said exploding canine.

One of the ad guys had the audacity to claim, "Well... at least it got a reaction."

If I'd had a satellite dish handy, I woulda strapped it to his back and blown him up.

Can you see why I had a problem with this ad? I like TV. I like TV ads. I like funny ads. But for an ad to be funny - or not so funny - with no good purpose is simply useless. Whether funny, poignant or sad, there must be a reason behind the message. And the reason, in the case of Fritzzy, was either so badly examined or off-the-mark as to be irrelevant. It's an example of an ad that does harm, both by wasting money and by undermining the image of the company it should be serving.

Maybe Fritzzy is an extreme case. But the story is a parable and serves to illustrate the chief point of this entire book: marketing without strong ties to business reality is insane.

Serious me vs. serious work

Hey! You kept reading. I'm touched, really. Thanks for the vote of confidence.

Question I expect from some of y'all: isn't "insane" a little strong? Can't we get by with a less-loaded term like "impractical" or "unwise" or "foolish?" I could use a more mannered phrase... but I won't. Because it's not what I mean. When I say, "insane" I mean, "insane."

At this point I hope you'll grant me a moment of personal angst, dear reader, as I imagine you placing me mentally next to Susan Powter, crop-coiffed author of "Stop the Insanity!" I still remember the first time I saw one of her infomercials. I initially thought it was about a social issue or something religious. She was very intense, attractive, full of energy and determination to "Stop the insanity!" She reminded me of Sinéad O'Connor on steroids. I was prepared to be moved. It became apparent after a few minutes, however, that "the insanity" was the "military/industrial/diet/exercise complex." She showed a picture of her earlier, overweight self and descended into histrionics about her previous, insane plight.

I'm a "big guy," myself, and so I empathize. "Big," of course, being the not-tall folks who shop at the "Big and Tall" men's shop. I blame my bigness on the government, aliens, fluoridated water, "The Love Boat," Queen Victoria, the cargo net in gym class and AOL/Time Warner. It's either that, or the fact that I'm almost totally sedentary and eat what I damn well please. Anyway...

No disrespect to Susan Powter, to those who tried her system and those who are searching for a reasonable way to stay slim. But I'm still going to use the word "insanity." And I will urge you to avoid such in your marketing. The ways to identify said insanity and to market in a sane fashion are forthcoming. Just look at how much more of this book you have left! It's all great stuff, and it's just waiting for your eyes and brain to caress. How exciting for you. If you are reading this book in a library, please confine your enthusiasm to quiet hums or chuckles of surprised delight.

At this point, if you are a "serious person," you may be ready to put the book down, if you haven't already. If you already have, the only way you'll know about this section is if one of your heartier comrades brings it to your attention.

I have a problem with "seriousness." I have sometimes been accused of "not being a serious person." I'd like to clarify for you that I am, in fact, deeply serious about the subject of coherent, meaningful marketing that can impact your business and its goals. I take my work very seriously... I just don't take myself particularly seriously. That turns some "business-like" people off. That little split infinitive in the previous sentence may have turned you off, too. Here's the thing, Sparky - I've got a writing degree from Cornell Freakin' University. So trust me when I say that I'm super-hyper-over-aware of my language choices. Even the spelling errors are on purpose, Sport-o. If you think fun and humor have no place in the business world, you have my sympathy.

Sorry about the "Sparky" and "Sport-o" thing. I get up on soapbox, and... well... sorry. Anyway...

My dad, who is the wisest man on the planet, once told me that there's a big difference between taking your work seriously, and taking yourself seriously. He is a psychiatrist who takes his work very seriously. He still puts in about sixty hours a week, and he just turned 65. He does OK, but he ain't rich or nothin'. Does it to help people. Very serious about his work. Just not about himself.

He told me the difference when I was about ten or so and got kinda puffed up about having a lead role in a show at our church. I believe I was playing King Nebuchadnezzar in the ever popular youth musical, "Cool in the Furnace." Old Testament wrath meets the song stylings of some 1970's Burt Bacharach wannabe.

[Meanwhile, back at the actual point...]

"Look," Dad said. "Take your work seriously, but don't take yourself so seriously."

"What's the difference?" I asked.

"Taking the work seriously means showing up on time, learning your lines, not goofing off when you should be quiet. Taking yourself seriously, though, means thinking you're something special. That you're already good enough and don't have to improve. Thinking that way makes it harder for you to learn and improve. It also makes you harder to live with. Hint, hint."

I didn't agree. I was ten, and, therefore, a total moron. "I don't see the difference," I said. "If you take the work seriously, you'll have to take yourself seriously."

"Look at the doctors on the TV show 'MASH,'" he explained. "Are they good doctors?"

"Yeah."

"Do they take their jobs seriously? Do they do everything they can for their patients? Even when it's really hard and gets them in trouble?"

"Yeah."

"Who's the one guy on the show that's kind of a jerk?"

"What's-his-name. The jerky one."

"Burns. Major Frank Burns. And we think he's a jerk because why?"

It took me a minute, but I got it in one.

"Because he takes himself more seriously than he takes his work."

"Exactly."

Thanks, Pop. Another good lesson. Too bad it took 20 years for it to sink in.

Look into my (supposed) depths and you will surely find many faults. I am often inappropriately frank. Not Frank Burns. Just frank. Candid. I talk too much and am a little loud, at times. Partly because I'm a bit hard of hearing and partly because I get worked up and partly because I'm just a

loud bastard. I drive too slow when it's snowing and I like TV shows and videogames that are intended for children. [Once again, the day is saved by... the Powerpuff Girls!] I clearly do not take myself too seriously. If you find that troubling, move along to the next shelf of business books and no hard feelings.

But know this: I always, always, always take my marketing seriously.

Wasting money on ill-conceived ads truly pisses me off. Failing to show good ROI really steams my clams. Employee dissatisfaction stemming from badly communicated strategy... well... also steams my clams. And people who just start doing marketing "stuff" without any idea of why they're doing it? What about them? You guessed it - a third helping of steamed clams.

OK. So we've established that I'm taking the subject seriously, but not myself so much. So why this goofy prose style? I just think you might have more fun if I write in an authentic voice and leaven this sometimes dry genre with a few personal stories and (attempted) humor. I like to have fun at work. I like to learn things. I like to work on teams and plan campaigns and tweak the budget. I like it when my employees understand how what they do fits into the "big picture." They end up coming to me with ideas that blow away anything I could have imagined. I like it when a project comes in under budget but still kills the numbers.

So I hope you can accept that while I'm having some fun, I am taking the subject matter very seriously. So serious, in fact, that I'll stand behind my choice of "insane" as a way to describe marketing programs that aren't well grounded in commonsense reality. It may seem like hyperbole, but I'll back it up with White Crane Style Arguments. And my word-fu is the strongest in the province!

Words... not just for scrabble anymore

I love dictionaries.

When you look at the multiple meanings of words, or at the history of words, you find that there are a great many ways to use our dear English tongue with art and precision. So, Mr. Webster, what do you have to say on the subject of "insanity?"

in-san-i-ty \in-'san-et-e\ *n, pl -ties* (1590) **1 a**: a deranged state of the mind usually occurring as a specific disorder (as schizophrenia) and usually excluding such states as mental deficiency, psychoneurosis, and various character disorders **b**: a mental disorder **2**: such unsoundness of mind or lack of understanding as prevents one from having the mental capacity required by law to enter into a particular relationship, status or transaction or as removes one from criminal or civil responsibility **3 a**: extreme folly or unreasonableness **b**: something utterly foolish or unreasonable

So, based on the above definitions, when I say that marketing not based on solid business reality is insane, I mean that it is:

- A specific disorder - specific to marketing. You may have very good HR programs, superb finances, an excellent product, a great location, etc. Many business functions have good, solid reasoning behind their plans and programs. So I'm not saying that insane marketing necessarily means you have problems in other areas of your business.
- Not "mental deficiency" - i.e., I'm not calling anyone stupid. Plenty of smart people do plenty of insane things (see: smoking, skiing, dating drummers, destroying the ozone, trying to repair your own roof). Smart people can make assumptions based on what "everybody else" is doing, and proceed to do great, smart work... that happens to be insane.
- Often removed from responsibility - For some weird reason, many companies do not hold their marketing departments as responsible for their actions as they do their janitorial departments. They keep better track of the non-dairy creamer in the break room than they do of customer satisfaction. They buy into the whole "marketing's an art, not a science" horse-puckey. "Your honor, we find the VP of Marketing not guilty by reason of standard marketing dogma."
- Unreasonable - great word. "Lacking reason." Insane marketing often lacks both reason and reasons. If your marketing programs have good reasons behind them, and are implemented reasonably, you've escaped from insane marketing.

So how can we tell the sane marketing from the insane? Surprise! Another anecdote.

The best phone call I ever received was from a sales manager at one of our stores. We'd just added a blatant, standard, old-school, call-to-action violator to one of our print ads. Something like,

THIS WEEKEND ONLY: FREE DINGUS WITH EVERY PURCHASE!

I don't remember what the dingus actually was. Doesn't matter. What he told me, though, was that people were walking into the store, ad in hand, saying, "I want this."

"It ain't fancy," he told me, "but it got me my weekend numbers on Saturday, and Sunday was all gravy."

"I'm glad you liked the ad," I said. In marketing we rarely hear good things from the field. I was touched that he'd thought to call and say something nice.

"I don't know if I like it or not," he replied. "I'm not an ad guy. All I know is that it worked."

Bingo.

Did it work as planned? If so, then it's probably a sane piece of marketing.

Which isn't to say that all sane marketing always works, every time, exactly as planned. If something doesn't work, you figure out why and do better next time. That's sane, too.

Which also isn't to say that insane marketing always fails. But we have a technical marketing term for when you succeed but don't know why. We call it "luck."

You don't need another acronym

Somebody once said (note to editor: get on the Internet and find out if this is a real quote or just something that somebody once said), "Doing the exact same thing over and over and expecting different results is one definition of insanity." I agree. So is spending money on marketing without getting measurable results, continually learning something new, and improving over time.

So how do you inject sanity into your marketing? Through systems that link the baseline realities of your business to the particulars of your marketing. I call it "SANE Strategies for Marketing."

Situation Alignment Navigation Education

Why the acronym? Didn't that nice section heading just say that we don't need another acronym?

We don't. I advise you to never trust business systems based on acronyms, alliteration or rhymes. They tend to be simplistic, unsophisticated and specious. We search the universe for elements of synchronicity - common numerals, overlapping events, uncanny resemblance, strange coincidence - in order to lend deeper layers of meaning to the mundane details of our life. "Ooh! My number at the deli is 24 and I just turned 24... this must be my lucky pastrami!" I don't know if you believe in synchronicity; I'm not sure if I do or not. But I do know that you can't trust a system just because the first letters of related words in a sequence spell out some other word that's applicable to the topic.

Except for this one. Mine, I mean. SANE Marketing. It's terrific. You can trust this one acronym.

Why?

- It's short. Acronyms with more than four letters are pushing it. Three is great. Five is right out. I have no idea how the policy monkeys in Washington came up with the acronym for the "USA PATRIOT Act" - Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism... Act. That's just nuts, a ten letter acronym. Well, nine, really. Since the "A" in "USA" stands for "America" both in the acronym and the thing it spells. Which is cheating, technically. But nine... yowza. That's crazy talk. Personally, I think they must've gotten a bunch of junior staffers high on absinthe and stuck them in a room with 28 copies of the game "Boggle."
- It came to me in a blinding moment of clarity while I was showering. Ideas generated while bathing almost always qualify as genius.
- It works well with what I intended to say anyways. So it's not like I'm trying to push

chocolate-chip-cookie dough through a catheter.

- I freely admit that I changed the "S" after some initial thought. Originally, the "S" stood for "Strategy." But then I realized two things. First, the whole process is a strategy, not just the first part. Second, if "S" stood for "Strategy," then it would be "Strategy, Alignment, Navigation, Education Strategies for Marketing." And, whoops! One of the words from the acronym shows up later in the title. Like "TCBY Yogurt." Which would be "The Country's Best Yogurt Yogurt." Or "DSW Shoe Warehouse." Which ends up reading, "Designer Shoe Warehouse Shoe Warehouse." Although I think they changed that recently. "Situation" is better anyway. I came up with that while I was at the Ohio Model Train Expo with my four-year-old son. I asked one of the guys who had a huge layout of trains where they kept it all when they weren't at a show. He told me that they had their stuff in one of the guy's barns, but that they were looking for a "better situation." Bingo. Pieces click into place. "Situation" fits perfectly.
- I'm fully and publicly aware of the illogic of acronyms, and that self-critical stance makes me a more trustworthy narrator. I'm cynical about it. Not jaded, quite. But you can certainly tell that this whole acronym thing falls into the "not taking himself too seriously" bin.

There's nothing wrong with acronyms, really. They're a helpful mnemonic device. But please treat them with caution, keep your RADAR up and don't walk blindly into a SNAFU. OK?

Note: The best acronym in history violates the "shorter is better" rule, but does so with happy disregard for spelling out anything intelligible, and is, therefore, immune therefrom. It is "TANSTAAFL." Which sounds vaguely Russian or Czechoslovakian, but ain't. It's from Robert Heinlein's excellent science fiction novel, "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress," which is, in my opinion, his best work. It goes beyond the simple, formulaic "space opera" of his earliest material, but isn't bathed in the sophomoric, pseudo-psychology of his last books. It features a wonderful relationship between a human technician and a giant computer on the verge of sentience. "TANSTAAFL" = "There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch." Amen.

Note: In the 1980s I actually formed an intellectual society based purely on the rejection of acronyms. We called it "M.O.N.K.E.Y". Which stands for "People For the Incorrect Use of Acronyms." I blame its failure on the lack of an Internet at that time.

There it is. SANE. The one acronym you can trust. Cue dramatic music.

For you hyperkinetic folk who need everything boiled down into tiny, tasty bits, here is the bullet point version of the whole book. Ready? Take a deep breath, and...

- **Situation:** Yo, marketing people - understand your business, your industry, your category and the economy. Understand the numbers that meter success and failure. Understand the upper and lower limits of what you're trying to accomplish, i.e., how bad and/or good it can get. Answer the two big questions: Why are we doing this marketing stuff? What do we hope to accomplish?

- **Alignment:** This is all about getting everyone on the same page. If you think you're designing an ad campaign in order to build the brand, but your CEO is focused on short-term sales... you're out of alignment. You will feel pain that a chiropractor can't heal. And alignment isn't just about you and your boss. It's about your customers, your vendors and everyone on the team. It's sad when you pass someone the ball only to find out that they thought you were playing hockey. Or skeet.
- **Navigation:** Zeno's Paradox (look it up) notwithstanding, you can't go from 0 to 100 without hitting all the numbers inbetween. If you have a goal for your marketing, map out how to get there in incremental, understandable, actionable steps. Think of those neat driving directions you can get on the Internet. They give you the name of each road, which direction to turn, how far to drive, a map of the whole trip, and a zoomed-in map of the destination. If your marketing plan looks like that (metaphorically), you're in business.
- **Education:** Wha? Education? I don't get it. This ain't no HR book. It's marketing. Damn right. And there's two ways to handle communications, which are the bread-and-butter of most marketing plans. One involves the use of various marketing media in order to inform the public, your customers, and your employees about the benefits of your subject. This model is respectful, specific and reciprocative. Or you can approach marcom via the propaganda model. This assumes that the marketing people always know best, that everyone outside the department is either an enemy or a moron, and that anything goes, as long as you get your bonus and can keep hitting up vendors for good swag. Which do I choose? Check the acronym.

That's basically it. If you feel as if you must plow onward, here's what to expect.

- Chapter 1 is a description of the current situation in many companies; insane marketing. If you've worked in a corporate marketing department, or at an ad agency or service bureau, you'll recognize some of this stuff. I've been there, my friend. And, oh yes, I've been guilty of my share of insanity. I try not to. But it's inevitable. Why delve into the insane initially? A) I enjoy a good rant. B) It helps to know what we're up against.
- Chapter 2 is the "Cliff Notes" version of the book. It's essentially an outline on steroids. If the bullet list above was way too "wham bam" for you, but you only have an hour or so to live, you can make do with this chapter. I like providing different options for different people (we're working on the animated, musical version of this book even now). It will also help you understand the basics of the whole enchilada before you start pounding down all the funky details.
- Chapters 3-6 are the funky details. These are tips, tricks, quips, quirks and other chunks o' fun that I hope will help you on your own magical marketing tour.
- Chapter 7 is the ever-popular "Conclusion." I'd call it a "wrap up," but that would make us all hungry for faux-Mexican food.

What this book is not

This isn't a "how to" book for any particular marketing medium. Smatterings of real-life examples will... well.. smatter... the text from time to time, but "Marketing for Dummies" this ain't.

It's not a touchy-feely guide to making everybody in the company all happy and sappy about the marketing department. Hear me now and listen to me intently as I am saying this: good marketing isn't easy. It is frequently painful. Marketing is often the departmental organ of change. Nobody who is happy really likes change. So marketing gets to push people out of the comfort zone, realign priorities and put the axe to programs in which many people may be heavily invested. If you want to make everyone happy, become a masseur. I've never heard anyone ever badmouth their masseur.

It's not a set of commandments. It's kind of a way... a Tao, if you will... of marketing. The more you concentrate on keeping your marketing sane, the more likely it is that you will find success, fulfillment and the one, true love of your life. You will also lose weight and your hair will be more shiny and manageable.

What this book may be

It may be an attempt to help take marketing back from the loonies, preachers and trend-riders. During the Internet Bubble, a bunch of "marketing" people managed to convince (see "Propaganda" above) a couple hundred million Americans that the rules of commerce (profit, loss, margin... that crazy stuff) no longer applied. Several years and several billion dollars of lost 401k money later, we understand that it still costs money to ship dog food and that people want to try on pants before buying them. Those guys who sold this bright, shiny, heavily leveraged picture of a boundless "new economy"... I hate those guys. That's not marketing. That's hoopla. Most people don't know the second part of P.T. Barnum's famous dictum that begins, "There's a sucker born every minute...." and concludes with, "... and two to take him."

I'm also tired of people who do the marketing "stuff" with no understanding of how it impacts their business. Most big companies have very specific goals. Sometimes these filter into their marketing. Sometimes not. Lots of companies, though, big and small, go about marketing as if obeying laws laid down by the Marketing Gods: thou shalt sendeth out press releases whenever thou openest a new store; thou shalt sponsor a table in the presence of thy vendors; thou shalt redesign thy logo and thy tag line every two years. Yeek. If you don't know why you're doing something, stop doing it and spend the money on more copies of this book. Or on office parties for all your employees. I'm not kidding about that last part. If you took all the money you ever spent on insane marketing and put it into making your people happy, your success would be almost guaranteed.

And it may be a way for me to articulate some fantastic lessons I've learned from the great people I've had the pleasure and privilege to work with and for.