

Looking at your marketing strategy



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I have the privilege and joy of working alongside my brother Erik at our marketing agency, Pivot. He's usually the one who sits in meetings, silently following the conversation for a while.

Midway through the meeting he breaks his silence and asks a question that is so thoughtful, on the nose, and (often) paradigm-shifting that it stops the conversation in its tracks. It's the equivalent of a mic drop for marketing meetings.

Erik's our director of strategy, so it's his job to ask the hard, good questions that make the rest of us creatives rethink our approach. This month, I'm channeling my inner Erik and talking strategy.

Questions to ask

Here are three strategic questions you should be asking yourself. (Full disclosure: question three has six parts. So, call it nine questions, if you prefer.)

1. Is what we're doing what we should be doing? "We've always done that" is not a sound marketing strategy.

For example, are you still placing an in the Yellow Pages? Or, are you still printing the brochures your old owner liked to pass out at Kiwanis meetings? You probably don't need those anymore.

If you are going to take a serious look at your marketing from a strategic point of view, everything has to be on the table. And while letting go of something outdated and not worth the time and money can still be hard, adding something new can be harder.

"We've never used Instagram." "I don't know how to run a Google ad." "Remavrketing seems creepy." Yes, I know, but you want an up-to-date marketing strategy that may actually work for you, right?

2. Who is my target audience, and what do they want? Do you know the answers to these questions? Maybe more importantly, are you *certain*? I regularly meet business owners who learn something new about their customers through market research. If you are operating on information about your customers that is old or based on your

assumptions, you may not have the full picture and may be missing out on important opportunities.

3. Is your brand healthy? A solid brand is the most important foundation for any business. **But**, how do you know if your brand is healthy? Here are six brand-related questions to ask:

a. Does your marketing strategy go beyond the typical focus on either price, quality or service? Most businesses differentiate themselves based on one of those three alone. Often, that won't make you stand out.

b. Is your brand well understood by your team? Ask yourself this: if






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everyone who worked for your business was asked to give your definitive elevator pitch, would their responses be close to the same?

c. Is your brand voice inspiring? In other words, does your marketing copy make it clear to potential customers how your products or services will improve their lives?

d. Is your marketing fresh? You should make sure your logo and marketing collateral are up to current standards and design trends.

e. Is it cohesive? Someone who doesn't know your business at all should be able to glance at all your marketing collateral — including print and digital — and be able to tell, from looks alone, that all the pieces are from the same business.

f. Are you ready for the future? You may not need to rebrand. But if you did, would you be confident in your ability to get employees and management on board in full support of your efforts, so everyone was enthusiastic about the company's new direction?

If the answer to any, some, or most of these questions is no, you may need to do some brand work, so your marketing is built on a strong foundation.

Asking why

A good strategy is vital to the success of any marketing effort. Often, like Erik in meetings, strategy takes on the important role of sitting back and asking: "Why?"

Why are we doing it this way? Why do we think this is the right way to do it? Why is this approach better than another? It is in drilling down into those whys that better strategy is born.

I hope you enjoy the process of asking these vital questions. ☺