

# Superpowers fear WMDs in hands of small business

by Bruce A. Love

*W*MDs have been discovered in the arsenals of many small organizations worldwide. These independent entities do not even attempt to hide the fact that they have developed, and used, these weapons. They claim that it is the only way they can survive in a world dominated by superpowers.

*U*nlike the weapons of mass destruction used by some infamous military regimes, the goal of using Weapons of Market Distinction (WMDs) is to develop precision marketing programs designed to reach specific targets. While larger organizations with extensive financial resources often rely heavily on sheer budgetary strength to overwhelm vast numbers of the population, the WMDs used by creative leaders of smaller organizations, are frequently low budget (and sometimes free) collections of assorted marketing tactics. These tools help to establish a competitive advantage, and are ideal for reaching some markets that are inadequately served by larger organizations.

*S*mall businesses and other small organizations find that by developing a commando style approach to marketing, they see remarkable results. Author Jay Conrad Levinson has made a career teaching this philosophy, which he calls "Guerilla Marketing." While consistent with traditional marketing principles stressing the use of the marketing mix, guerilla marketing builds upon the usual tools of product, price, place, and promotion to create an innovative no-holds-barred approach to marketing.

*T*he WMDs I refer to are what Levinson calls guerilla marketing weapons. Some WMDs should be developed and deployed at the outset and can make or break an organization. Factors such as name, colors, and shape can dramatically impact the way a product is received. I witnessed this concept dramatically illustrated when a client offered two identical hot sauces under different labels to a large gathering at the International Fancy Food Exhibition in Philadelphia. The first jar was

labeled Jalapeno Hot Sauce, which accurately described its contents. The second jar, however, was sampled 1500% more than the first. It's colorful name and amusing label are credited for this incredible popularity. This creative packaging (in addition to being a tasty product) enabled Ingleby Farms to win a Scovie Award for its most famous product: Heinie Hurtin Hot Sauce. Over time, attributes such as name color shape and logo contribute to establishing branding (the process of designing a distinctive look for your products and packaging), and enable existing customers to feel comfortable trying new products that you introduce.

*S*ome WMDs take a long period of time to develop, and require patience. For small service organizations, active community involvement, association memberships, seminars, informative web sites, and newsletters all enable you to help others in the community while establishing awareness for what your organization does. In this way, you market not by selling, but by helping. A polite, friendly, enthusiastic attitude will go a long way to establishing consumer confidence, developing resource networks, and attracting sales. If a sale is made on a first encounter, that's great. The seeds for some sales however may be planted months, or even years, before the fruit of your marketing efforts are actually harvested. In the mean time, your willingness to give back to the community will have created a win-win for all involved. Large organizations find it difficult to provide the same personalized service that their smaller counterparts are able to offer.

*S*mall organizations have two important advantages over larger organizations: speed and agility. The key to being a successful guerilla marketer is to view everything around you as a potential WMD, and knowing when to launch specific weapons for maximum effect. By adopting a guerilla marketing philosophy and using WMDs, stores increase sales, associations increase membership, consultants attract clients, politicians secure votes, and small municipalities promote economic growth.

Love Consulting  
600 Oakmont Place  
Roaring Spring, PA 16673  
814-224-2651

articles@loveconsulting.com

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