



De-Mystifying a Marketing "How-To"

Brand awareness: key driver of marketplace success

In late 2022, *Harvard Business Review* reported on a survey of 1,200+ buyers who purchase products for their businesses.¹ The study showed that 90% of buyers ended up choosing a vendor already on a "short list" at the beginning of the purchasing process. The marketing lesson? Not holding a "top of mind" awareness position before the selling/buying process starts almost always results in failure to make a sale.

How to boost awareness: 3 strategic (and cost-efficient) ideas

We all know raising 30,000 plants in one acre produces greater returns and efficiency than scattering 1,000 plants across 30 acres. As a strategy, this concept — concentration of resources — came from military planners such as Sun Tzu (*The Art of War*, circa 350 B.C.) and Carl Von Clausewitz (*On War*, 1832). This winning principle also applies to marketing.

Here are three ideas you can use starting now to leverage the "concentration principle" to efficiently boost awareness in the marketplace.

1 Focus your message

Stop saying so many things. And repeat the few things you say.

A meta-review of 439 scientific papers concluded four is the "magic number" of things a person can remember from a body of information presented.² When presenting a product, stick to the hybrid name/number and three key differentials about it. Have more than three things to say? Organize it under one of the three main points.

These additional benefits come your way when you focus and repeat your message:

People will remember — For years, car insurer Geico trumpeted its hyper-focused message: "Fifteen minutes can save you 15%." Did you forget? Unlikely. And why is that? Because repetition creates memory.

Believability increases — A *Journal of Marketing* article described experiments by Georgetown University and UCLA professors. It identified the "optimal number of claims in persuasion settings." The answer? Three. Researchers experimented with four different products, studying what happened when one to six claims were made for each. They found "believability" increased with the number of claims made, but only up to three. A fourth, fifth or sixth claim decreased

believability and increased skepticism.³ Focus your message around no more than three ideas/claims.

Likability goes up — There is a link between familiarity (things we're aware of) and liking. Studies of artwork, music, geometric shapes and photographs of people's faces conclude people like and react more favorably to the familiar.^{4,5,6} One study of 2,879 advertisements showed that an ad's likability accounted for 80% of the difference in recognition (whether it was remembered). We like and remember the familiar.⁷ Focusing and repeating a message creates a marketing win-win.

2 Tighten your targets

Increase focus on target audience, media choices and timing.

One simple and guaranteed way to increase frequency on a fixed marketing budget is to reduce the number of audience members we try to reach. For example, instead of sending one seed catalog or direct mail piece to an audience of 10,000, why not send 10 postcards to 1,000 people? What should those 10 pieces say? Your focused message. Don't send the very same postcard about your new hybrid to those folks 10 times. Instead, stick with your message about the hybrid but present it in different

