

40 CREATIVE MARKETING IDEAS

You made an excellent decision. By taking a peek at this workbook, painstakingly crafted together by your friends at Forty, you clearly know that the marketing landscape is changing. Dropping thousands of dollars to buy customer's eyeballs just won't cut it anymore. Those that will succeed, both now and in the future, are the ones that embrace creativity and experiment with different ways of reaching their customers.

The ideas outlined in the following pages range from free and incredibly easy to those that require a bit of an investment in time even a few dollars (don't worry, there aren't many of *those*), but all are meant to spur creativity and motivate you to try out some new approaches to marketing.

So print out this book and get to work! Doodle in the margins, write down tasks, jot down ideas, set it on fire — whatever! The more ideas you implement, the more success you'll have.

CONTENTS

Easy

Ideas that are low investments of time and energy 3

Moderate

These will take more time and energy 14

Difficult

Yes, these are more intense. But they're worth it 21

KEY

 **No Cost**

 **Minimal Cost**

 **Low Cost**

 **Moderate Cost**

 **High Cost**

EASY AS PIE

The following marketing ideas are those that require little to no money to get started and are pretty simple in their implementation. This isn't to say they're any less important to your overall marketing efforts, they just happen to be the ones you can begin to work on immediately. Be sure to check out the examples we've provided of those who've already begun to make use of some of these suggestions; they provide a great resource for real world application that you can gain inspiration from, without having to make the same mistakes (ahem, Skittles.)

Decentralize Your Web Presence



In the 90s, your “Website” and your “Web presence” were basically synonymous. Today, they're not. If you're on a tight budget (who isn't?), consider skipping your main site and focusing more on the rest of the Web online: Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, Google Local, Tumblr, Ning etc. They have functionality and audiences built in that would take you a long time and a lot of money to build from scratch. Save your cash and invest in areas where you can hit the ground running.

NOTES/SKETCHES

Q: Apart from your main site, how else can you establish a cost-effective presence online?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?

Skittles is using this method to shake up their web presence. Visit skittles.com to check out what they're doing.



List Everything Your Competitors Have in Common...then Do the Opposite



Too often companies get wrapped up in only competing on the same items as their competitors. They want a website that is similar but better, products with the same features done better, etc. In order to stand out amongst a sea of similarity, try your hand at writing out everything that they actually do, then spend a little more time thinking of the exact opposite of them. Do they use a lot of black in their imaging? Use white in yours. Do they sponsor motocross events? Sponsor a snowboarding event. Not only will you get noticed for being you, but you'll appear in front of a whole new set of eyes.

Q: What are some things your competitors do that you can do differently?

Get Emotional



As much as we'd like to think that our decisions are rational and logical, they're also driven by fears, aspirations, gut instincts, a desire for affiliation, and a medley of other emotional promptings. Skip the rational arguments, and appeal to those hard-to-reach emotions instead. It'll give you a stronger personal connection, and set you apart from your competitors.

Q: Beyond practical matters, what are your customers' emotional needs? How can you appeal to (or satisfy) them?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Get in Early



A potential customer shopping around may visit ten other websites (or stores, or offices...) before making a decision. Typically, you would put on a good show and hope they eventually come back to buy, but there are often ways you can connect with customers even before they make a choice, so you can build a relationship and follow up when your competitors can't. A great example is a free download of something upon entering your email address - you give 'em something to remember you by, but retain their info for following up.

Q: What real value can you give your potential customers in return for their contact information? (Be creative!)

Say Something Nobody Else Will



Every industry has norms about the content in sales materials, and it's often the case that companies imitate each other instead of thinking about what customers really want to know. If you're a service firm, for example, try posting your prices instead of requiring potential clients to work to get a price. It'll build trust and comfort, and establish your price as a baseline for others.

Q: What information would your customers love to have that most of your competitors don't talk openly about?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?
<http://birdhouseapp.com/> makes fun of themselves in their promo video, but they also cover questions and concerns new users may have — making it an entertaining, yet novel video (the tweets at the bottom of the page are pretty good too!)

NOTES/SKETCHES

Get a Mascot or Spokesperson

\$\$

NOTES/SKETCHES

It's easy to create an icon or character associated with your company, typically found in or near your logo. So why not go a step further and bring this character life by creating a mascot for your company as well? They can be present at any public event, or maybe even make an appearance around the office to boost morale every so often. Just be sure to document each of his or her appearances so those external to your organization can catch a glimpse as well. There's a reason that sports teams make use of these cheery little characters — people like them!

Q: What would your mascot look like? What would you name it?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?



Who isn't doing this? Mascots and Spokespeople are so ingrained in marketing, that people often forget they're looking at a characterized version of the brand. Look at Orville Redenbacher, Chester Cheetah, Mr. T for Snickers, and Bruce Campbell for Old Spice! They all use these faces and characters to convey a message in a clever way that gives them plenty of opportunity for creativity.

Make Friends with Other Companies...and Talk About the Cool Things They're Doing



NOTES/SKETCHES

You have to admit, you come across some amazing companies each and every day. By taking the time to mention them in a blog post or on Twitter, or even writing an entire article about their company not only makes them look good, but you'll look good doing it. When you take the time to talk about others, people tend to perceive you as more genuine in your claims (aka less sales oriented), which can only be a good thing. So the next time you come into contact with an amazing company, or had a great customer service experience, let everyone know!

Q: What are some companies that stand out in your mind that you can tell the world about?

Talk About Your Customers



One way to prove you are the best company in your industry is to discuss what your customers are doing since they received your product/service. Not only do you help to promote your already loyal fans, but you get to toot your horn a little bit as well. Any chance you have to talk about others is always looked upon famously, and especially if you can do so in a way that indirectly promotes your own company, you're golden. These stories can be in the form of case studies, but any other creative way to discuss them is highly encouraged — especially if it's concealed within a form of communication not directly associated with your company.

Q: Which of your clients would make the best subjects for tackling this task? What are some ways you can discuss them without it looking like internally created marketing materials?

Aim for a Different Target Market than Your Competitors



There are always other tribes of individuals who are just dying to hear about your product or service. Yeah, they may be a bit smaller than your main market, but think of the possibilities associated with targeting a few select smaller ones. Or even one, incredibly influential group. These groups are out there, you just have to find creative ways to reach them. For instance, if you are in the business of selling peanut butter, moms who do the grocery shopping for their families are probably your biggest market, but other markets also exist for peanut butter which are typically ignored such as dieters, dog owners (medicine can be dispensed inside a glob of this stuff), bakers, etc.

Q: What are some different markets that you can target that your competitors don't already reach?

Stop Talking About Yourself and Your Company



People are incredibly attuned to sales pitches and will often disregard such advances. To combat this, why not take the approach that you will from here on out cease to mention yourself or your company in any marketing materials you create. What will come of such an idea is the spreading of valuable information while assuming those reading it will understand who the message is from. The result? More knowledgeable clients who view your company as one that will hand them information they can immediately put to use, rather than one pushing a sales agenda.

Q: What are some things other than yourselves or your company that you can discuss in communications with potential clients?

NOTES/SKETCHES

If You Absolutely Must Talk About Your Company...at Least Make It Fun



There may be certain instances that require your company be mentioned, but there are much more effective ways to do so rather than the traditional “Company X stands for integrity and honesty,” that anyone can claim. Instead, why not take the route that’s a little less worn and make any reference to your company informal and, dare we say, fun? It’s a risky move, but one that gets noticed, discussed, and even lauded. Marketing at its finest!

Q: How will you apply this idea to your marketing communications?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?

Woot.com is notorious for their witty copy and self-deprecating sense of humor. Check out their blog or newsletter for a daily dose of well-crafted copy all about themselves that you will actually enjoy reading!

Hire a Voice Actor for Your Voice Mail



Standing out isn’t easy. The best ways to do so are in ways that catch your audience and competitors by surprise. Why not take an often overlooked aspect of your business, your voice mail greeting, and spruce it up a bit by hiring a voice actor? The beauty of it all is that no one will expect it, and everyone will talk about it.

Q: What are some ways you could have fun with your voice mail greeting beyond just using a voice actor?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Show Your Face



People want to buy things from other people; it's a simple concept. Which should make you wonder why so many companies never show a single face of an employee anywhere on their websites (even worse is a cartoon character or baby photo - those are clearly just blatant copouts). If you want to really connect with your customers, stop hiding behind the anonymity of the Internet and put your happy little mug out there for the world to see.

Q: Besides your website, where else can you use real images of yourself/employees to better connect with customers?

Be Enigmatic



The common rule of creating or producing something is that you credit yourselves upon completion — so why not bend this rule slightly and do something mysterious that catches on without taking credit for it. The fact that no one is claiming responsibility for such a thing only creates intrigue around it as people interpret any lack of credit to mean something is more genuine.

Q: What are some ways your company can pique people's interest in a mysterious way?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?

The HBO series True Blood worked with many large companies on ad campaigns that were marketed towards vampires to create intrigue about the show and get people talking. Companies like Harley-Davidson, Monster, and Mini all ran ads promoting “wind running through your fangs,” “outrun the sun,” and “thousands of night-shift positions.”

NOTES/SKETCHES

Get Visual



The worst thing your marketing materials can have is useless copy (aka “fluff”.) By having fluff on your communication materials, it turns off those reading it so they may skim over the important messages you are trying to convey. To solve this dilemma, make use of imagery wherever possible. People respond much more positively to diagrams, graphics and photos — so use ‘em. This is not to say that your copy should be completely dissolved, but limit the word count and say only what is absolutely necessary.

Q: Where are some places you can cut your word count and replace them with images?

CHECK IT OUT If your budget doesn't include custom photography, you may have luck with <http://search.creativecommons.org/>

Get Physical



When is the last time you received a hard copy of someone's portfolio? Why not try the unexpected and dazzle your present/past/future clients with beautifully printed hard copies of items you would normally send by email. It will be memorable, incite discussion, and will be difficult for someone to toss in the trash. Worried about cost? Try printing on your own printers, get creative with your binding (ribbons work great), and skip the fancy envelopes.

Q: What are some things you can send out in hard copy that will make the biggest impact?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Talk About Something Different



It's easy to get caught up in standard speak about your product and its results. In order to break out of this rut and discuss something truly interesting, try talking about something other than your products and company in your marketing. Your company's service is an often overlooked aspect of the company that could use a bit more bragging. Maybe you have a system in place that allows clients to directly speak with their developers or designers? Perhaps have a new system of project management within your company? There are plenty of other aspects of your organization that can be outlined, you just need to find them.

Q: What is something you could discuss about your company that is only known to few?

Turn Off Everything Automated



Automated phone systems or email responses may seem like a smart idea when it comes to making your company seem larger/more competent/busier, but in reality, avoiding these will go a long way in developing customer relationships. When you take the time to properly respond to each and every incoming email (maybe even research the person or company behind it) it can result in an instant relationship. People appreciate being handled by a person, not a machine of sorts. So take the time to build these relationships as early as you possibly can.

Q: What automated systems do you have in place that you can do away with?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Create Unique Names For Your Projects — And Use Them



Ever wonder where things like “economic stimulus” comes from? People make them up, then they catch on. Instead of referring to a project or portion of a project as, “that thing we did once for that client that they liked,” why not give it a name? Your clients can then use the term, you can use the term, and hopefully, others can begin to use it, too.

Q: What are some names you can give to current or future projects? How will you inform the public of these unique names?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?

Software and technology companies use this a lot. Internally, Microsoft calls the latest Xbox 360 “Jasper,” which is more interesting than “Version 3” and gets picked up by enthusiasts. Another example is Apple, which calls the new operating system release Snow Leopard.

NOTES/SKETCHES



The marketing ideas in this section were rated as moderately difficult to implement, require a significant amount of time and may cost you a bit of money – though some are still free! Don't let this intimidate you, as these are merely suggestions. Maybe you have a cheaper/faster way of executing on these ideas, so be sure to take notes in the margins. Most ideas in this section require ongoing effort to put into place, so be sure you understand the timing and have the personnel to keep up with the demands that these more complex marketing ideas carry with them.

Send Memorable Press Releases



Imagine being a reporter. You're bombarded with press releases, all written to the same formula, all optimized to be copy-and-pasted into your publication, all looking pretty much identical. It's mind-numbing. Instead of sending yet another trite press release, shake things up. Give them all the pieces they need (photos, quotes, links, chronology, etc.), but in a different format. Make it stand out visually. Use a totally different tone. Create something that they'll remember, show their colleagues, and look forward to next time.

NOTES/SKETCHES

Q: What can you do to stand out from other press releases?

SOMETHING TO TRY
 PitchEngine.com is a great tool for creating free, interactive press releases that feature images, video, and social media links.

Give Away Remarkable Schwag

\$\$

The default in giveaways tend to be pens, t-shirts, or stickers. Some of the most creative conference giveaways cost no more to produce than a pen, yet get people talking. So think outside the lame t-shirt, and give people something they can't wait to use.

Q: What are some really creative or incredibly useful items you can think of to give away at your next public appearance?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?

At SXSWi 2009, Adobe gave away what were essentially miniature socks with their logo attached to them - they managed to turn baby apparel into trendy iPhone and iPod protective cases!

Look to Marketing Students

FREE

Marketing students can make more than great interns. Many universities will take on real world projects and hand them off to marketing students who will research, present, and deliver their recommendations. Not only do they take on these projects at no cost to you, but you get excellent outside perspective as well as contacts for future employees. So what are you waiting for?

Q: What project or problem would you have a group of marketing students tackle within your organization?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Keep the Momentum Going



Your existing customers know you best, so you'll often have better luck converting them into repeat customers (or evangelists for your product or service) than starting from scratch with someone new. Establish a program to stay in touch with past and present customers to keep reminding them that you're around and thinking of them.

Q: How can you re-establish contact with past customers, and give them something relevant and memorable so they'll keep you in mind?

Put On a Great April Fool's Prank



This is a tricky one, but if you're prudent and clever, you can create a noteworthy April Fool's gag that brings attention to your business and gets people talking, as well as establishing your brand as being fun and creative. Just remember that this is about entertainment, and shouldn't make potential customers feel deceived, betrayed, or frustrated.

Q: What's a fun prank your business can perform that's outrageous enough to capture the public's attention, but restrained enough that it won't get you in trouble?

CHECK IT OUT

Pigasus Award, a tongue-in-cheek honor presented on April 1, given in the field of "Paranormal fraud".

NOTES/SKETCHES

Share a Local Industry Blog



Adding your company’s voice to an industry blog demonstrates expertise in your given field. It shows that you have authority in your knowledge and helps to develop trust between yourselves and your clients. A company blog in and of itself is a great way to create this same reaction, but contributing to a blog external to your company only makes that feeling stronger. Start one, join one, it doesn’t matter — just get involved in your industry!

Q: What are some existing industry blogs that you can contact to inquire about becoming a regular contributor?

CHECK IT OUT Phoenix has some great industry blogs to use as examples:
<http://www.ValleyPRblog.com> and <http://www.PhxAdBlog.com>.

Be “The Only” Something



It’s common to claim you are “the best” at something, or even “the first,” so why not find something that you are “the only” at? You don’t have to come up with some crazy invention, or move your office to a remote location; just find something unique. It can be a certain way of doing business, a skill or talent your company possesses, or even a tool you’ve created over years of doing business. If you talk about it right, people can love you for anything unique that you do, and identify with it.

Q: What is something that only you or your company do?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Take Pictures...Lots Of 'Em



...then do something with them. Post to Flickr or your company's Facebook page; just be sure that others can enjoy them along with you. Any time is a good time to take photos for the world — and potential clients — to see. It gives outsiders a feeling of being on the inside of your company and lets them get to know your employees by their faces (instead of just short bios on your website or those tiny pictures on Twitter.)

Q: What are some ways you can promote your company's picture collections on Flickr or Facebook (or other photo sharing sites)?

CHECK IT OUT Vimeo is notorious for taking tons of office photos and videos...go check them out! <http://www.vimeo.com>

Actively Hunt for Testimonials



If you sit around and wait for your clients to send you glowing emails singing your praises, you are going to be waiting for quite a while. If you know you did a stellar job for your client, ask them to write one for you. People love sharing their reviews, hence the tremendous success of websites such as Yelp, so they will likely be more than happy to oblige. You can also find ways to get more creative or indirect in asking for their testimonials by sending out surveys or making use of online tools such as Feedback Army or User Voice — both of which ask browsers of your website for their feedback.

Q: What are some questions you can ask past and present clients to gain insight into your organization?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Start Something Industry Related



It can be anything from summer camps for kids on design to networking meetups at local restaurants. By spending the time to put together an event that is associated with your industry, you appear as a competent and involved company that everyone wants to be around. The only investment these events should require on your end is a small time commitment — otherwise, it just takes asking around! There are plenty of local businesses who love hosting events and getting people in their doors, so everyone wins. If your event continues to grow, you can always recruit a group of volunteers and delegate as needed. People love getting involved in what they believe in.

Q: What kind of industry related event can your company start?
What sorts of things is your company passionate about that you can make a difference in?

Create a Comic Book About Your Company



Ok, fine. It doesn't have to exactly be a comic book, but something that explains your company, its products, services, whatever in a fun and memorable format will do. A comic book is an excellent idea as it takes an enormous amount of creativity and talent to pull off — something that people will notice. There are plenty of other ways you can present your company other than a tri-fold marketing pamphlet, you just need to figure out what best suits your company.

Q: What creative ways can you present your company that fits your mantra/tagline/personality?



Call up Steam Crow for all of your comic book illustration needs (<http://steamcrow.com>)

NOTES/SKETCHES

Use Super-Targeted Advertising

\$\$

NOTES/SKETCHES

Google Adwords is a great advertising platform, but if you want to optimize your advertising budget, consider investing in a super-targeted platform like Facebook Ads, which lets you show ads to specific audiences based on location, marital status, interests, job titles, employers, age, relationship status, sexual orientation, etc. Get your message in front of exactly the people who need to see it.

Q:

What exactly is your target market, and what imagery/text would attract their attention?

TO GET STARTED

Facebook is a great tool for targeting extremely specific audiences based on a variety of factors such as gender, age, location, and even keywords mentioned in their profiles! They follow the pay-per-click model which helps to monitor budgets and are great for creating awareness around your brand, company, or anything else you can think of!



NOW WE'RE TALKING!

The ideas classified in this section were identified as those that either require a significant investment of money or effort to pull off. Yeah, they may not be the cheapest or easiest marketing ideas, but they are definitely the ones with the most impact (you know the saying about spending money to make money.) So be sure to space these out over a length of time to keep your customers in anticipation; and so you don't get burnt out too quickly!

Build a Tool for Your Target Market



People don't need more advertising in their lives. Instead, do something useful for them by building a tool that they can use on a regular basis. Go beyond the old-school "logo on a letter opener" approach, though, and build something new: a search engine for your industry, a free template, a conversion utility, a modified piece of hardware, a new way to do things—it can be almost anything, as long as it's useful, and something that people can spread the word about.

Q: What tools or techniques does your company use that could provide great value to a larger audience?

NOTES/SKETCHES

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?

SmashLAB created four other websites with the sole purpose of giving their fans some great tools: undrIn features highlights from the world of advertising, marketing and design; MakeFive is all about sharing top five lists; Design Can Change is an initiative in climate change; and shiftCMS features a web site content management system .

Make Your Own Reality TV Show



You do amazing things. Your company probably breaks out in laughter every few minutes. You may even have a little office drama. Sounds like the ingredients for a great reality show, doesn't it? So why not try it? Just record your days and upload them on YouTube. It gives your potential clients an inside look into your operations while documenting everything going on at your company, and may even get a few others laughing at you — which is always a good thing.

Q: What would the title of your reality show be?

WHO ELSE IS DOING THIS?

Starving Designer (<http://www.starvingdesigner.com>) is a series by Brent Spore on his design challenges he faces on a day-to-day basis.

Host a Meetup



When getting a new business off the ground, it helps to attend industry events or networking meetups to get your name out there. However, you can get some really remarkable publicity by actually starting and running a meetup yourself. It puts you at the center of the action, gets your name and face in front of everyone attending, and helps to establish you as a trusted figure, all for a relatively low investment of time and money.

Q: How would you organize a monthly meetup that would provide value to your potential customers, peers, and others?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Put On Free Workshops



People tend to want to keep their knowledge and expertise to themselves. Good thing people don't tend to run out of ideas, or lose the ability to learn, so why not teach others what you know? Sharing your knowledge will help others in your industry to respect you and your company, while also helping potential customers to value and trust your opinions.

Q: What topics would you cover if you were to put on a workshop?

Create a Unique Office Space



Your office can serve a variety of functions beyond 9-5 hours. Give it some character by sprucing it up a bit with unique furniture, off-the-wall art, and even board games. You could even turn your office space into a co-working lab and let others enjoy the space alongside you. There are so many options for your office space that don't involve cubicles and ties — give your office some breathing room.

Q: What does your perfect office look like? What are some other offices you've seen that are particularly inspiring to you?

TO GET INSPIRED

Check out
<http://www.thisaintnodisco.com/>
for office space ideas.



NOTES/SKETCHES

Design Some Great Desktop Wallpapers



Desktop wallpapers are a great way to spread your design aesthetic in a unique way. By giving away incredible wallpapers, it enables people to become familiar with your company/design style/motto in an unobtrusive way. Plus, any time you can give away something for free, people will love it and love you for it. Even the least skilled individual can create something that people will want to stick on their computers — a perk for you, as it’s an excellent form of free marketing.

Q: What would you put on your desktop wallpapers?

CHECK IT OUT Hicks Design in the UK has several sharp looking wallpapers for free download: <http://hicksdesign.co.uk/goodies/>

Give Away Something Your Competitors Charge For



The profits gained from the sale of something small just can’t compare to the number of new clients you can gain from giving it away for free. The best things you can give away are ones that don’t cost your company more than the time it takes to produce them — think: extensive case studies, workbooks, e-books, etc.

Q: What are some items you can afford to give away to people?

NOTES/SKETCHES

Speak/Present/Show Up to Everything You Are Invited



It may seem as though the constant time commitments and endless events never seem to pan out to much, but the impressions left and contacts made by being present at everything you possibly can will always be worth your time. It just takes a bit of planning and finding others to attend on your behalf. You can do it!

Q: What is your plan for attending everything you are invited to?

Leave Your Office



It may seem counter intuitive to show the world all of the non-work related things your company is doing, but by demonstrating that you have a well-rounded work environment can do wonders for your perception. Everyone expects your company to be stuck in cubicles all day with infrequent trips to the vending machine, so by putting up video footage of your company's retreat, or road trip to a networking event shows that your company is different from the rest. There's no better marketing than that which shows your uniqueness as a company...and not just in your product or service.

Q: What events can you document to show your company's lighter side? What events can you start doing to promote this way of thinking?

NOTES/SKETCHES

**WHAT
ARE YOU
WAITING
FOR?**

We sincerely hope these **40 Creative Marketing Ideas** have flooded your head with inspiration. What you do from here, we can only imagine. The one thing we do ask, is that you keep us informed as to what it is you are doing with the inspiration you've garnered from this workbook by emailing info@fortyideas.com. Also, never hesitate to ask us for a little assistance in putting these ideas to use.