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5 Guidelines for Business Direct Marketing

How can B-to-B direct marketers make sure their work remains relevant to their company's success? By adhering to these five principles.

1. Remember: Direct marketing is a selling process, not an entertainment event. We must never lose our sense of purpose: to start or facilitate the selling process. Our job is not to brand, position, entertain or enlighten.
2. Build your plan around hitting the ROI goal. Focus on changing behavior, not mindset. Only action—generating a lead or making a sale—can directly contribute to ROI. If you don't hit your ROI target, budget won't be allocated for it. If budget isn't allocated, you become irrelevant. By focusing on ROI, you will also force yourself to establish proper performance standards for every campaign element.

Most of the questions required to build an ROI plan are not included in most marketing and communication plans. Typically you must set the following targets before creative is begun:

- Revenue targets
 - Closing rate targets
 - Response rate targets
 - Lead quantity, allowable cost-per-lead
 - Budget targets
3. Use the "Nobody Cares" rule in all program development. Product development and marketing and communication groups often project a level of anticipation and excitement in the market that isn't there. Truth is, the prospect usually doesn't care. Build your copy platforms around the following rules:
 - They don't care about your company.
 - They don't care about your products and services.
 - They don't care about anything you have to tell or sell them.

When you create programs using these assumptions, you still bring in the early adopters and truly desperate. But more important, you'll also bring in

the fence sitters. Bringing in the marginal buyer is where the direct marketing battle is won or lost.

4. Make your copy platforms, appeals and offers personal and emotional. Build your programs around the emotional arguments that drive all of us: greed, fear, guilt, anger, exclusivity and salvation. Can you save your prospects time or money? Can you make their jobs easier? Remember: They don't care what your product does—they care what your product does for them.
5. Test all hypotheses. The biggest sin committed in direct marketing today is the lack of testing. It's bad in consumer direct. It's even worse in the B-to-B world, since the marketing team is virtually never a qualified buyer. How many marketing managers at IBM, for example, buy \$5 million hardware solutions?

The buyer will tell you how they want to buy; all you have to do is test.