

## Ten Essentials To Effective Marketing Communications

By Tom Hering  
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1. **Know Thy Customer.** To market effectively, you must completely understand your customers and prospects. Because if you don't know their needs, how can you possibly sell them on the benefits of doing business with your company?

So ask a lot of questions. Check into the marketing information available through your industry associations. Retain the services of a market research firm if necessary. Find out what is important to your customer? Competence? Value? Reliability? All of the aforementioned?

You cannot expect to succeed if you do not know how your customers will gauge success.

2. **Be Certain About Your Strengths.** This requires brutal honesty. Know without a doubt what makes you invincible. Evaluate all the strengths of your firm. Evaluate them as if you were a prospective client. Do you possess specialized knowledge that no one else in your market can claim? Strong customer relationship skills? Competitive fees? Inspire confidence?

An easy way to get an impartial evaluation of your strengths to ask current clients what they find most appealing about you and your business.

3. **Be Certain About Your Weaknesses.** More brutal honesty. Realize where you are less than superior. Are you less experienced in certain business aspects as other companies? Nothing can put a company out of business faster than promising one thing and delivering quite another.

4. **Understand Your Competitors.** Don't fear your competition. Respect them. Understand where they are strong and why. By knowing who your competitors are, it will make it easier to position your company in the marketplace. And your Unique Selling Proposition(s) (USP) should definitely be something no one else is saying.

5. **Stand for Something.** After completing the first four business essentials, you should have a clearer understanding of just what your company can represent to the market. Is it the more experience? Is it specialized expertise?  
Sift through your research again and again if necessary. You will undoubtedly find a position your company can own.
6. **Show People Your Value.** Help them understand that regardless of where you are on the pricing spectrum, your products or services bring value to their company. Unfortunately, many customers and prospects seem to understand the cost of everything and the value of nothing. It is your job to communicate what kind of value you offer them. And then to remind them again, when necessary.
7. **Be Certain of the Understanding & Support of Your People.** Once you've developed your position, make sure all hands on deck know about it as well. A consistent image to customers and prospects not only applies to your marketing materials. More importantly, it starts with the people who create and deliver your products or services. From top to bottom, every member of your team should understand the unique advantages your company offers to the market. And then, of course, practice what you're preaching.
8. **Speak with a Firm & Consistent Voice.** This essential is pretty much an extension of number six. Only it carries over into all your marketing and presentation materials.  
When everything is spread out on a table, customers and prospects should get the feeling your messaging is consistent from piece to piece. The benefits of doing business with your company should be explicitly or implicitly communicated, whether it is through your identity materials, collateral, advertising or website.
9. **Educating Your Clients Equals Increased Value.** More than anything, you are educating your customers on what your company can do for them. Don't keep it a mystery. The more they understand the process you go through, the more invaluable your product or service becomes to them.
10. **Never Take Understanding & Perception for Granted.** A colloquialism you've obviously heard before. But it is very apropos to marketing. Because just as you've figured out all of the above and you feel good about how you're marketing your business, a cataclysmic event can occur. It could be in the form of a new competitor, an economic downturn, world event, or some other unforeseen circumstance.