



Editors Note: This article originally appeared in the Larsen *inSights* eNewsletter. Larsen is a design, branding, marketing, and interactive agency with offices in Minneapolis and San Francisco. To subscribe to Larsen *inSights*, visit www.larsen.com/insights.

Tough Economy

8 Marketing Truisms

There's no question about it. Times are tough. The economy is taking its toll on businesses large and small, which means it's time to redouble your marketing efforts to stay competitive in your industry. In an effort to help, we're presenting eight marketing truisms from past issues of *inSights* to help you navigate these difficult economic times — or spur some ideas of your own.

1. Create a big idea

Let's say you're rolling out a marketing campaign. Launching a product. Revitalizing your brand. What's your big idea? Not to sound flippant, but you need one. Because without it, it's likely your campaign, product launch, or brand repositioning won't be memorable — or particularly effective. "Today, it's economically crucial to create something that's beautiful, whimsical, or emotionally engaging," writes Daniel Pink in his influential book *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*.

Wherever you are in the creative process, ask yourself the essential question: What's the big idea? If the answer requires you to think too hard or explain too much, the idea probably isn't there.

Read article: [Your Campaign: What's the Big Idea?](#)

2. Take risks and don't be afraid of failure

That's right. Creativity requires failure. Creative risk taking is always worth your time and trouble — even if your creation fails. The playwright Samuel Beckett once said, "No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." Beckett's attitude will help you through dry periods and help you face creative disappointments. Whether you're writing a play for the stage or in the early stages of rebranding your business, there's no secret that will ensure creative success. If there's a trick to consistent creative thinking, it's to remember what you learn from your past failures so that you, indeed, fail better next time.

Read article: [Creativity at Work: Leave Your Competitors in the Dull](#)

3. Know your customer

WIIFM (What's in it for me?). If you're a marketer, WIIFM should be your mantra. You should be asking it about everything you create. Knowing, of course, that the "me" in "What's in it for me?" is not "you" — it's your customer. Your audience. Your user. Your recipient. Your prospect. Your reader. Your donor. Your investor. Doesn't matter whether you're creating a website, a logo, a tagline, an annual report, or a trade show exhibit. Whatever you're marketing in whatever form, it's all about your audience.

Read article: [WIIFM: All About Audience](#)

4. Keep it short and simple

Brevity isn't only beautiful aesthetically; it can also affect the bottom line. Consider what separates good public speakers from bad ones. The best are engaged and direct. They know better than to bore an audience with endless anecdotes or meaningless detours. They energize with powerful images that relate directly to their main points. For instance: The Gettysburg Address is only 10 sentences. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech lasted just 16 minutes. Even if you're not the president or a civil rights leader, you're still communicating with others daily through e-mails, phone calls, letters, presentations, meetings, etc. What you say and how you say it can make a difference.

Read article: [Brevity is Beautiful](#)



5. Unify online and offline marketing

The goal is to create a seamless Web experience — online and offline. If users are already familiar with you from, say, an ongoing business relationship, a retail presence, or media coverage, your site needs to deepen their understanding of your value. It should start to move them along that golden continuum — from awareness to consideration to preference to purchase.

Read article: [The Web Experience: 6 Essential Questions](#)

6. Make your presentation compelling

Don't just stand there and read your PowerPoint slides! Instead, add commentary that reinforces, highlights, or extends what your audience is seeing. Most people speak at 150 words per minute, but can process language at 900 words per minute. This means by the time you have words up on the screen, your audience has already read them. (Assuming, of course, your message is interesting and relevant.) Glancing at notes is fine, but if you're reading aloud, you're not actively engaging your audience.

Read article: [Presentations: 8 Mistakes Everyone Makes](#)

7. Create customers who are advocates for your brand

How do you create and sustain loyalty? How do you turn customers into advocates? Strengthen loyalty with special members-only benefits, such as bonus points for frequent shoppers. Provide pertinent product or service information in a regular email newsletter. Offer customers an opportunity to leave comments, exchange ideas, and create community: Establish a bulletin board or create a blog. Give loyal customers a presence by featuring them in a case study or inviting them to write an article about your product or service.

Read article: [The Customer Continuum: Turning Casual Web Users Into Loyal Customers](#)

8. Insist on brand consistency

Your company's greatest asset is your brand. And much of that brand is expressed visually. If you haven't established a system to control the visual appearance — in short, the personality — of your brand, it's likely that many of your communications will be inconsistent or off-brand. At its most basic, a visual system establishes clear guidelines for each of the following: logo standards, typography, color, imagery, layouts, and formats.

Read article: [Visual Systems: Controlling What Was Once Left to Chance](#)

It's our hope that these 8 truisms can help you focus on the fundamentals in the face of uncertain economic times.