

Head: Enough! End the 2009  
Forget Predictions with; Get Actionable Tactics

Teez: Five ways to get back to what works, do ~~what is what's~~ real, and get the education to be a successful in online marketing for the next 10 years, not just 2009.

"Enough!" was the single word that echoed in the late summer air of Denver as the opening of President-Elect Obama's 2009.

In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, President-Elect Obama said, "Tonight, I say to the people of America, to Democrats and Republicans and independents across this great land: Enough." As I sit here myself planning for 2009, our upcoming Online Marketing Summit and certification program as well as my own marketing plan, the single word "enough!" that thought perfectly reflects my sentiments. Enough with all the hyperbole and predictions about what's in store for 2009.

Admittedly I, too, have've spoken and written on such, too. So, I'll stop the pontificating and start getting today I get back on the actionable-tactics track. To begin, look Look at your marketing plans for the year ahead and see how they stack up against five timeless online-digital marketing proverbs.rules. I've included at least one central action item you can do tomorrow. /right now.

In this order, here are five timeless proverbs of online marketing:

**Understand the Fundamentals**

Understand, *then* plan; don't plan to understand as you go. E-mail marketing, ~~web~~ Web site usability, and search engine-marketing are the three tried-and-true pillars of ~~online~~ digital marketing in terms of sustainable ROI ([define](http://www.webopediaWebopedia.com/TERM/R/ROI.html)). There isn't a company today that ~~cannot~~ can't see significant gains by improving its existing programs in these areas. Yet most ~~companies~~ have no idea of the fundamentals that actually drive success for a good e-mail campaign, ~~for~~ a strong customer experience on a Web site, ~~nor how best to combine~~ or for combining SEO ([define](http://www.webopediaWebopedia.com/TERM/S/SEO.html)) and PPC ([define](http://www.webopediaWebopedia.com/TERM/P/PPC.html)) into one effective campaign. ~~Not to mention how to integrate~~ Never mind integrating all three into a cohesive strategy that supports and drives the ROI ~~of the other.~~ for all. We are all executing (or having execute (or have an agency execute for us), but never take the time to understand the fundamentals. ~~I'm not talking about becoming an expert, just understanding the few fundamentals~~ that make these efforts work.

**Action item:** ~~budget:~~ Budget time and money for education. ~~Budget time, budget small dollars to get~~ Get research, watch a Webinar, get certified, or attend an educational event ([full](#)

disclosure: I have vested interest in the last two ~~for full disclosure~~). It's no secret that MBA programs and test preparation entities make a killing during down-times, because people realize ~~that~~ there's no better time to get ~~one's self~~ on the right track than when every dollar counts and the fast pace of growth has waned into a more methodical approach to business and marketing.

So, grab your calendar, put in a recurring appointment with yourself to read something of educational importance (not industry news) for ~~that the~~ same hour every day or week. EarnmarkUndertake one education event, program, or initiative ~~you'd like to undertake and add that to your personal goals and objectives that most companies make us turn in~~. If you need help finding some good reading, find me on [LinkedIn](http://www.linkedin.com/pub/0/312/658) or [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/people/Aaron-Kahlow/620816463), and I'll be happy to recommend top books and whitepapers.

**First Things First**

Execute on the foundational basics ~~and~~, then add the fun, new stuff. ~~A few examples of what I mean by "first things first." Take your Web site. Many~~ For example, many sites are trying to figure out how to add a blog or ~~user-generated content (UGC/CGM~~ ([define](http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3515576)) to improve engagement ~~commendable~~. Commendable ideas. But improving the engagement on a site that ~~does not~~ doesn't apply the most basic ~~of Web~~ site usability fundamentals is like ~~trying to paint~~ painting over a rusted metal wall to make it more visually appealing. The paint may look ~~new and~~ fresh for a few days and folks will comment on its appeal, but quickly the rust and corrosion will take hold and the same rusty wall, ~~a la the same crappy user experience on your Web site,~~ will ~~take hold~~ be visible.

E-mail's another great example. We all love e-mail because it's so easy to blast ~~out~~ a message to our customers ~~at with~~ a few pushes of ~~the a~~ button. ~~Our monthly e-newsletters being one such blast~~. Ask one simple question: "Why do you we send e-newsletters?" Get a real answer to that question, and see if ~~that it~~ matches up with what your customers actually want from you. Most companies have ~~nothing~~ worthwhile to report every month to customers, so they try to sell them with the latest promo or gimmick. If you've got nothing, ~~then~~ send nothing. Just because you can, ~~does not~~ doesn't mean you should.

**Action item:** Send out a survey as your next e-newsletter and ask your customers what they want from you and how frequently. Then ~~the hard part comes,~~ actually do it (e.g., don't send the same e-newsletter format next month).

**Customers Know Best**

We all say, "we listen to ~~the customer~~." ~~In reality, our customers,~~ but that's the furthest thing from the truth. With ~~a myriad of all the~~ data about our ~~customer customers'~~ online behavior ~~online~~, budget is no excuse not to understand. There are hundreds of millions of ~~dollars~~ dollars' worth of usability studies done on customer/user behavior as it relates to Web sites, search, e-mail, and social media. Much of this

is free and already posted online. Just because you did some cookie-cutter survey last year doesn't give you any indication "~~on~~ why" your customers do what they do online and how they prefer to be served. Yes, preference surveys ~~on preferences~~ are important for specific elements, but they ~~will not~~ won't answer the big questions ~~you need answered~~. So read the research, ~~look at possibly~~ consider doing your own, ~~and~~ then stop the guessing and promoting. Make educated decisions based on customers.

**Action item:** Get three to five friends or co-workers who aren't familiar with your Web site, ~~have them start at the~~ to go to your home page, and find your top one or two offerings on the site. Watch them over their shoulder, ask them to think aloud so you can understand what they are doing and why. Then, sit back, fight the urge to tell them anything about the site, and take copious notes.

You'll get a great sense of what a customer actually sees ~~versus~~ instead of your opinion about a site you know all too well.

**Help Me, Help You, Help Me**

With so much to learn in the ever-changing world of onlinedigital marketing, we must turn to ~~our~~ peers, ~~as well as~~ support groups, and interest groups to find people who ~~have already learned the lessons and can~~ give us insight into what's working and what's not. Your local marketing associations are a good place to start, though there's a dearth of good onlinedigital marketing education offered by most associations. So, ~~begin, but~~ don't end your search with these associations. ~~There are group~~ Group sites like [ITToolbox.com](http://ittoolbox.com/) ~~that~~ offer programs for the information technology industry. ~~Groups in~~ LinkedIn are being formed groups are popping up, though not much action is happening yet. And some publisher sites are heading down this path. Be patient, many forums are still ghost towns. ~~So before~~ Before you heavily invest some time in any, look at the post recency and frequency ~~of posts~~ as well as the contributors' credentials ~~of the contributors~~.

**Action item:** Go to Google, type on the subject area of greatest interest or need, and see what pops up. This may take some surfing, so do more than one search and go beyond the first page of those search results.

**Socialize Your Efforts**

Every marketing campaign today can benefit from social media, such as a blog to support your PR, a ratings/reviews overlay on your Web site to get customers sharing their needs and wants, or simply getting in the flow of social networks such as Facebook or (to a lesser degree) LinkedIn to understand this change in human behavior and begin connecting with partners, customers, ~~etc., through social networks such as Facebook or to a lesser degree LinkedIn and so forth~~. It's long past time for you to figure this out. ~~So many marketers are out of the flow. When I say "flow," I mean understanding what it feels like to read an update on your friends and colleagues in Facebook, giving and getting status updates via Twitter or Facebook~~

and enjoying the experience, sending instant messages or having a chatty conversation with a business colleague on a social network instead of sending another dry static e-mail. </p>

<p>Many people don't understand the human behavioral aspect of ~~this~~ social media and how ~~it is~~ it's really changing ~~the paradigm of~~ business communications where so personal and business lives are blending. Unfortunately, generation gaps are a big reason for this. Anyone over ~~the age of 35~~ has not really ~~hasn't~~ grown up on the electronic medium; ~~we've~~ we've only adapted. ~~So, as one~~ If you're in this age group, it's imperative to try new things and get into it. Otherwise you'll be ~~the one~~ making fun of someone's status update changes at a party, while everyone else will actually be laughing at you because you just don't get it. </p>

<P><b>Action item:</b> </p> Just do it. ~~Like last year,~~ I strongly recommended folks understand the big social networking environments like, such as Facebook ~~and I'll stick with that recommendation~~. LinkedIn is great for collecting names (a virtual Rolodex), but ~~does~~ it doesn't have the social networking implications ~~in behavior and getting in the flow~~. ~~So, if you are not on Facebook, get on. And if you are on Facebook, get.~~ Get engaged. ~~Same rule as last year applies, if you need a friend, then feel free to start with me. I would be happy to give you some groups to join and things to do. And at least you'll have one friend, right?!~~ </p>

<p>As I said in the beginning, ~~these are not~~ These aren't suggestions just for 2009. ~~They are~~ They're timeless proverbs rules for online digital marketing and the principles will apply at all stages of your progress. ~~There is~~ There's no better time to get back to what works, do what is what's real, and get the education you need to be successful for the next 10 years, not just 2009. </p>