

# The Worst Case Scenario Handbook

Jim Porter, bluefish marketing

The Worst Case Scenario Handbooks have become somewhat of campy cult classics in recent years. If you're not familiar with these titles, which seem very appropriate in this day and age, they dive into challenging scenarios that we are not likely to run into during our days at work or even at home trying to manage the kids! Nevertheless, these situations are often entertaining to read about.

The table of contents reads like a regular 'who's who' of doom and gloom situations - not entirely unlike watching the financial reporting on CNN these days. Chapter headings from "The Worst Case Scenario Handbook" include:

- How To Escape From Quicksand
- How To Win a Sword Fight
- How To Escape From a Bear

Beginning to get the idea?

When thinking about writing an article for The Causeway Connection, I began to think about how today's marketing managers, in the high-tech community anyway, are really facing a "worst case scenario" of their own. While the backdrop of the books does provide a funny way of looking at the situation, many of us have never experienced business conditions this bad for this long.

This is not an uncommon situation: your job is on the line, your budget has been cut and you lost 50% of the marketing staff in the last "reduction in force". Worst of all, imagine that your boss' boss is questioning the value of doing any marketing. What do you do to survive this worst case scenario?

## The answer: Own the early stages of the purchasing process

It's time to roll-up your sleeves and get dirty. We've all heard executives say that everyone in the organization is responsible for sales, well in this market, they're actually right! Companies can't afford "soft" returns on marketing campaigns. What your company needs are real sales opportunities - that's where you can help.

Today, during the early stages of the buying cycle, the last thing a prospect wants to do is tip off vendor sales reps that they might be in the market for their offering, only to receive a barrage of calls asking them if they are ready to buy. Instead, they prefer gathering information "under the radar" and making directional decisions without the harassment of over eager sales reps. This is where tactical, focused, marketing can make an impact.

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## Our Services



### Sales

*Our goal is to understand your specific sales needs. Whether it's hitting your quotas or engaging with your ideal prospect – we are here to keep you on track.*



### Marketing

*Our specific demand generation and nurture programs are set in place to keep your buyer engaged at every point of the sales cycle. Stay in touch with your prospects via digital,*



### Research

*Do you understand your target audience? What are the trends impacting them? Can you quantify the issues? Do you need hard data and answers to tough questions? We do that.*



### Technology

*We specialize in Salesforce.com CRM and Pardot marketing automation consulting. If you need better contact or opportunity tracking, nurturing, scoring and analytics, we can show you how.*

Marketing can provide the right information, at the right time, to the right people. It delicately guides the prospect in the early stages of the buying process in a helpful non-threatening way. Imagine how many prospects will be predisposed to purchase from you if you help them early in the buying cycle. Imagine the impact on revenue if your sales reps spent their time with qualified leads - potential buyers. Wouldn't it be great to tie new deals to Marketing's expenditures? Now that's a survival strategy!

Marketing must take a leadership role in securing well-qualified, informed prospects for Sales. Soft returns like building brand, increasing awareness and generating unqualified responses no longer justify marketing expenditure. Your efforts and resources must have a direct impact on the pipeline. Here are 4 easy steps to ensuring survival - yours and your company's.

### Step 1 - Understand how your prospects buy

- Understand - really understand - how your prospects purchase what you're selling. Ask prospects the steps they go through in the early stages of their purchase process. Don't assume that you already know - I guarantee you, how your prospects purchased products or services five years ago is very different than how they purchase now. Yesterday's decision maker is today's influencer. Don't rely on your sales people to know the process either; it has changed for them too.

**Dont assume you know the sales cycle - I guarantee that it is different, very different, from two to three years ago!**

- To begin to understand the new purchasing process, interview 10 prospects and 4 recent customers and ask them the steps they took. The buying process tends to be somewhat linear but don't get thrown off if you get different, or conflicting, answers. You'll be able to piece together a typical process without too much trouble.

### Step 2 - Align "information offers" to the milestones of the purchase process

To win the battle in the early stages of the buying cycle your information offers need to be complete, compelling, relevant and recent - but most of all they need to be aligned with the logical steps you've mapped in Step 1.

- **Complete** - Make sure that for every milestone in the purchasing process you have an offer. It may be a case study, an online demo, an ROI calculator, an evaluation checklist, or a white paper. If you're missing something, get it as soon as possible. Remember your audience - finance now dominates the purchase process for technology buys. Do you have information offers that are tuned to the financial audience? We'll need these before they ever get to talk to a rep.
- **Compelling** - These pieces have to be pragmatic and compelling in content, as well as in delivery - or else they are fluff pieces. We've all been guilty of this at one time or another, but today buyers have neither time nor patience for this.

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- **Relevant** - Buyers want to see references within their specific industry or vertical segment. They want to be sure that the solution is going to work for them, in their industry, without endless amounts of modification. Technology buyers want to see technology, financial buyers want to see the metrics, and business buyers want to see how it will impact their business. In your quiver of offers, do you have an arrow for every need?
- **Recent** - Buyers want to make their decisions based on current data and information. Have the industry analysts critiqued your products this year? Are your success stories and references recent and up-to-date? Collateral like this does have an expiration date - 2 years or older and it's probably time to update.

### Step 3 - No more in-fighting, agree on lead definitions

- The classic in-fighting between sales and marketing over leads must stop in order to survive. Based on your newly defined purchasing process (Step 1), define a "qualified lead": size of company, vertical, prospect title, identification of pain, project budgeted, stage of buying process, seen a demo, read vertical case studies.
- Take your recently mapped-out purchasing process, sit down with the head of sales and agree as to what sales and marketing will do during this process - where does marketing end and sales begin. This is the key to survival.

### Step 4 - Execute on the plan

- As quickly as possible complete steps 1 through 3 and create a plan. From the plan create a marketing campaign to generate interest from the prospect and from the right companies.
- Be complete - marketing is like a series of dominoes stacked on edge, each representing a stage in the marketing offer. skip a stage or two, and none of the dominoes fall down; the campaign fails before it starts.
- Create a dialogue with your prospects. Hold their hands and guide them through the buying process. Fill them with information that helps them to do their job, or do their job if necessary. Define the purchasing process, then own the early stages and get ready to measure your impact on sales!
- Can't do it all on your own? Look outside, outsource. Hire a marketing services firm that can help - one that combines lead generation capabilities and telemarketing professionals that are skilled at working the early stage of the purchasing process. They can augment your existing team, or work independently, as a seamless extension.

### Avoid the Quicksand

This worst-case scenario in the technology marketplace requires radical action. Roll up your sleeves and focus on selling - claim ownership of the early stages of the buying cycle! Follow these four tips in our handbook, and you'll be well on your way to writing "The Marketing Best Case Scenario Handbook."

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