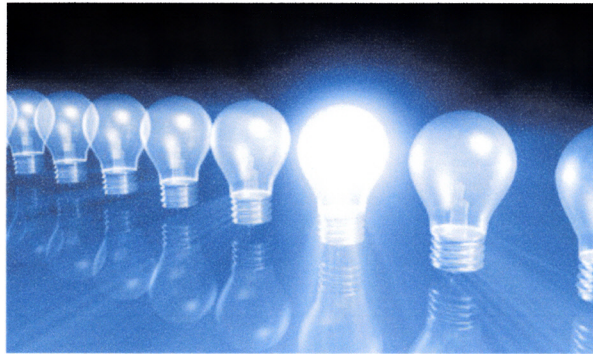




AMi eNewsletter
Supporting Marketing with Impact

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When the pressure to drive sales builds, it can be tempting to “steal” ideas from our competitors. Don’t do it. We’ll tell you why..



To Thy Brand Be True: The Pitfalls of Copycat Marketing

Maybe you’ve seen it: the Gold Bond Ultimate Overnight television commercial, promoting the benefits of nighttime moisturizing. Eight seconds into this 15-second ad, the narrator claims—in word and in print—that the lotion penetrates 10 layers deep, locking in moisture, thanks to hyaluronic acid.

Does that ingredient sound familiar? If you've seen Eva Longoria's commercial for L'Oréal Paris's Revitalift serum, it should. She painstakingly pronounces the substance's name syllable by syllable (hy-a-lu-ron-ic) in the opening of her commercial, in which she claims hyaluronic acid is the skin care ingredient "everyone is searching for."

Is hyaluronic acid in skin cream an amazing new discovery, or is it simply a new angle for marketing, one that both companies are trying to capitalize on? Is this a case of copycat marketing?



What Copycat Marketing Can Hurt

Keeping tabs on your competition is never a bad idea. And if your business is new, or if you're developing a product or service in a significantly different area for you, checking out the competition can give you some insight into how to talk to your market. But trying to replicate an offer, mimic a catch phrase, emphasis the same benefit or feature, or look like another company's marketing will not end well. Imitation is not the best form of flattery—or the most profitable—when it comes to marketing.

Some marketers will tell you that copycat marketing is a more efficient way of getting the job done, as long as you put your own spin on it. The theory is that it's better to model your approach or product on a successful concept than to start from scratch. No need to be a great innovator when you can be a great implementer.

But the problem with copycat marketing is that you're not thinking for yourself. You're not differentiating your company or your brand from your competitors. Instead, you're confusing your market, diluting your brand, or making your company seem inadequate and dishonest.

Rebecca Gill, founder and president of Web Savvy Marketing, identified several other dangers, as well, in her 2014 article, "Saying No to Copycat Marketing." Gill says that copycat marketing

- *Kills creativity*
- *Leaves you forever chasing your competition, not outsmarting them*
- *Prohibits strategic planning and long-term marketing efforts*
- *Makes you one fish in a full pond*
- *Distracts you from your goals and objectives*



How to Create Great, Original Marketing

In 2016, the Forbes Communication Council, an invitation-only, fee-based organization for senior-level communications and public relations executives, published an article about building brand strength (“Five Ways to Stay True to Your Brand’s Unique Values”). In it, they claim that successful companies don’t just create great products and services, but they also stay true to their brands, they value their customers, and they show that they care about more than just a profit.

How does this help your marketing? It forces you to focus on you. It allows you to think about your products and your strengths and your style and your customers. It allows you to do your thing, not someone else’s.

Building your brand means that you

Walk the Talk. *It’s easy to say your company believes in certain things, but in order to gain and retain customers, you have to act on those beliefs. As Kerri Ward, IGS Energy, says, “Don’t just say you have core beliefs, abide by them. If you create a culture where living the values is part of the job, employees become your greatest advocates. Customer experiences improve when they see your employees living your culture, and then they become great advocates too.”*

Put Matter over Money. *Your company exists for a purpose. At some point, someone developed a solution to a problem. Being successful and growing your business is important, but remember why your company exists. Use that to*

guide your marketing. Follow your path, not someone else's.

Build a Believing Team. *Every single person in your organization has to believe in your company and understand what makes it great and different. If they don't believe it, then how can they get customers to? Make sure everyone, beginning with interns and recruits, understands your company's values, goals, and mission.*

If your industry is lucky enough to benefit from a great new invention, fantastic! Omitting that fact from your marketing could put you at a distinct disadvantage. But if you're building your marketing messages based solely on the ideas of your competitors', then you risk your brand losing its customers and its identity.

Can your company afford either?



Does it work?

So what is hyaluronic acid? Hyaluronic acid is a substance found in the human body, most notably in fluids in the eyes and joints. When extracted from rooster combs or made by bacteria in a lab, it is used as an oral or injected medicine to treat various joint disorders, particularly osteoarthritis, and to replace fluids lost during certain eye surgeries. According to www.webmd.com (<https://www.amidirect.com/so/c5MaHw2Pe/click?w=LSotDQowZGQxOTdhNSo4MTcwLTRkZWUtMTVhZSo3NWQ4ODc5MGMoMGQNCmhodHA6Ly93d3cud2VibWQuY29tDQotLS0>), there is currently no evidence to support the claim that applying hyaluronic acid to the skin can prevent changes associated with aging. Studies are underway.

Very truly yours,

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