

Acclaim for Leah Hoppes'

## MARKETING CHOMP

*Powerful Modern Marketing to  
Grow Your Business Now*

**"Marketing Chomp** is a great step by step guide to help any business owner take charge of their message and deliver it precisely to his/her audience. Having worked with small business owners on a personal level, I know the frustration they feel when it comes to marketing. This book lays it out in simple terms and easy steps to help the reader develop and execute an exceptional marketing plan."

– *Thom Farrell, CEO in the Engineered Critical Components Industry and Chairman of the Small Business Assessment Committee for SCORE*

**"Marketing Chomp** is a nuts and bolts manual for, as the subtitle claims, growing your business now! Leah Hoppes writes with a no-nonsense style, adds a sprinkling of humor to keep readers engaged and offers a step-by-step how-to in areas most business owners ignore, to their peril. The workbook will give business owners, team builders and managers, cutting-edge tools to compete in today's arena, while still offering food for thought for even the seasoned marketing professional. With so much marketing advice out there, this read will stand out as educational, empowering and inspirational."

– *Marjorie Stradinger, CEO, Stradinger & Stradinger: Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing*

"This is a clear-cut, understandable, well-defined, interactive workbook! Now we're on target with the right message to the right audience in a very competitive market, attracting excited new clients!"

– *Dr. Bill & Debbie Hestrup, Owners of Hestrup Family Wellness*



# MARKETING CHOMP

*Powerful Modern Marketing  
to Grow Your Business Now*

Leah Hoppes

FIRST EDITION



**KINGMAN ROW**  
**Johnston, IA**

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## PREFACE

### Using *Marketing Chomp*

Marketing encompasses a universe of things, and business owners everywhere are overwhelmed: What to do? Where to market? How to market? To whom to market?

We have found small business owners are chomping at the bit for someone to provide solid, logical direction. But it's impossible to sustain – much less grow – your business on a diet of junk information, and there's a lot of it out there. It's no different than trying to fuel yourself for a good workout or a race: you have to eat nutrient-dense food. A diet of chips and soda will not land you in the winning time slots; in fact, you'll be lucky to even finish.

When we're talking about your business, barely crossing the finish line doesn't count. If you're crawling at the end, it means you're going out of business.

Understandable eagerness to do *something* at the expense of doing the *right* thing leads to poor decisions. For the small business owner, a major marketing misstep can mean closing the doors.

Do you need this book? You tell me.

Are you primarily a *strategic* thinker? This book can help you incorporate more detail-oriented *tactics* for success.

Are you primarily a *tactical* thinker? This book can help you build a plan.

Are you a young marketing professional? Siddown, kid, let's talk about some things you *didn't* learn in school.

Are you new to the job? Have you just been thrown into marketing? This book can help you make sense of your new role.

Are you a seasoned marketer? Are you too close to it all? Caught up in a specialty? This book can help you take a step back and learn or re-learn some essential concepts.

Are you a business owner or entrepreneur? Let me show you how to leverage the power of marketing to grow your business.

Are you *clueless* about marketing? Close to giving up? Well, I might chomp, but I don't bite. Let me help you make sense of this.

*Marketing Chomp* is written in a way that takes us from a "menu of *ideas*" to specific "recipes for *exercise and action*." My goal is to break down marketing into bite-sized, easy-to-digest marketing solutions for the stressed out business owner.

You can consume *Marketing Chomp* however you wish, by selecting the chapters which intrigue you or by reading it in order.

However you do it though, remember that knowledge – like food – is only as good as the *action* for which it provides fuel. To really impact the way you market yourself and your business, at some point you need to take in the entire book and *apply it*.



Over the course of this book, I hope you will learn things which you may not have known, identify areas where you need to focus and, overall, develop a deeper understanding of how to leverage the power of marketing. We'll also be looking at ways to quit your bad habits.

So, whether you love marketing, hate marketing, are overwhelmed by, burnt out on, knee-deep in, or PO'd about marketing, come sink your teeth into *Marketing Chomp!*

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Story of Vision Force*

#### ***Freak Like Me***

I shouldn't even be alive. In 2009 I had not one, not two, but three strokes. The third and massive stroke hit five days after the initial two, which put me on a helicopter flight from a Level 1 trauma center to a university hospital which had an entire stroke team waiting for me.

After defying the odds and surviving the night, a continuous parade of medical students marched in to have a good stare at the odd specimen. They were put on the spot with questions by the leading neurologist while I blinked back with a raging headache. As the doctor poked my foot with a cold, sharp neurological test device (a.k.a. pen), I was far from grasping the full scope of my circumstances. I felt most like an extra on the TV show *ER*.

It wasn't until later that I was told I hadn't been expected to make it through the night and how I would be written about in medical journals.

A vertebral artery dissection is quite rare; basically it happens to 2% out of every 100,000 people and about 10% of those (that's me!) will suffer a stroke as a result, which logs me at .2% of the population. Now, medical documents don't even talk about *multiple* stroke percentages so, well . . .

Let's just say that I'm a freak of nature and that's okay by me, because it is a similar freakish anomaly that preserved my life.

The neurosurgeon assigned to my follow-up care pointed out on the CT scan how both of my vertebral arteries were the same size. She explained that most people have one artery which is significantly smaller than the other. In the case of a stroke, when the larger artery is blocked there isn't sufficient blood (and therefore oxygen) getting to the brain through the smaller, unblocked, artery. Because there had been sufficient blood flow in my left (same-size) artery during all three strokes, even the massive one, I didn't die. So, though freaky things happened to my body, that freaky same-size trait assured my survival when the artery lining tore away from the artery wall.

Enough suspense – I had a full recovery. . .

## ***Vision Built on Dunkin’***

I was one of those people completely sold on “corporate.” I loved my job, liked the way my career path had gone and saw only bigger and better things on the horizon. Corporate had been good to me. I learned how to push the boundaries just enough to get projects done while still upholding my obligations as a manager and playing by the rules. I had a clear vision of my next role.

But then I met Sean.

Sean was a big-vision person, the likes of which I had never quite experienced. He started talking this nonsense of becoming entrepreneurs and owning a business someday. It was hardly a conversation I could take seriously. I listened with one ear, humoring him, but, after all, I didn’t know anything about *owning* a business. I *had* a job, and a good one at that!

Well, that’s the thing about Sean: not only is he a Big-Vision guy, he’s also a Talented-Leader guy, which means he is highly influential. He started by asking me questions.

“So, if you *were* to own your own business, what could you do? What do you think you would *want* to do?”

Worst of all, he would actually wait for me to answer.

“I dunno,” I’d mutter. “Marketing, I guess.”

My wimpy reply is actually embarrassing to me now. I had no confidence in being a business owner, had never thought about this – how on earth did I know what I would do with a business of my own?! Generally, if the idea isn't our own we don't really like it, so this whole line of questioning was just, well, *silliness* in my mind.

About this same time my corporate job came to an abrupt end, which began the unraveling of the whole Corporate-'til-Retirement plan I had going in my head. Because of the twist in circumstances, I was a little more receptive when Sean came back from a two-day business conference jacked up with ideas. I couldn't help but get caught up in his enthusiasm. Talk we did, and one night he said, "Let's create the name of our company!"

He was serious about abandoning our employee status and starting a plan to become business owners.

So we got our Dunkin' Donuts® coffee and our laptops and sat around the kitchen table at my house, brainstorming names for our company. We started with what we wanted to offer, how we would do business, what we would stand for, and then scoured the dictionary and thesaurus. We'd come up with an idea, then check to see if domains were available. At one point we had "Vision Brigade," but that sounded too militant, so back to the drawing board.

Ultimately "Vision Force" won out. It embodied all that we wanted it to and the domain was available, so we snatched it up. We created the Facebook page and then immediately went to work on getting the logo designed. Within a week we

had a logo, a domain, a Facebook page and the start to what we thought would be a five-year plan.

Then, three months later, I found myself without a job. Again.

Let me put this in perspective. I had 18 years of steady career progression, promotions and increasing responsibilities. I devoted myself to my employers. I didn't have kids, so work was my life. I traveled, worked long hours, on both evenings and weekends, and had the type of marketing roles where I had to work even on vacation to stay on top of everything. So when all of that went away, it was jarring. Sure, I was making over six figures, but the trade-off was that the company owned me.

When I was first faced with the abrupt ending of one job, I found another job quickly, one that paid a fraction of what I had been making. But I was happy just to have landed something within a few short weeks. Then, when *that* company decided to let several of us go, well, that was just about all I could take. Two jobs gone within five months. It's pretty accurate to say my love for corporate and my desire to work for people had turned rather sour. Sean and I were still only dating at the time, and when I told him that I had been let go, there wasn't much more to say. The mere thought of going back into those environments literally turned my stomach, so I said, "I guess our five year plan starts now."

And with that we made the decision to try this thing called business ownership.

## ***Fake It 'Til You Make It***

Initially, I didn't know what the heck I was doing. Don't believe me?

I had to look up how to spell "entrepreneur." I so wish I were joking. But the truth is, I didn't know the first thing about, well, anything.

A friend invited me to a women's networking group, which is how I got my first customer. As it turned out, that first customer's wife was also the banker who helped advise me on how to officially get started.

The first few months were painful. Dreadful, actually. I went to absolutely every networking event there was, even though they weren't getting me in front of my ideal client. I went simply because I didn't know what else to do.

I connected with every single person, met up for coffee and had more unproductive conversations than I care to remember. I was new at networking so I didn't really understand how to do it effectively. The closest I'd ever come to networking was schmoozing with clients and upper management at trade shows and Christmas parties.

But I got another client, then another, then another. Then I got a referral. That referral gave me another referral, and so the business slowly started to build.

But I also had a secret. . .

# SECTION I

## Chomping on the Essentials

*In this section, we look at what you  
absolutely must have –  
the meat and potatoes of your marketing strategy!*



## 2

### SO . . . GOT MARKETING?

Search the internet for “What is marketing?” and the results will come from a variety of sources: business people, anonymously written blogs, Wikipedia. And because most writers are trying to promote a certain idea, they often miss the mark.

Marketing isn't just a tactic employed to attract customers, nor is it simply finding what fits your customer. There is **marketing** and there are **marketing tactics**, and yes, there is a difference. Marketing tactics are all the *actions* you take to attract customers, and these actions shouldn't be confused with the broader concept of *marketing*.

*Marketing, in its truest sense, consists of developing such a deep knowledge of the industry and its market that one is able to see trends and identify customer needs before the customer is even aware of those needs.*

If you are only focusing on what your next brochure is going to look like, or what to post on social media, then you're

missing out on the power of marketing. If you're trying to fit your current product or service with your current customer base, you're missing the mark for long-term, strategic growth.

And if you just answered that you really aren't interested in strategic growth, now I know you're just lying. If you're in business, you're trying to *stay* in business, otherwise you wouldn't be doing what you're doing right now: reading this book. No one goes into business with the clear intent of losing money and closing their doors. What might be true is that *you don't know* what long-term strategic growth is.

So, what does that look like?

Long-term, strategic growth starts with thinking about being in business for more than the next six months, and then putting a plan in place for staying in business. It also means making systematic and strategic decisions on that assumption.

*Marketing is a way of thinking! At its core, it combines  
**brainstorming, strategy and innovation.***

Don't have time for all this thinking?

When you're running late and your car's fuel gauge is pinned on E, don't you stop for a few minutes at the gas station? Most of you do because you know *it will cost you even more*

*time* if you become stranded on the side of the road. In the same way, you need to take the time to think about your business, and your marketing, and fill up before you run out – of customers.

One of the biggest obstacles I've faced in marketing our company is discovering how many business owners don't really understand what marketing can do for them. In order to illustrate the power of marketing, I share examples of what good marketing looks like. The following illustration is one that's near and dear to my heart, because I spent countless hours investigating all aspects of this particular industry back in my industrial manufacturing days.

Thirty years ago there was a certain standard for a good cup of coffee. What is it today? What brand comes to mind? Depending on where you live, your answer might vary but, for the most part, there is a single brand which stands out among the rest. Furthermore, we no longer take our coffee with just cream and sugar. Rather, our java comes in so many delightful options that a trip to a coffee shop is a challenge for even the most decisive soul. So what exactly happened over the last few decades? What changed? Did Americans wake up one day and demand to pay 400% more than they were used to paying for a cuppa joe? Did our palates instantly transform overnight? Don't be silly.

*We were marketed to.*

It took a bit of time, but that's the simple, meat-and-potatoes reality.

Generation X, looking to create their own path, fully embraced the more European style of coffees being offered.

They clamored for cappuccino, espresso and latte, not to mention the sugary caramel macchiato. Drinking coffee was no longer just about getting our eyes open and our day started. Rather, it became an “experience.” Can you think of any large coffee chains which might have had a hand in this? Hmm, yes, I thought you might!

And *that’s* the power of marketing! Does that happen in your industry? That company with the best product or the best quality, is it really number one? Sometimes, perhaps. More often than not, however, the answer is no. The company with the best *marketing* wins. Thus, my question to you . . .

### ***Got Marketing?***

Have you struggled with understanding your customer? Do you get frustrated because you don't know what “new” thing you can offer? Those stresses can be alleviated when you start thinking about marketing as more than just an action item. If you really expect to see a return on investment from tactical marketing efforts, you need to spend time thinking about *Marketing* – that’s with a capital M – which means getting out from behind your competition and forging your own path.

This is why carving out time from our busy schedules to devote to marketing planning is absolutely crucial to our business survival. I use the word carve, because merely “setting aside” time is way too passive. Carving requires effort and focus, and that’s exactly what it takes to actively schedule time free of disruptions to focus solely on our business.

This may mean getting up an hour early, staying up an hour later or taking lunch at a diner two towns over where no one knows you and won't interrupt you. Business owners who succeed have mastered the art of planning, preparing and executing everything we're going to address.

Ready to get started?

### *AN EXERCISE*

Really take the time to do this; it's fun. Do it on a big piece of paper. Try to avoid doing it on a computer, because you want it to be messy. Use crayon if you want; be sure to get advice on color from your six-year-old. Brainstorm. Ask yourself, "What is going to keep me in business three, five, and even ten years from now?" Focus on your customer, *what* they buy, *how* they buy, *why* they buy. And *write it down*. What is the logical extension of each of those customer behaviors? Where does each lead? And how might you respond in your business? Draw arrows, make maps. *Where is the treasure?* When you start thinking about things your customers aren't yet anticipating, that leads to innovation. That's called strategic thinking and is what really defines the word "Marketing."

# 9

## DON'T KILL THE MESSENGER

### (or, What Exactly is a Marketing Message?)

Large companies hire large marketing agencies with impressive track records who will then assign an entire team to brainstorm and collaborate on the company's messaging.

And then there's the rest of us.

What is a small business to do? Just as with everything else in the world of entrepreneurs and small businesses, *it can be done* with focus and determination.

In the previous chapter we covered how to identify **your customer's why**. By digging deeper, uncovering often unstated reasons for purchasing behaviors, you might have subconsciously started creating the draft of your **marketing message**.

The easiest way to think of your marketing message is as **a person on a mission – a messenger**.

If you were an old-world tax accountant and had to send a trumpet-blaring messenger out yonder to get business, what would you have this bloke yell to get the attention of the possible peasant prospects? Maybe, "Keep more of your wages AND your head!" A message like this appeals to the basic human instinct of self-preservation as well as the satisfaction of keeping more of one's own money.

On the flip side, say your role was *also* to provide tax collection services for the king himself. You would send your messenger out to him with the words, “Your most royal Highness, we’ll eek out every last cent from your loyal subjects.” Yes, two different messages for two very different audiences *and not at all contradictory*. In reality, you *do* eek out every last cent on the table, but the service you provide the peasants is to leave less on the table to begin with.

In neither case would you send your messenger off with a three minute sales pitch. (Because really, who wants to listen to someone yelling that long?) It’s the same for your marketing materials, social media and advertising.

You want, first of all, to keep things *concise*. The old K.I.S.S standard (Keep It Simple, Stupid) has stood the test of time and you’d be wise to adhere to it.

And you want things to be *precise*, that is, crafted for a particular kind of customer in a particular situation.

At our own company we’ve found the message that works for both small- and medium-sized businesses is “Own your space.” This message encapsulates everything we do – marketing and sales consulting, coaching and training – and it even works as a strong message for the workshops and seminars we hold.

For larger companies, the Vision Force message focuses more on accountability, because larger companies usually feel that they have a stronghold in their market but are weaker in execution, that they need help breaking through to the next level. If you serve more than a single market or demographic, you, too, will need more than one message.

If you completed the exercise in the previous chapter, you will have already generated a list of reasons why people are buying your product or service. It's time to get back to work.

Flip back and review Column C. Do you see the same answer repeatedly? What's the first one you see popping up over and over? Highlight it in yellow every place it appears. Is there another word or theme that you see multiple times?

Highlight that one in green. Repeat this process for every word which shows up more than once. How many common elements are there? You may have two, you may have seven. There's no right, wrong or even ideal; it's simply going to be different for every company.

The next step is to consolidate, if necessary. Of the different repeated themes, are there any that should be combined? If you have the words "growth," "increased revenue" or "sales growth," for example, you can combine these into one term.

Your **final exercise** is to make sense of these common themes by putting some thought behind them and forming one or two sentences. When we did this with our ideal client list, growth was the landslide winner, so one of our marketing messages goes something like this: "Educating business owners on the power of marketing so they experience strategic growth." It's always evolving, so don't judge me too harshly if you find something different in cyberspace – but you get the idea.

Basically, you need to capture and be able to articulate the *real* reason your clients hired you and, in doing so, you will put yourself well on the way to crafting your own marketing message. If you do it right, you have no reason to fear being gobbled up in the marketplace.



**The Incredibly Tasty EXERCISE in**  
***Don't Kill the Messenger***

Review Column C and highlight common themes and repeating words and phrases. What seems to be the underlying “why” for people buying your product or service? List them here:

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Craft a sentence or two about WHY your customers are really buying:

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And now, craft your message. This is it – the clarion call designed to meet the deep WHY that you identified:

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If you're ready to make this major investment, by all means, do it. Hire the right people to help you implement and create these campaigns and you will be ahead of your competitors!

If this is beyond your ability right now, don't worry; it's something to put into your plan for six months or a year down the road. Put your dollars into building your list, just don't let them get eaten up by a subscription you're not fully utilizing.

### ***About the Author***

Leah Hoppes graduated from Valparaiso University and went on for post-graduate work at University of Wisconsin-Madison where she earned her Marketing Certificate. She spent 19 years in corporate America and 15 of those were spent in industrial manufacturing working for multi-billion dollar companies. Leah held various global marketing positions such as product manager and brand manager roles and was responsible for marketing strategy, marketing plans, product launches, product recalls, branding and re-branding initiatives as well as globalization of product databases, websites and marketing programs.

Over the course of her career, Leah has learned world-class best-practices and now brings that expertise to the small business owner. She and her husband, Sean Matthew Whitfield, educate and train the business community on how to leverage the power of marketing and even more importantly, help them follow-through and implement their action plans. Leah brings real-world, hands-on experience from everything from startups to multi-national corporations and shares the latest in marketing trends and technology to readers. In her inaugural book, Leah simplifies marketing by breaking it into everyday language, providing relevant examples and eliminating the intimidation factor in marketing one's business for growth.

Leah and Sean are frequent guest and key-note speakers, hold workshops and seminars, and teach marketing, sales, and entrepreneurship to both college and high school classes. The couple is extremely active in the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce and in their community.