

The

7

deadly
mistakes
behind
marketing
failures

and how to avoid them



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Thanks for downloading this guide to the '7 Deadly Mistakes' and how to avoid them.

Some are obvious, and some not so obvious! We see founders and business leaders making them every day. We know because we've made the same ones. Some of our businesses have failed because of them, while some have succeeded because we spotted and avoided them.

We've collected our experience as exited founders, business leaders, marketers and investors to develop methods to de-risk a founders time and investment, creating sustainable organisations built on insight, evidence and growth practices – not just intuition and luck.

We know hitting funding milestones comes down to creating an Unfair Advantage for your company. We see this as a structured way of working that combines a powerful value proposition coupled with marketing operations to deliver sustained marketing testing and growth.

So we help you treat marketing as engineering, with every insight validated and your CAC/LTV ratio below competitors. This process greatly stacks the funding odds in your favour. And you'll enjoy new-found clarity, purpose and sales within weeks.

If we do our job right, no founder should be making these mistakes.

Is this you?

You're working hard
to deliver growth.
But you feel
something is missing.

Sales are hard to get and you and your team aren't clear about what needs to be done. Your customers forget about you and your marketing is ignored.

Your sales approach is fragmented. You want an automated sales-generating machine but while some marketing channels work, your approach to others has been scattergun. You've no idea what your TikTok strategy should be!

You've a better funded, louder and more annoying competitor that you're convinced will eat your lunch.

So you feel you need to do everything, immediately, but you lack the processes. Your expensive marketing agency underwhelms.

Your B2B clients are haggling over fees. Your B2C customers drop out before buying.

Your leadership team continually debates your brand (what it means, why you're here, what your next product should be).

Decisions are not being made. The clock of opportunity keeps ticking.

We've been there. It sucks.

The good news is that you know what the problem is: your brand and offering is boring and you're not organised for success.

You lack clarity, purpose and systems.

You know this. And that's why you're reading this. So here's the mistakes we promised you... good luck!

1

BEING BORING

We've found that the vast majority of short-term sales problems are not just due to a lack of product/market fit: it's a lack of product/market fit **compounded by a boring brand and positioning in the market.**

These two elements feed off each other to create a **vicious circle.**

Brands are collections of perceptions in the mind of the customer.

Those perceptions can be crafted so prospects know, like and trust you. To do this you need to understand a prospect's **emotional drivers** and the **context** within which they are buying.

This is critical because most buying decisions are governed by irrational desires and contextual whims.

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"Control the context and you control the choice"

Advertising veteran Dave Trott.

For example, when you're hot and thirsty your body dictates the context and guides you to a sugary cold drink, regardless of your better judgement.

In a business to business context, **team members are influenced by herd behaviour**, often compromising and suppressing personal opinions for the sake of the group. Even large ticket items like cars and houses are primarily emotional, contextual purchases; think about the prices of houses by a top school, or the lure of a convertible when the Spring sun appears.

Many smart founders downplay the critical importance of the contextual and emotional drivers behind human decisions.

Long-term success obviously requires meeting short-term goals. But trying to get short-term sales without inspiring, congruent marketing actions and stories is like fighting a boxing match with one hand behind your back.

Being boring by design

It's so easy to start in the wrong place.

The brand and your story should govern every decision you make. **But most positioning and vision statements are boring and unusable.** So businesses start off (or retrofit) a dull idea into the heart of their business.

In doing so, **they engineer apathy into their offering.**

Too much brand thinking is based on complicated models, created by committee and delivering zero inspiration to teams and customers.

Many companies are completely devoid of meaningful insights behind what they do, why they do it and what customers want.

It's a case of garbage in, garbage out.

But when you find your primary, governing insights your business can move forward in crazy fast ways.

Seth Godin calls brands that find a truth that helps them stand out and resonate in the market 'Purple Cows'. Marketing professor Byron Sharp reports that sales data supports being 'distinctive' over being 'differentiated'. GaryVee says creating 'attention' should be your #1 focus. And you can't get attention without being interesting.

You can't bore someone into buying.

So however you describe it, being boring doesn't deliver.

Elysian Fields helps you find your **primary insights** so that you will stand out, consistently.

So book a time to talk through your challenges with us here

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"Elysian Fields were a key strategic partner helping us segment the SME market, identify insights into our target customers and define the financial product proposition for the SME market.

With their support we were able to identify the risk exposure in launching a product into this market and make informed decisions"

Avi Schechter, Founder, Pixomi

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GOING IT ALONE, RATHER THAN LEVERAGING OBJECTIVITY

Have you ever spent fraught hours trying to find a 'shared' vision everyone can agree on?

Did you arrive at your business's mission, vision, values and messages only to end up with something utterly generic?

This is because most collective thinking delivers vanilla thinking.

Your team lacks clarity of thinking and it's affecting your growth.

You need objectivity.

We all come with biases but experienced coaches are essential. Every serious entrepreneur has a coach or three.

Coaches help clients break subjective feedback loops with targeted self-enquiry.

For example, researcher Elizabeth R. Thornton suggests stopping and asking yourself these questions to get you into an enquiry mode:

- What is the objective reality of what happened?
- What were my assumptions? What did I think was happening?
- What was my response?
- Looking back, what could have been a more appropriate response?
- What did it cost me?

Businesses follow subjective feedback loops all the time.

Applying an engineering mindset to marketing helps break preference biases. No one should run an ad because the HiPPO (Highest paid person's opinion) "likes it".

Applying the scientific method to help decide the direction of your brand is a lot tougher to do on your own. Fortunately there is a proven method that solves this issue. It's fast, uncomplicated and is something you control.

It's been created through decades of experience and has been packaged so you and your team can get the clarity you need fast.

You run it. You align on the outcome together with your team. We guide you.

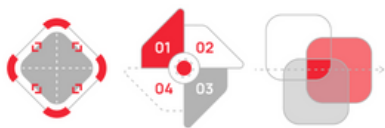
It's a process you can follow to deliver clarity and create your own Unfair Advantage.

The Unfair Advantage method redesigns the critical elements you need for success within a handful of weeks.

Here's some of the critical elements you will discover:

- Your **'why'** (your motivation and vision), so that it will inspire your teams and industry commentators. You can't pay lip-service to this. It has to be massively motivating. It has to drag you from your bed every morning.
- The **transformation** you deliver for clients, so it can reignite your sales scripts. No one buys features, they buy the transformation in their business, life, relationships etc that those features deliver.
- The **paradigm shifts** in perception you will create for prospects to inspire sales. This is curiosity at work. You shift the world view of your audience. You create a possibility in their minds by reframing their problem. No one needed a 'social utility' until Facebook reframed social communications by understanding the social problems of college students better than previous social networks. A shift occurs when you point out what is *wrong*, what *should* be occurring and how viewing the problem differently presents your product as the *saviour*.
- Your **uncommon** view of the market, so you will excite partners and investors. As we've said, you can't bore someone into buying. Your view has to be uncommon; without the usual jargon and in a space of its own.
- **Your new point of view**, so you can steer a unique and distinctive product or service roadmap. Small companies can't become kings or queens of an existing category. They can nibble at the edges but they won't beat the incumbent. Not without a complete reinvention of the category through new technology or such rapid innovation that the incumbent fails to respond fast enough. However, small companies can become rulers of a new category - one they invent, own and dominate. We help you create that category so you don't play second fiddle to the incumbent.

Sprint workshops



Alignment
Segmentation
Value Proposition
Positioning
Brand point of view
Messaging
Buying funnel

If you're frustrated with being stuck in a vicious circle and worry about missing the opportunities in front of you? We can help you.

The Unfair Advantage method delivers you the clarity you need to align your teams and sell with confidence.

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“Elysian Fields worked so quickly to accurately position our fund in Quantum - an incredibly complex category. They brought clarity to our key messaging for LPs, Founders, Partners, Employees and the media. I would be happy to recommend them to anyone who wants reliable and efficient marketing for their business”

Ton van 't Noordende, Managing Director, QDNL Participations

3

BEING SEDUCED BY GROWTH-HACKING QUICK FIXES

Pretty soon most marketing hacks stall. They run out of steam despite optimised funnels and microtesting mastery.

This happens because you're focused at the bottom of the funnel when sales are actually created at the top.

The top of the hypothetical funnel is where you create the inherent value in your offering. It's where your product and service sit.

Value is created by understanding and then solving customer problems in a distinctive way.

Just as you make profit when you buy well, so engineering the outcome you want from the beginning rather than trying to hack the solution at the end delivers compounding returns.

Start by designing your business around a clear purpose and demonstrable, viral value for every customer.

Find your niche: a set of customer problems you alone can focus on solving. Obsess about what value is: how it's felt by customers, how people talk about it and why it's so natural for you to create.

When you align your efforts with your own grand purpose - your shared mission - you begin to align your output with what you love, not what you can hack.

Use a system to create this value for your customers consistently and sustainably and you'll be taking your customers on a journey to an even brighter tomorrow with you.

So leave your ego at home and find the real customer problem you can solve brilliantly.

The Unfair Advantage method helps you build the systems to deliver product/market fit by matching your vision to your customer's hidden desires.

4

IGNORING THE COMMUNITY YOU'RE IN

What are the culture gaps between you and your ideal customers?

What are the differences between your values, behaviours, knowledge and expectations and theirs?

Here's a useful rule of thumb:

The more visible a product or service is, the more it must publicly align with the culture and community it operates within.

Ask yourself: What gang are you part of? How do you help make heroes of the members of that community?

Service businesses

Service businesses (lawyers, consultants, fitness trainers) are often invisible within the communities that use them. So they need to create value through transformation; helping their customers progress in their lives. They make them richer, smarter, more productive, more relaxed. Service businesses support users as they create culture through their personal progress. Service businesses are the 'intel inside' of others' success.

Product businesses

Product businesses (packaged goods, digital or tech products) are often more public than service businesses because others see them being used. So they need to make the user the hero. For example: The car I drive reflects my aspirations. This tasty no-sugar ice cream helps me feel like I'm sticking to my diet. Product businesses need to solve the customer problem while making them feel like a star.

The Unfair Advantage method helps you define your niche and its community, so you can solve their problems consistently and publically.

[Book a time to talk to us here.](#)



ASSUMING

Packaged-goods giant Unilever believes that niche brands (from subscription razors to eco toiletries) have collectively taken over 20% market share from its own brands in the categories they previously dominated.

Some of their brands have already suffered 'death from a thousand cuts'.

This disruption was happening but it wasn't obvious, until it was.

Unilever is not alone. Many large businesses assume niches are just that, niches.

How we assume

Humans have a lazy propensity for using heuristics; rules of thumb or shortcuts in decision making. Call them assumptions.

The Baader-Meinhof phenomenon describes how we notice things more when we're newly made aware of them (for example when we constantly spot a car we might buy). Frequency makes us assume they are everywhere.

When you add the herding principle to these two behavioural quirks (herding is when we follow others' actions) our micro assumptions can quickly balloon into a confirmation bias and a decision: noticing a car creates a shortcut for deciding to buy it too. **This is how something that was once niche becomes first acceptable and then mainstream.**

The trick is not to ignore the early warning signs from the fringes of your (or your adjacent) market. Don't assume you know what's going on in the minds of buyers. The future is here, it's just not evenly distributed (according to William Gibson).

We always start with the 'workarounds' deployed by a target market to get a job done. Your prospects have a job to get done. They will hire anything that achieves that job - be that an intern or a spreadsheet. Or they might decide they can manage with the discomfort and not spend to solve the problem. Either way they will go through a bunch of decisions about an area of discomfort in their lives.



TRYING TO APPEAL TO EVERYONE

It takes confidence to choose a niche and stick to it.

We're in an age of abundance. No one really needs anything. So finding that niche problem and being great at solving it is hard. **With infinite choice available to every buyer offering 'one size fits all' can be disappointing to all.**

Worst still, appealing to everyone distracts you from finding meaningful needs to meet.

So start and stay niche. We help clients find 'virtuous circle' flywheels within their business design to create value again and again, adding one niche upon another niche. You're scaling by serving many niches with the same core value. Ikea, Amazon, Spotify and VW do this.

The Unfair Advantage method helps you create a business-growth flywheel for your own business. Then we help you focus so you can execute it.

Our job as marketers is to understand these workarounds in order to guide their decisions towards us.

Licensed Black Cab drivers in London complained Uber plays unfairly. Uber destroys the value that they believed was essential for passengers. For some passengers the value of a qualified, trusted driver who knows London streets by heart is indeed essential. For very many it isn't.

- What are you assuming about your market?
- Do you know why they choose what they choose?
- Are you your customer? If so, how do you work around the problems you face?
- How could you disrupt your own offering?
- Can you reinvent rather than differentiate?

The Unfair Advantage method helps you become closer to, and able to solve better, the detailed needs driving your customers' real, rather than assumed, needs



FOCUSING ON THE PRODUCT, NOT THE PROBLEM

We're taught that product is everything. So we fall in love with our ideas and obsess about every detail.

But at some point, when our ideas are beginning to work and customers are exchanging value for money, every business owner hits a wall.

They can't get past their own 'local maxima' and 'local minima' (jargon for the peaks and valleys where sales activity delivers some value but no more). They can't find the ways out of their plateaued sales income.

They start tweaking their product. Yet the issue is always about the problem you're solving. Solving the problem in an inspirational way delivers sales.

“There's only two ways to influence human behaviour: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it.”

Simon Sinek.



Remember the power of context?

Ever got to an online checkout page and thought “I wonder what the reviews say about this product?”. Or, “Who is this company again?” Eg. why should I trust them to solve my problem?.

We then drop out of the sale because the ecommerce ‘funnel’ is restricted and won’t let us click back to answer our questions or find out the answers when we need them.

Such questions reflect cognitive dissonance in our thinking.

This uncomfortable feeling occurs when “a person holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values; or participates in an action that goes against one of these three, and experiences psychological stress because of that.” [Wikipedia].

Relevant, focused and value-obsessed brands remove cognitive dissonance from buyers’ minds because the buyer knows who they are buying from and that their problem will be solved because the brand has got their back. Thus increasing conversion, recommendation and engagement with marketing.

Yes we need great products, but it starts with obsessing about the customer’s problem.

The Unfair Advantage method refocuses you on the problem you're solving so you can dominate the minds of those experiencing it.

How to avoid the Deadly Mistakes

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The Unfair Advantage method
The most efficient and effective way to
create clarity and build a ‘growth machine’



Credibility

Understand where credibility and internal alignment problems undermine growth ambitions.



New Insight

Detailed primary research to uncover new insights



Position

Create a brand and disruptive point of view that prospects will talk about.

We know what works because we've been there

We know that having a great product isn't enough.

Who you choose to sell to, why they buy, how you position yourself and how you go to market can, together, become a significant Unfair Advantage.

We will create the machine that makes such an advantage a reality in 4 stages:

1. First, we align your team around Credibility challenges that hamper growth.
2. Then we uncover New Insights which product and marketing can immediately use.
3. With this information we can Position the business in a fresh and relevant way
4. Finally, we help you execute a simple Go To Market plan with a sustainable Growth Machine and other Marketing Operations support.

Our method takes all the guesswork out of creating and scaling meaningful businesses.

So you end the internal debates and brand navel-gazing and get on with building and selling.

Don't just take it from us

"Elysian Fields were instrumental in defining our category, brand and go to market plan enabling us to develop highly effective marketing. They brought experience and clear thinking to the table, moving fast and with precision. I'd be delighted to recommend them"

Sachin Dev Duggal, CEO and Founder of Builder.ai (now at \$250m Series D)

"The process is extremely logical and the steps align closely to my interpretation of a brand-led startup approach. Like a mashup between Lean, Design Thinking and Brand Strategy"

KiwiTech

"It's really efficient and focused work so I'd highly recommend him to get your positioning, messaging and sales funnels sorted!"

Ashleigh Tennent, Founder More Happi

"Elysian Fields were instrumental in helping us define our positioning, value propositions and go to market that has been the bedrock behind our 200% growth".

Alexander Pershikov, Founder, GetTransfer

"EF play an instrumental role creating sustainable unfair advantages for our portfolio companies."

Manu Gupta, Founder of Blue Lion, ex-founding partner of Lakestar

"They're able to pull existing insights out of the team and compile everything in a very coherent and clear way. It's very cool - like magic."

Todd Larsen, Co-Founder, Technical Leaders

"I would be happy to recommend them to anyone who wants reliable and efficient marketing for their business"

Ton van 't Noordende, Managing Director QDNL investment fund

ELYSIANFIELDS.CO

If you'd like to speak with us about customising this approach for your business, we'd love to talk to you.

We don't work with everyone. We're selective because all we care about is getting results for our clients. So the call is about understanding if we can help solve your problem or not.

There is never any pressure on any of our strategy calls. Our goal is to figure out where you need help, and point you in the right direction.

[To chat with us click here today.](#)

See you soon!

Best
Martin, Fergus, Noah, and the team

