

Top Ten Mega Marketing Mistakes That Gun Shops Make

A Special Report By Gene Kelly, President of The American Gunsmithing Institute

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to identify mistakes, because just by knowing them and avoiding them, you can make a **HUGE** difference in the balance of your bank account or the financial results of your gun shop. Now don't feel bad if you are a gun shop owner or manager and can identify with most of these as I go through them. We've talked with many other FFL Dealers and Gun Shops and studied their advertising. They have all made the same mistakes.

#1: The first mistake is "**Being An Advertising Victim.**" And it's real easy to be an Advertising Victim. You see, some advertising sales rep or agency comes by and tells you that you need to advertise because you need to advertise. And they want to sell you "institutional" advertising instead of "**direct response**" advertising. They want you to "get the name out" for your gun business or increase "awareness". Maybe they even tell you that you need to brand your gun shop. The fact is it's very doubtful that you can afford this type of advertising. You see companies like Smith & Wesson, Nike, Cabela's or Coca Cola use this type of advertising. This is advertising where you can't measure your results. They tell you that when some gun owner needs ammo or is looking for a new gun they will think of your shop. If you fall victim to this - **YOU'LL GO BROKE**. The only companies that can afford this type of advertising are the Coca Colas or Nike's of the world. What you want to do and **ONLY** do is emotional **direct response** advertising. That's advertising where every dollar you spend is measurable and accountable.

#2: The next mistake is "**Lack Of An Iron Clad System For Building Their Customer Database.**" How many times does someone come to your shop inquiring about a gun, visit your range, bring a gun for a repair, visit you at a gun show, etc. and you are not able to continue to communicate with him because you do **NOT** know how to contact him? The real **VALUE** in **ANY** business is in the customer base. It is no different in the gun business. It is 10 times easier to get existing customers and clients to return than it is to get new **ONES**. Plus, returning gun owners will become your best customers. What would happen to your gun shop if you had to constantly rely on selling new gun owners instead of having a relationship with existing ones? So why do so many gun shops not collect the necessary information to allow them to continue to market to their most valuable asset—**THEIR GUN SHOP CUSTOMERS?**

We recommend that you obtain the name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and complete purchase history on all your gun shop customers. Eventually you can even have information such as preferred guns, ammo used, skill level, hunter, competition shooter, etc. You can gradually build a huge database and have targeted ways to communicate with them throughout the year, even during off-season. This can make you almost immune to downturns and give you a tremendous competitive advantage over competing gun shops, especially versus the big boys.

#3: How many of you “**Lack Diversification In Your Marketing**”? If gun shops even advertise or market, typically they just do a few listings in gun show flyers or hunting publications. Maybe they are on the Internet. If they have a database, they may send some emails out. But very few really use the full range of options. Email marketing is fine and you should do it, but you should consider direct mail with special offers and postcards. In this day and age, you need to consider social media marketing like Facebook, Linked In and Twitter. Voice broadcasting and telemarketing are other options. Interactive web sites are great ideas. If you want to really rev up your marketing, you need to become a multimedia player to make sure your messages are getting through. Not everyone will respond to any one type of marketing, so get familiar with all your options.

#4: We already talked about marketing to your existing gun owner database. **What is the second easiest customer to sell?** Well the answer is a referral. Unfortunately, most gun shops live with the myth that if they have a great store and treat the gun owner right they will automatically recommend your shop to others. **WRONG!** The “**Lack Of A Referral Program**” is a HUGE marketing mistake. The last thing that anyone is thinking when they are at home watching TV – “whom can I send to these nice people so that spend money at the gun shop I visited today?” It’s not because they don’t want to. It’s because we are all too busy to be thinking about it. That’s why you need to have a “Gun Owner Rewards Referral System” in place, which will give your customers an incentive to bring more gun owners with them or tell other hunters, gun owners, friends, family to go to your shop.

#5: If a referral gun owner is the second easiest customer to sell, then whom do you think is the third easiest customer to sell? The answer is “lost customers.” Again, most businesses, including gun shops, totally ignore the customers that have NOT been using their services for a period of time, when in fact, these people are infinitely easier to sell than new customers - if you know how. Therefore, this mega marketing mistake is the “**Lack Of A Lost Customer Reactivation Program.**” You need methods to automatically identify when a gun owner or other customer has become “lost” and make an effort to get them back.

#6: This next mistake is a BIGGIE. It's "**Thinking You Are Your Customer.**" I can't tell you how many times I've heard gun shop owners or other small businesses tell me that their customers are too sophisticated for this type of marketing or that type of advertising. This way of thinking, without testing, can be dangerous. In fact, some of the most successful direct mail strategies that we teach may be considered outrageous, but they work...with all kinds of gun owners, even the most sophisticated or affluent. There are many proven direct response techniques which we teach in our Marketing Systems, many of which may seem unconventional. But what is particularly important to note is the fact that just because you might not respond to something, it doesn't mean your customers won't and you need to be open to and test new ideas.

#7: The next marketing mistake is "**Working 'In' Your Business Instead Of 'On' Your Business**". Related to not working on your business is not realizing the overall importance of marketing. One of the biggest problems that I hear from FFL Dealers or Gun Business owners all the time, which is - I'M TOO BUSY. I'm too busy to do any marketing because I'm the best salesperson and I need to be available all the time to my customer. Or, be at the Gun Show. Or, I need to be in the shop or on the range. Or, worse yet, I need to parent my staff. The problem is, you are working "in" your business instead of "on" your business. If there is one thing that you should write down and post as a constant reminder, it is this:

*'STOP SEEING YOURSELF AS A SELLER OF PISTOLS, SHOTGUNS,
RIFLES, AMMUNITION, REPAIRS, ETC, BUT AS A MARKETER OF A
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL GUN BUSINESS'*

The marketer of ANY business will be the one who achieves total financial freedom. The real money is in the marketing, not in actually doing all the tasks within the business. Setting aside time to work "on" your gun business instead of "in" your gun business will become the most profitable time that you spend during your entrepreneurial career. And by all means, make the time to learn marketing. Become a student of marketing and learn how to implement. Spend time here and you will start to see real results.

#8: One mistake that really drives me crazy is **Thinking that Low Price is a Promotional Strategy**. We don't have time here to go into all the theories about price strategy, but most businesses and, in fact, many gun businesses think that low price is the only tool they have in their tool chest. They proudly proclaim Low Price Matches and we have lowest mark-ups around. And, maybe they even have an Internet store also selling on low price. It's a stampede to the lowest profit and eventually to disaster. Low price is not sustainable. Pricing is a huge issue and you should be searching for ways to increase your prices, offer premium versions, upsells, continuity, etc.

#9: The next marketing mistake is “**Lack of ‘Shameless’ Self Promotion.**” One thing that I have discovered in speaking to hundreds of business owners, FFL Dealers and entrepreneurs is that everyone thinks their particular business is different. Well you’re probably right. Every one of you has something different or special about your gun business. But the mistake you are making is keeping it a secret. You all have a great opportunity to promote yourselves and your gun business and the best part is that you can do it for the cost of a “first class” stamp - just 44 cents. That’s right - learn how to write a simple 1-page press release and send it out in a #10 envelope. Your local papers and media are hungry for your story. But they can’t run it unless you give it to them. Making the mistake that they will seek you out is simply - a mistake. In fact, over 80% of all local news stories are a result of a simple press release.

#10: Finally, BIG MEGA MARKETING MISTAKE #10 - “**Too Infrequent Contact With Present Customers.**” Now, I just told you that referrals and lost customers are the 2nd and 3rd easiest customers to get, but if you haven’t already guessed, your present customers are the first. The best way to accomplish this is to simply increase the frequency of your contacts with them. It is amazing to me how many businesses think they can mail or call their customers too frequently. Gun Owners, in particular are avid about their hobby, even those who aren’t serious hunters or marksmen. Many will just eat up anything you send them. You can contact them too frequently, but you are probably not even close. Here are the facts of a survey conducted by DIRECT Magazine in 1999(this is for all businesses, not just gun businesses):

“The proper frequency to contact your customers is every 20-days.”

Perhaps even worse, the survey showed that for every month that you do not contact your customers, you lose your relationship with 10% of them. So if you wait 10-months, you might as well be mailing to the phone book.

And, let’s think about the gun business. If you don’t communicate with your database during the off-season, they may forget about you or next season they may try a new gun shop and form new habits. Keep them engaged and build a relationship all year long. When the season begins have them chomping at the bit to get to your gun shop.

So what does this mean for your gun business? Weekly emails with great offers? Monthly direct mail newsletters? Birthday cards? Special post card offers? Invitations to special events? You need to plan this out and find what works for you. But, you really can’t over-communicate with your customers. There’s magic in increased frequency.

So now you have them.....

The Top Ten Mega Marketing Mistakes That Gun Shops Make!

How many are YOU currently making? **Would you like more information on the most proven, tested and successful systems ever assembled to GROW your gun shop revenues?** *We are in the process of assembling state of the art and time tested marketing strategies and systems to share with Gun Business Owners. Stay tuned as we will be in touch. If you have questions right now, just contact me directly at (insert email address)*