

# The Seven Deadly Sins of Marketing





## The set-up

The way to market communities has changed drastically in the last several years. In a global economy, with every community at our fingertips in seconds, via the Internet, the way we market communities has forever been altered.

You are about to learn the Seven Deadly Sins of Community Marketing and chances are that you are guilty of most of them. It's not that you're doing anything wrong, you're just doing what everyone else is doing. These days you can't just blend in - to win you must stand out!

Here are the two primary reasons why the "old models" simply don't work.



## Communities are looking for their second act

In the U.S. there are 19,500 cities and towns. Of these, 18,500 of them have fewer than 40,000 residents. Only a thousand towns have more. In Canada there are nearly 7,500 cities and towns of which 7,000 have fewer than 40,000 residents.

Virtually every community was founded on transportation (close to major freeways, railways, or waterways), natural resources (timber, fishing, mining, agriculture), or manufacturing - a combination of the two. But in this global economy, most are losing their core industries. So what's your "second act?"

Every one is competing for your tax dollars, your jobs, your residents, and your piece of the tourism and economic development pie. Competition is fierce and growing stronger.



## We're drowning in marketing overload

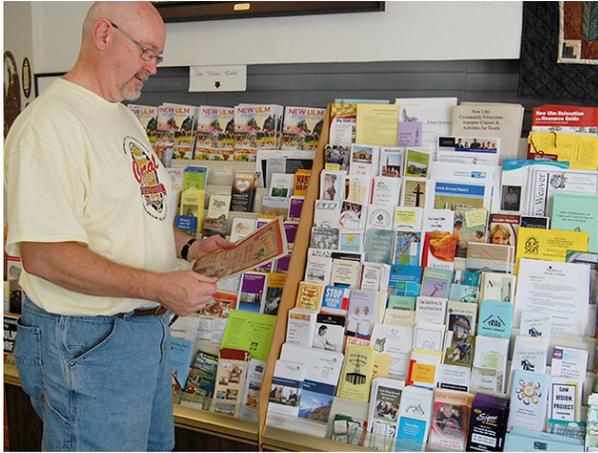
Billions of dollars are spent every year marketing communities: Chambers of Commerce, destination marketing organizations, economic development agencies, cities, downtowns, counties, districts, regions, states and provinces.

Yet we're exposed to 5,000 marketing messages a day - far more than the mind can absorb - so we filter out anything generic that doesn't appeal to us specifically.

Because communities work so hard to be all things to all people, the "something for everyone" mentality has lead to an alarming fact: 97% of all community-based marketing is now ineffective.

This includes your brochures, websites, Internet advertising, fliers, posters, radio and television ads, print advertising, billboards, etc.

Here are the seven reasons why (the deadly sins) and what to do about it.



## Deadly Sin #1: Trying to be all things to all people

Why is this important? Because we filter out anything that does not directly appeal to us. I happen to love scuba diving, so when I hear or see ads promoting great Caribbean diving destinations, I automatically perk up and take notice. But seeing ads that promote "we have something for everyone here in Grand Cayman" will simply get bypassed and will remain unnoticed.

To win you **MUST** narrow your focus. You simply cannot be all things to all people and win in this age of marketing over-saturation.

Look at the list of words and phrases to avoid, to the right. These could fit virtually anyone, anywhere. Is it any wonder why 97% of your marketing is wasted?

### Words & phrases to avoid

- Explore
- Discover
- Outdoor recreation
- Unlike anywhere else
- So much to see and do
- The four season destination
- Where the seasons come to life
- Historic downtown
- Center of it all
- Best kept secret
- We have it all
- Experience...
- Visit (name of town)
- Beauty & heritage
- Naturally fun
- Gateway
- Close to everything
- Escape the ordinary
- Unique
- Right around the corner
- Your playground
- So much history
- ...and so much more
- Purely natural
- The place for all ages
- Home away from home
- A slice of heaven
- For a refreshing change of place
- It's all right here
- Recreation unlimited
- The adventure place
- The perfect getaway
- The place for families
- For the kid in all of us
- Start your vacation here
- Recreational paradise
- Take a look!
- Where opportunity lives
- Where adventure lives
- We're open for business

I was speaking at a conference and as this list was scrolling on the screen an audience member stood up and said, "I think we're using all of those! With slogans like: Come and explore and discover our outdoor recreational paradise. There's so much to see and do in our four season destination. A place where the seasons come to life. A real gem and best kept secret..." No wonder 97% of your marketing is ineffective.

Avoid using the word "natural" and "adventure" in any context in your primary tag lines. Those two words along with "explore," "discover," and "unique" are so overused they simply fall on deaf ears.



## Deadly Sin #1: Trying to be all things to all people (continued)

### Be Specific

Communities, like businesses, have been forced to specialize - to be known for something specific. In business, lawyers, medical practitioners, insurance agencies, architects, engineers, software developers, and consultants all specialize.

Yet communities are stuck in the "group hug mentality" where in an effort to make everyone happy they use generic feel-good messaging that doesn't provide one reason to visit you and doesn't set you apart from anyone else or anywhere else.

In this age of differentiation, you must outwit, outplay, outlast - you must narrow your focus.

Put yourself in the shoes of the people you're hoping to attract and ask yourself: "What do we have that they can't get or do closer to home?" What do we have that differentiates us from everyone else in our market area?

Remember, we have the world at our fingertips in seconds! What sets you apart?

### Tell me why

Why should I invest in your community when there are lots of places looking for my money? Why should I establish a business in your town over others with similar attributes and attractions? Why should I move to your town? Why should I visit you?

Notice the focus on "WHY" not what you have, where you're located, or who you are. Tell me why and make sure it's unique to ONLY you.

Whatever it is that makes you different, or clearly better (by third party endorsement), you MUST hang your hat on that.

How do YOU stand out from the crowd? How many places can have "something for everyone"? You must jettison the generic. Memorize these three words and look at all of your marketing text. Then take out anything that can fit anyone else in your marketplace.

### Jettison the generic

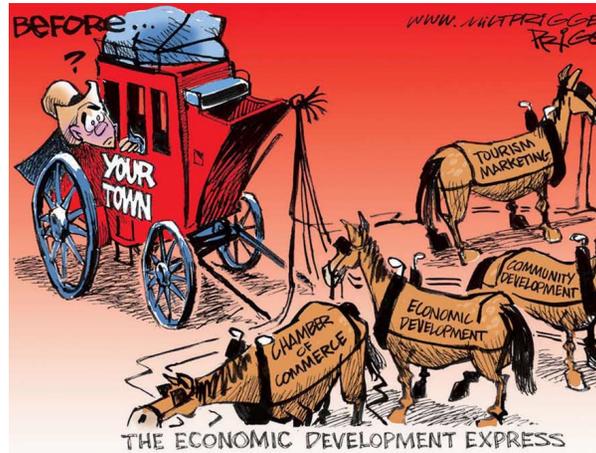
Look at your taglines and logos. Look at your brochures, your photographs, your website and printed materials. If your messages can fit anyone else, then toss it and start over.

If this was easy everyone would be doing it. It's not, but to win, you must jettison the generic in everything you do.

The narrower your focus, the stronger your success will be. Something for everyone will result in mediocrity and ultimate failure. Memberships can kill your marketing efforts. I've heard it before: "Well, I'm a member and pay my dues, and I think we have so much more than that. We really do have something for everyone." I love this quote: "If your brand - that one thing that sets you apart - stands for everything, then you stand for nothing."

It's far better to be a big fish in a small pond than to be a small fish in a big pond.

# Seven Deadly Sins of Community Marketing | Handout



## Deadly Sin #1: Trying to be all things to all people (continued)

### Narrow your focus

Communities that win have a narrow focus:

- Orlando owns the “kids and family” brand
- Nashville - country music
- Napa Valley - wine
- Washington, DC - government
- Lancaster, PA - the Amish
- Hollywood - movies and stars
- Detroit - cars
- Vail, Colorado - skiing
- Hershey, Pennsylvania - chocolate
- Branson, Missouri - music theater
- Indianapolis - Motor sports
- Frankenmuth, Michigan - German theme
- Helen, Georgia - Bavarian theme
- Tombstone, Arizona - old west theme
- Canmore, Alberta - Mountain sports
- Vulcan, Alberta - Star Trek
- Silicon Valley, California - high tech

What's your brand? What puts you on the map?

### Never, ever use focus groups

Focus groups are the epitome of the group hug mentality. Avoid them at all costs. It's a good way to ensure you'll end up with something generic that will be totally useless and will do nothing to increase your marketing effectiveness.

This effort of narrowing your focus is finding your brand. And you cannot do branding by public consent. You build your brand on feasibility, not local sentiment. Consider purchasing the “Art of Branding a Community” video at the DDI Store ([ddistore.com](http://ddistore.com)) for more on how to develop a winning brand.

The best marketing efforts happen when you have everyone on the same page, pulling in the same direction. Look at the two pictures, above. Does the one above this column look familiar? Could this be you? When you narrow your focus all of a sudden you go from that to what you see next to it, on the right.

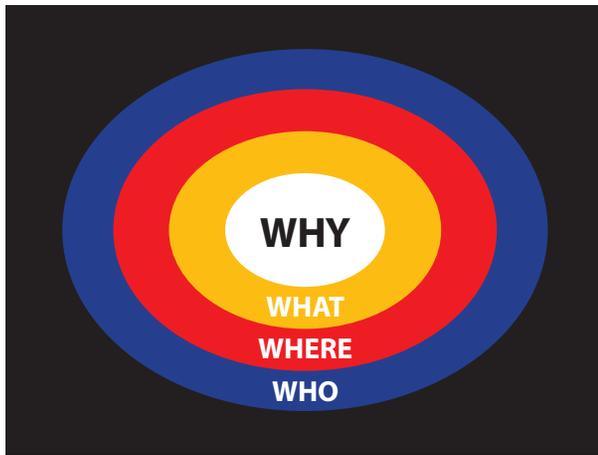
### It takes a village to win

You will be far more effective as one loud voice as opposed to numerous small voices. Can you imagine what would happen if every Coca-Cola bottling plant designed its own Coke logo, cans, bottles and ads? Coke wouldn't exist as a brand. This same rule applies to communities.

Consistency is always a hallmark of good marketing. It helps you “own” your brand - that narrow focus.

Pontiac used to be known as the “muscle car” manufacturer but as they broadened their scope in an effort to “expand their reach” they started producing low horse power, low quality, four cylinder cars totally losing site of their niche. Where is Pontiac today? Gone.

There are more ghost towns in the making today than ever before in North American history. If you hope to avoid this, then you need to narrow your focus. Investment and business will follow.



**Deadly Sin #2:  
Telling the world who instead of why**

Tell me WHY I should visit you.

WHY should I buy from you?

WHY should I invest in your community?

WHY should I live there?

Always tell me WHY first - what sets you apart and makes you the destination of choice - and then tell me WHO you are, WHERE you're located, and WHAT else you have to offer.

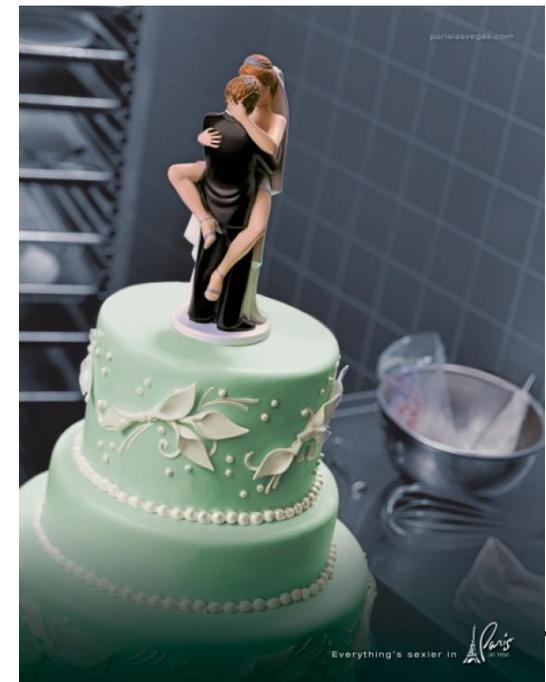
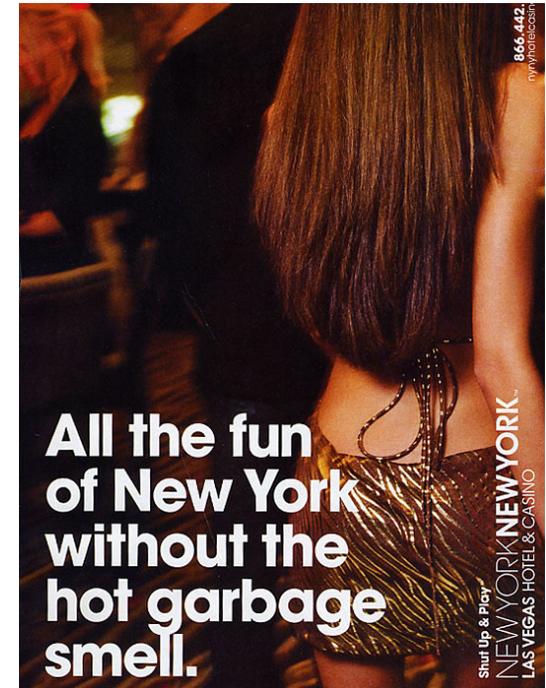
Go to [ted.com/speakers/simon\\_sinek.html](http://ted.com/speakers/simon_sinek.html). This ten minute video is a great presentation on telling the world WHY before the what, where and who. It's titled "How great leaders inspire action."



**List of good examples**

Here are a few terrific examples of telling the consumer WHY:

- McDonald's - "You deserve a break today." This had nothing to do with food, but telling mom's WHY they should take the kids to McDonalds.
- The U.S. Army - "Be all that you can be." This campaign wasn't about travel, using weapons, getting a free education, but about achieving personal goals - becoming an outstanding human being and changing the world.
- BMW and "The ultimate driving machine."
- L'Oreal - "Because you're worth it." You'll pay more for their products because you're worth it.
- De Beers - "Diamonds are Forever"
- Las Vegas - "What happens here, stays here." This is perhaps the most successful tourism ad in U.S. history. It's the why, not the what, who or where.



What do angry flight attendants, transsexual cats and The Great Wall of China have in common?

They're all in our Travel Blog!

"It was laugh-out-loud funny!"  
- Joy Dean, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

"I am enjoying your travel blog — REALLY. Great stuff!"  
- Dennis Burnside, CLEVELAND, OHIO

"I love reading your blogs so much, I read your last two out loud to my parents tonight so they could enjoy them too!"  
- Liala Perez, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

"The best, most realistic, and honestly hilarious travel blogs ever!"  
- Rob Pritchard, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

"Your blogs are profound! Thanks for reporting the good, the bad AND the ugly."  
- Kim Halliday, MARIETTA, GEORGIA

"Your blogs are brave and edgy! Keep them coming!"  
- Paul Panticci, CINCINNATI, OHIO

"I don't think I've ever laughed so hard!"  
- Brian Wilson, ALPHARETTA, GEORGIA

Go to  
[www.sitenet.com/travelblog/](http://www.sitenet.com/travelblog/)

### Deadly Sin #3: Boring ads and headlines

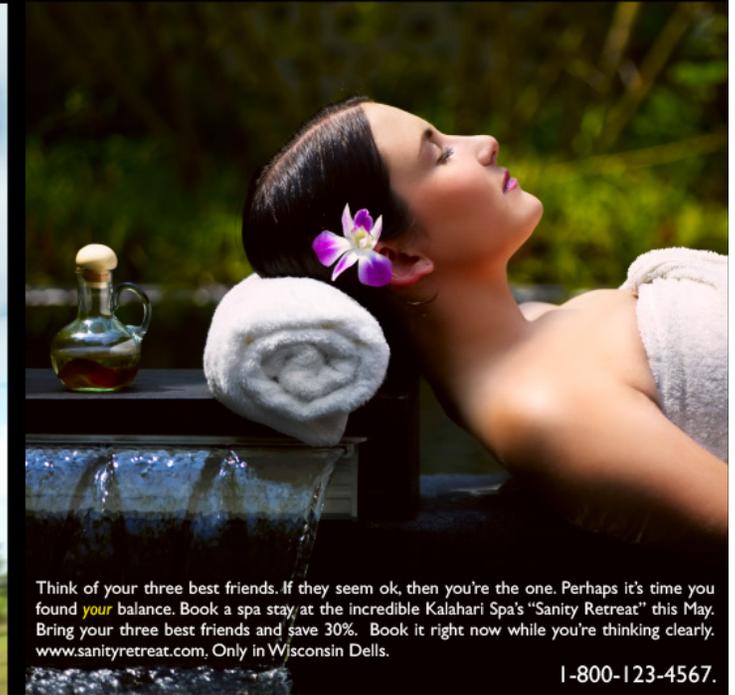
If you want your marketing to be effective, you MUST stand out from the crowd and command attention.

I was hosting a workshop with a group of about 60 people and we decided to design a new ad for an audience member's business. We decided we were going to do an ad for a local spa in town that was using the tag line "Beyond Expectations." This tagline should be on my list of words and phrases to avoid.

I asked the audience to come up with a great line that had nothing to do with spas, but would certainly get the attention of anyone who saw it.

A participant raised his hand and gave me this line: "One out of four people in this country are mentally imbalanced." There was more to this quote, but this is what I was given to work with. From this I had 20-minutes to come up with an ad that would get attention and effectively market the spa. The first thing I did was find a stock photo of a gal who looked

One out of four people in this country are mentally imbalanced.



Think of your three best friends. If they seem ok, then you're the one. Perhaps it's time you found **your** balance. Book a spa stay at the incredible Kalahari Spa's "Sanity Retreat" this May. Bring your three best friends and save 30%. Book it right now while you're thinking clearly. [www.sanityretreat.com](http://www.sanityretreat.com). Only in Wisconsin Dells.

1-800-123-4567.

a little unbalanced - it had to be a photo that would get attention. Then I needed a spa shot. Then I wrote the following body text:

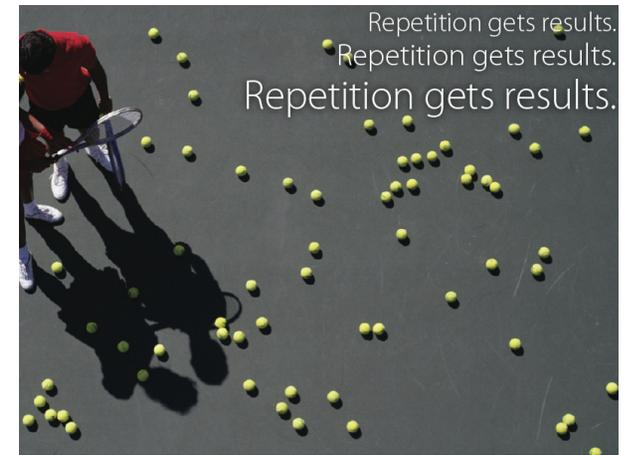
"One out of four people in this country are mentally imbalanced. Think of your three best friends. If they seem OK, then you're the one. Perhaps it's time you found your balance. Book a spa stay at the incredible Kalahari Spa's "Sanity Retreat" for Mother's Day. Bring your three best friends and save 30%. Book it now while you're thinking clearly. [www.SanityRetreat.com](http://www.SanityRetreat.com). Only in Wisconsin Dells."

Sure beats "beyond expectations," doesn't it?

David Ogilvy, one of America's most famous advertising executives summed it up best when he said "On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents of your marketing dollar."

You need to EVOKE EMOTION in all of your ads. Look at the top left photo. It says something and evokes emotion. Emotion creates top of mind awareness and a call to action. Always hit me in an emotional spot – whether pure serenity or fist pumping fun.

# Seven Deadly Sins of Community Marketing | Handout



## Deadly Sin #5: Being everywhere yet nowhere

The days of placing "drip ads" (small ads in numerous publications) are over. You find your niche and promote specifically to that audience over and over and over again until it sticks in their minds. This creates top of mind awareness or TOMA.

Tell them once, tell them what you told them, and then tell them again. Is it any wonder I still have this phrase burned into my brain, even after 20 years: "Two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun."

Repetition gets results. Repetition gets results. Repetition gets results. Early in this guide I used the words "Jettison the Generic" a number of times specifically to get it to stick in your mind.

This is the age of specialty marketing. Go for the niche publications, travel sites, and other marketing avenues including clubs, guilds and other niche non-profit organizations.

## Repetition gets results

In 1888 a doctor wrote down what it takes to close a sale. One hundred and twenty-five years later, this still rings true. While a bit of an exaggeration, a person has to see an ad five times before it creates TOMA.

- The 1st time a man looks at an ad, he does not see it.
- The 2nd time he does not notice it
- The 3rd time he is simply conscience of it
- The 4th time he faintly remembers having seen something of the sort before
- The 5th time he half reads it
- The 6th time he turns up his nose at it
- The 7th time he reads it through and says "pshaw!"
- The 8th time he yells "here's that confounded thing again"
- The 9th time he wonders if there's anything to it
- The 10th time he thinks it might possibly suit someone else
- The 11th time he will ask his neighbor if he has tried it or knows anything about it
- The 12th time he wonders how the advertiser can make it pay
- The 13th time he rather thinks it must be a good thing
- The 14th time he appears to think it is what he has wanted for a long time
- The 15th time he resolves to try it as soon as he can afford it
- The 16th time he examines the address carefully, and makes a memorandum of it
- The 17th time he thinks he will ask his wife about it
- The 18th time he is painfully reminded how much he needs that particular item
- The 19th time he counts his money to see how much he would have left if he bought it
- The 20th time he frantically rushes, in a fit of desperation, and buys it.

## Seven Deadly Sins of Community Marketing | Handout



### Deadly Sin #6: Selling place before experience

If you've read my book "Your Town: A Destination - The 25 Immutable Rules of Successful Tourism" then you know how important marketing experiences over places is to winning the marketing game. Always sell the experience, or the outcome, first THEN the location or who you are. Look at the photos on this page. The experience or activity is always in the foreground and the location is in the background.

Remember people want to connect - it's "why" people choose certain destinations. They want to connect with each other, their roots, the environment, and with communities. Your photos should always show people - not just scenic vistas - connecting. This evokes emotion. People always identify with people more than places.

People also want to learn something. Culinary tourism is huge, as long as we can learn something. The same with art. In fact, people are four times more likely to purchase art when they meet the artisan. These days



we want to learn about our heritage, other cultures, how to kayak and photograph wildlife. But we also want it to be interactive. Static attractions, exhibits, and historical displays quickly become "been there, done that" attractions. If you want people to come back, then you need to make it experiential - or hands on.

Every photo you use should get the reader or viewer to think "wow! I want to do that!" or "I want to go



there!" But always make sure your photos and images showcase things the visitor can't get or do closer to home. Jettison the generic.

On your website use JPEGs not GIF images. Quality is critical. And one more thing, video is quickly trumping still photography. Nothing sells like videos, but keep them to less than three minutes. Two or less is even better.



**14,000\* islands.**

**One state of mind.**

There is no other lake on the planet that has as many islands waiting to be explored in such a spectacular picturesque setting. Home to more than 14,000 islands\* and 65,000 miles of shoreline is it any wonder that Lake of the Woods is a world-class legendary boating destination?

Just a 2.5-hour drive from Winnipeg you'll find the place where you connect with all that Lake of the Woods has to offer. Whether a passenger on a charter vessel or sightseeing cruise, or are looking to rent a houseboat or a kayak, or if you're the captain of your own ship, there is simply no place better to start your voyage than beautiful Kenora, Ontario.

Kenora's Windjammer Pavilion hosts dozens of events and concerts year round, and downtown Kenora is home to Western Ontario's best restaurants, fabulous specialty shops, and a vibrant downtown scene routinely given a standing ovation by travel writers from around the globe.

So make sure your biography includes a chapter written in this one-and-only, outstanding destination.



\*There are actually 14,522 islands in Lake of the Woods.



**Grab life by the handlebars.**

H. G. Wells once famously noted that "Cycle tracks will abound in Utopia." Just twenty minutes from downtown Edmonton you'll find this very place. Featuring nearly 30 kilometers of gear grinding hills, scenic riverside trails, and flat-out pulse-pounding terrain. Welcome to Alberta's biking utopia - Devon.

**Devon** ALBERTA  
Enjoy the ride!

[www.RideDevon.ab.ca](http://www.RideDevon.ab.ca)

**Bike Town Alberta**

These two ads are good models to follow. They show how to best sell the experience first, then the location.

1. Use just one signature photo or graphic image that sells the experience and sets you apart.
2. Use one simple headline - one that highlights your point of differentiation, or will get your attention, pulling you into the ad.

3. This can be a "sub-head" or continuation of the thought.
4. The image and header text should pull people into the body text, which must be compelling.
5. THEN you tell them, "by the way, we are Kenora" or the name of the destination.
6. And here's where you can log on for more information.

7. And then the exclamation point or tag line such as "enjoy the ride" for Devon, Alberta. This is the call to action after "log on for more details."

In a nutshell, quit marketing your hotel, business, community, location first. Pull us in, sell the experience, evoke emotion, then tell us who and where you are followed by a call to action.

# Seven Deadly Sins of Community Marketing | Handout



## Deadly Sin #7: Missing a call to action

Always get your customer's attention, pull them in, and then create a call to action. Typically this is best done with a question. Disney uses "What will you celebrate?"

The Northwest retailer Fred Meyer asks "What's on your list today?"

What is your call to action? Make it easy. Convenience is critical.

Finally, remember this in your marketing efforts:

A by-product of marketing "for the people" is the committee that compromises and kills a potential marketing home run. This is why you never see statues of committees in public parks. You see brave leaders!

## The Recap List

- Jettison the generic - find your niche and promote it like crazy.
- Tell me WHY before you tell me who, where or what.
- Get my attention - pull me in and I'll remember you.
- Create a call to action - What's on your bucket list?
- Make sure there's a next step - "do it now" so I don't forget.
- Web first, print second - Get your marketing priorities in order. When is the last time you actually used the yellow pages?
- Concentrate your efforts - Repetition gets results.
- Narrow your focus - and keep it narrow. Be the largest fish in the small pond.