

How Successful Marketers Transition from Ordinary to Extraordinary

BY KELLY RIGGS

The terms *ordinary* or *extraordinary* in any endeavor are defined by the results that we expect. When observed performance is average or conforms to standard expectations, we typically will label that performance as ordinary—not bad or necessarily unacceptable, just *ordinary*. On the other hand, some performances are atypical or exceptional or dramatically exceed our expectations, and therefore, rise to the level of *extraordinary*.

The assumption here is that ordinary marketing (whatever that might be) creates ordinary results, while *extraordinary* marketing would produce exceptional results that far exceed our expectations.

In fact, the difference between ordinary and extraordinary can be defined as the difference that exists between good and great, the subject matter of Jim Collins' mega-seller *Good to Great* (Harper Business: 2001). In evaluating the differences between good companies and great companies, Collins wryly observes that, "Good is the enemy of great." In other words, being good (or ordinary) often prevents companies from becoming great simply because ordinary is good enough or because extraordinary is not worth the effort required.

Assuming that's not the challenge you contend with, what is the catalyst for the transition from ordinary to extraordinary as a marketer? Why do some marketers produce extraordinary results while others labor in the trenches of the average and the run of the mill?

Recently, I had the opportunity to work with a struggling small business that desperately needed to attract and convert new business opportunities. Revenues were in decline, profits had plunged precipitously, and there was considerable tension inside the organization. They lacked focus and urgently needed to create an intentional plan for moving the business forward.

And that is what they did. Following a defined process over a period of four months, the owners were able to make substantive changes that reversed the company's fortunes. As things began to turn around, the managing partner sent me the following email message.

"During our last meeting with the partners, [we discussed] what we gained from working with you. It gave me great pleasure to report the following.

"1. We had lost money four months in a row, and [this month] is showing a potential \$30,000 profit.

"2. Three months ago, we had about \$400,000 in proposals out. Today, we have over \$1 million.

"[This month's] profitability is proof that we are focused and intentional in what we are doing. I don't believe the things happening are by accident. I just wanted to say thank you."

To summarize, their marketing efforts improved dramatically, increasing the number of viable opportunities available to them, which they were able to then convert into profitable sales revenue. The challenge was that this particular company, despite good marketing—great presentations, world-class graphics, superb deliverables—was neither focused nor intentional, the two hallmarks of extraordinary performance. They did not clearly understand their competitive advantages. They did not have a plan to develop critical relationships. They did not have a targeted, strategic plan to develop the right opportunities. In a nutshell, they were not producing enough quality client conversations to create a pipeline of business that would allow them to achieve their revenue objectives.

In my observations, the transition from ordinary to extraordinary—in any endeavor—is the result of focus and intent. It is accomplished by adapting from a tactical, often reactionary, decision-making approach to a strategic marketing process. This process can begin by asking this one simple question: If the most successful company in your industry analyzed your marketing efforts, what would they do differently?

Extraordinary marketers understand one very simple concept: If you want different results, you have to do something differently.

Truth be told, ordinary marketers do ordinary things. They often take the path of least resistance. They tend to be comfortable with how things are currently. They bristle at the suggestion that they might need to do something different or better. Life is comfortable, and the prospect of change is painful.

Extraordinary marketers are none of these things. They understand one very simple concept: If you want different results, you have to do something differently. In answer to the question above, what they would do—as an outside observer with no agenda and no political concerns within the company—is tear apart every single aspect of your marketing efforts. They would analyze, from top to bottom, everything your marketing department does currently. They would question everything. They would scrutinize your win rates, your pursuit costs, and your current “best practices.” They would dissect your presentations, your deliverables, and the composition of your teams.

There would be no sacred cows; no part of the process that couldn't be touched simply because “that's the way we've always done it.” There would be no soft-pedaling of your weaknesses. The conclusions would be stark, and the recommendations would be blunt. They would make substantive, perhaps painful, changes.

These changes would create focus and intent for every member of the marketing team relative to a well-defined process and a clear set of objectives.

Focus and intent. These are the hallmarks of the extraordinary marketer. Evaluate your current practices using the following guidelines to determine if you are an example of an extraordinary marketer.

- The extraordinary marketer is driven by a strategic process and will solve strategic problems with strategic, rather than tactical, solutions.
- The extraordinary marketer understands that the results the company is getting are the results they should be getting. With this in mind, the extraordinary marketer will analyze current practices in light of producing different results and will not shy away from making changes as needed.
- The extraordinary marketer works with specific intent. He or she knows what they are doing and why they are doing it.
- The extraordinary marketer works toward specific objectives rather than simply “working hard.”
- The extraordinary marketer understands, at any particular time, the most important thing that needs to be worked on or improved in order to reach the company's stated objectives.
- The extraordinary marketer works diligently to identify and overcome the natural resistance that inevitably prevents success. **m**

About the Author



A former sales executive, two-time national Salesperson of the Year, and partner in three start-up business ventures, Kelly Riggs is founder and president of Vmax Performance Group (www.vmaxpg.com). He has written two books: *1-on-1 Management™: What Every Great Manager Knows That You Don't* (2008) and *Quit Whining and Start SELLING! A Step-by-Step Guide to a Hall of Fame Career in Sales* (2013). A trustee of the SMPS Foundation, he can be reached at kelly@vmaxpg.com.

Kelly Riggs will explore this topic further during his breakout session, “How Successful Marketers Transition from Ordinary to Extraordinary,” on August 1 at 3:15 pm in San Antonio during the SMPS Annual Conference.

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