

# Top 5 Traps CMO's Fall into and How to Avoid Them

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1. Paid first, free second
  2. Message control
  3. Production control
  4. Avoiding the conversation
  5. Technology du jour





## Trap 1: **Paid first, free second.**

Often when the campaign is planned the first thing the department reaches for is the budget. Many discussions are had around how best to deploy the budget and how it was spent in the last campaign. What worked and what didn't work and how pressure can be put on suppliers to sharpen their pencils and give a better price for the same media this time round.

There is still a feeling from CMO's that if the media is not paid for, it's then not of sufficient quality to warrant an increased focus. This stems from the fundamental experience many CMO's have with social media where multiple strategies have been deployed in order to get to grips with this channel and the results have often be reflective of the experimental nature of these strategies. It is a trap many fall into, assuming that all free media is just social media. There are many channels which are not considered traditional social media but which are also free and which can often be just as effective.

A strong and in-depth analysis of the target market will yield many secrets particularly, how they gather information about a particular product or service based on outlets like blogs, message boards and review sites. These are all rich territory for brands and the ability to infiltrate them in the correct way will yield dividends.

It doesn't sound glamorous and nor do these individual media channels command much in the way of audience. But, when aggregated you might be surprised at how quickly you reach a sizeable chunk of your audience, and who are more engaged and more responsive than claimed in traditional, paid media channels for free. Free first, paid second.



Trap 2:

## **Message control.**

The first cousin of 'paid first free second' is controlling the message. Many brands still insist in crafting a message that not only restricts the media that a message can be deployed in, but also create barriers that consumers are required to leap over in order to become engaged with the brand.

What social media has taught us is that whilst we cannot control the message, we can certainly influence it and this truth is something that all CMO's will need to confront at some point. The customer is now, ultimately, in control of your message. They will decide whether it is credible, realistic or empathetic and they will vote with their keyboards, and their feet.

The key is to ensure that the message is framed as a proposition that invites a response, a conversation. For more on this, see trap 4 - Avoiding the Conversation.



### Trap 3: **Production control.**

Recent experience with the rise of user generated content has taught us that the quality of the production values, both video and print, doesn't always need to be the best that money can buy in order to be highly effective.

In the modern marketing landscape the language that a brand uses to communicate with its audience effectively is becoming less structured and more conversational than it has been in the past and this can sometimes be at odds with a slickly polished graphical photographic or video finish. Not only is this expensive and disproportionately so to the cost of the media, it's often not something the consumer really cares that much about.

Unless you're premium brand where the consumer is most interested in the lifestyle or aspirational connection, then a "high-res" view of your communication is critical. However, for everyone else, there is nothing wrong with a "lower-res" view of your brand, if that means that you're going to bring the Message to market more efficiently and cheaply. Ask many of the most successful YouTube'rs with millions of views - most admit to experimenting with increased production values in their videos. However, conversely, they started to lose their audience. The higher production values had raised a barrier and reduced the empathy between them and their audience, to a point where some of their hitherto loyal viewers simply stopped watching.

For big marquee brand campaigns sure, go for it - add the highly polished look and image to whatever you're doing, but for everyday communications with your customers you can build a more genuine relationship by not sweating over the craft of your message and concentrating on the empathy and emotional connection that your message is making.



## Trap 4: **Avoiding the conversation.**

Don't be afraid of them. Don't be the brand version of the guy who walks into the bar dressed up in his smartest clothes, with his funniest jokes but only wants a one-way conversation with whoever he meets.

This is a subset of the control trap but many marketers are afraid to start conversations with their customers for fear that it will result in a tidal wave of negativity and discourse that can't be managed. Although this is true, it really comes from the old adage; you get the conversations you deserve. If our guy walks into the bar and says something arrogant or controversial, he is certainly going to get a different reaction if he had entered with a more open approach.

The same goes for brands. Do ensure that you have the capacity to observe, monitor and most importantly answer questions, or feedback both positive and negative, posed by your customers. You should also be prepared and ensure that support media, such information, tips, tricks and other handy hints are close at hand, as customers often just want your help. Customers want to understand your proposition to better use your product or service more efficiently or help them make a better decision within your category.

In marketing automation terms this process is called nurturing and a many successful brands actively nurture their customers with no promise of an immediate sale. This can be sometimes up to 12 interactions before the customer decides they are ready to buy. A great opportunity to create a very strong customer bond through conversation.



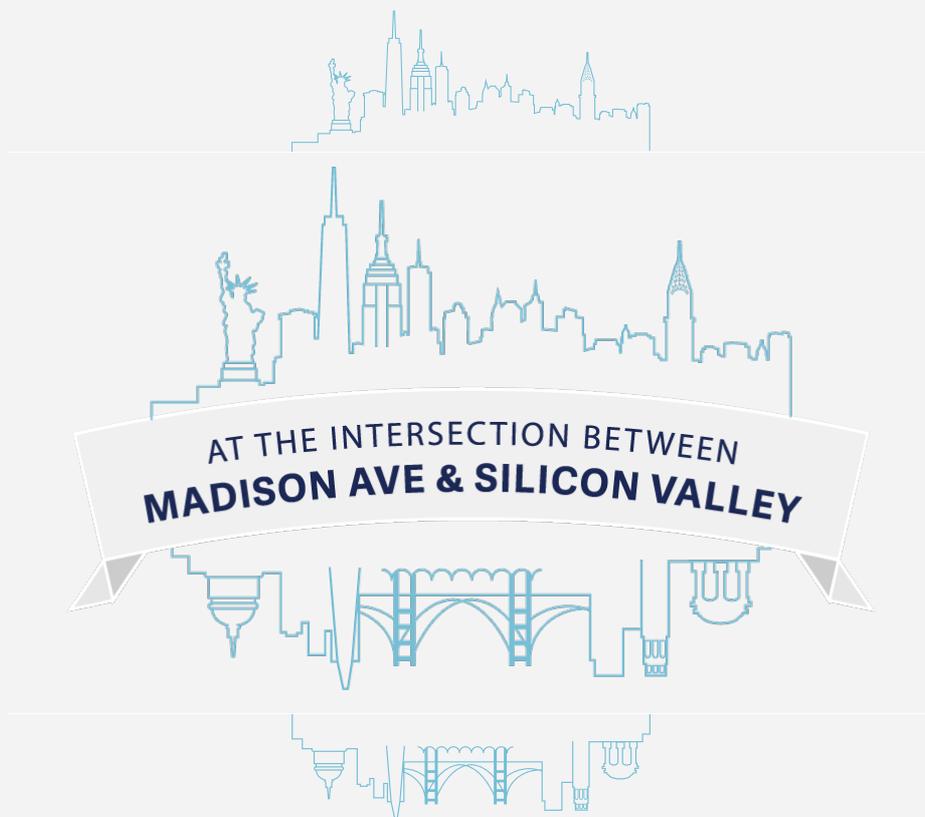
## Trap 5: **Technology de jour.**

In thinking Digital first, many CMO's are often at the mercy of the white noise generated by marketing vendors of any particular software.

Apparently there are over 20,000 pieces of marketing software available for use. Clearly it would be impossible to analyse each of them to be a fit for your organisation. In today's fail fast succeed even quicker world, there are many technology solutions presented to marketers that outwardly seem like the answer to all your hopes and dreams but can often be a nightmare to understand, use successfully, integrate with legacy systems and efficiently optimise.

Always pick the technology that fits around your strategy not the other way around. Your strategy is always going to be more robust than the technology in the sense of delivering to your target audience what you want it to.

Modern marketing technology often has that bright shiny new object feel about it and as a result there are often magpies picking them up and squawking about them. Don't be tempted. Be patient and wait until you're confident that your strategy is the very best you can deploy and then match the technology to the strategy. Once you do that, you will find that the technology you require will be self-selecting and you significantly reduce the time required trying to find the perfect fit.



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My passion is helping growth companies prosper utilising a global brand marketing perspective, rooted in Silicon Valley executive-level experience.