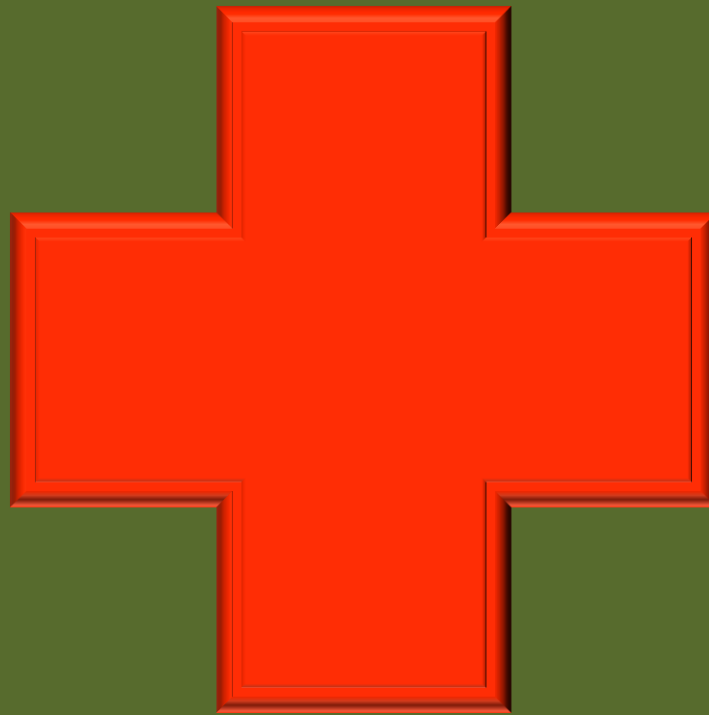


# The Marketing Manager's Survival Kit

*Remedies for Marketing Management Disasters*



Be Prepared for Anything

Demand Droughts

Marketing Anarchy

Marketing Blackouts

Toxic Waste

A Deluge of Work

Stakeholder Riots

Executive Explosions

Zombie Apocalypse

# Demand Drought

Creating demand and driving sustainable revenue growth is the primary charter of every marketing organization. However, they are much easier said than done. There are times when increasing demand is as simple as ramping advertising spend. Sooner or later though, every ad campaign and media channel runs dry. Ending a demand drought requires marketing innovation, and marketing innovation requires the ingenuity of skilled marketing managers.

## Source Ideas Broadly

Source new marketing ideas broadly and routinely by conducting regular surveys of customers and sales, publishing request and feedback forms, and soliciting suggestions from throughout the entire company

*Marketing Management  
Survival Tactic*

## Rain Revenue with Continuous Innovation

The problem is ingenuity doesn't scale. Sustainable revenue growth cannot rest entirely on the shoulders of a few creative marketing managers. To prevent recurring demand droughts, you must systematize marketing innovation. New marketing ideas, both big and small, must be sourced, brainstormed, prioritized, tested, measured and assessed on a regular basis. Successful new ideas then become ongoing marketing programs, and innovation shifts to marketing program optimization. If you want to be a revenue rainmaker, you must build a marketing innovation machine.

## Maintain a Backlog of Ideas

Create a running backlog of all marketing ideas that you can draw on at any time. Set a standard for prioritizing ideas based on relative value and level of effort required to implement them. Groom the backlog on a regular basis to refine good ideas, remove outdated ideas and reprioritize those that remain. By keeping a running idea backlog, you simplify marketing planning and make sure you never lose a good revenue generating idea.

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# Marketing Blackouts

If no one knows what marketing is doing, then the natural conclusion is that marketing isn't doing anything terribly important. Moreover, when different groups within the marketing organization don't know what other groups are doing, it is impossible to provide a unified experience for your customers. Unfortunately, most marketing plans, projects and performance reports are hidden away in spreadsheets, documents, email inboxes and other poorly lit locations.

## Marketing Project Management

Real-time visibility across the entire marketing department requires detailed project tracking.

Consider implementing a [marketing project management system](#). A rigorous and automated approach to marketing project management increases the probability that reality mirrors your marketing plan, and eliminates busy work. If you systematically collect information at the project level, then higher-level views, such as marketing roadmaps, calendars and progress reports can be completely automated.

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Ending a marketing blackout requires systematic collection, integration and publication of marketing plans, projects and performance. Current marketing plans, status of work-in-process and marketing performance reports for each marketing area should be available to everyone in the marketing department.

High level roadmaps, a monthly [marketing calendar](#), and regular updates should be published to all marketing stakeholders.

Without an integrated marketing management system, consolidating and communicating marketing activities is pure overhead and can be quite labor intensive. However, the alternative marketing blackout is far worse.

## Light the Way with Complete Visibility

### Publish a Marketing Calendar

An easy way to keep everyone informed about upcoming marketing promotions, projects, and events is to publish a monthly marketing calendar and update it weekly. Share the marketing calendar with marketing, sales, other departments and the executive team to keep everyone informed.

# A Deluge of Work

To capture the attention of busy buyers, marketing managers plan global campaigns, product launches, seasonal promotions, and spectacular events that routinely fill marketing departments up with a deluge of work. If you don't brace yourself for these foreseeable floods, quality will suffer and marketing teams will drown in a sea of work. Marketing management at scale is a process, not a project, and marketing managers must master important process management principles to open the floodgates when the tide runs high.

## Define Marketing Workflows and Handoffs

Increase the efficiency of people-centric marketing processes by focusing on the handoffs.

Define specific process stages, such as draft, copy, design, proof, etc. and create outlines and templates for deliverables that get handed-off at each stage. Track marketing projects by stage to ensure a smooth work flow. Just like you do with the purchase funnel!

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## Open the Flood Gates

Handling a deluge of work with limited marketing resources requires scalable, efficient marketing production processes based on increased standardization, automation and quality. The more your marketing production processes resemble a factory, the more marketing output you can generate per marketing team member. Most marketing projects from websites to trade shows require the coordination of cross-functional marketing teams. While these people-centric processes cannot be fully automated in the same sense as sending an email, their production capacity can be dramatically increased by standardized workflows, formalized hand-offs, deliverable templates, reusable assets and proactive management of resource bottlenecks. Once standardized, routine tasks can be automated and end-to-end processes can be optimized through continuous improvement.

### Manage Bottlenecks

If you monitor marketing projects by workflow stage, then you can identify bottlenecks in your marketing management process when a particular stage backs up. Bottlenecks in any stage reduce the output of the entire process. Remove bottlenecks to keep your marketing projects flowing and increase efficiency.

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# Executive Explosions

Sometimes big problems come in small, well-intentioned packages. For example, when the VP of Sales makes a simple and reasonable request that threatens to blow up all your well-thought-out marketing plans and committed marketing goals. Can we upgrade the website next month? Let's start doing webinars once a week. And, so forth. Then there are the super urgent, yet conflicting requests. The VP of sales wants a website upgrade, but the VP of customer success wants a community portal, and, you only have one web team.

## Manage Scope, Not Just Resources

The secret deactivation code to defuse every explosive executive situation is the word "YES". Manage project scope, not just resources. By breaking big project requests up into smaller increments, you can provide immediate satisfaction without derailing current marketing plans. Say "YES" to something small today, and deliver the bigger vision incrementally over time.

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## Defuse Volatile Situations

### Public Marketing Backlog

An executive request that looks important and easy in isolation, might be foolish and difficult when weighed against current marketing plans. Everyone wants marketing to work on the most valuable ideas, so keep a prioritized backlog of all potential marketing projects and publish it for stakeholders to see. Build consensus around your marketing plan and backlog priorities. Now handling a new request is just an exercise in reordering the backlog.

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The ability to defuse potentially volatile situations involving hard-charging, single-minded executives is an essential marketing manager skill. Life is easier, however, if skill is also supported by process and a few facts. Executives ask marketing for things they think they need to be successful. However, exactly what they need and when they need it allows room for negotiation. What is the priority of the request relative to projects on the current marketing roadmap? Does it all need to be done yesterday, or can it be broken up into smaller projects and rolled out over time? Or frankly, is it sufficient to just capture the idea for future consideration.

# Toxic Waste

Most marketing departments are under resourced and over committed. There is no time for do-overs. Fuzzy objectives, fuzzy assignments, fuzzy agendas, fuzzy hand-offs and fuzzy communications lead to endless marketing rework and countless hours spent in useless staff meetings. Busy work that eats up precious marketing cycles without moving things forward is a toxic waste of time that can seriously undermine marketing performance.

## Marketing Collaboration

Email, chat, and social tools are great for one-off conversations, but they lack the context, depth and continuity required for purposeful collaboration. Consider a [marketing collaboration platform](#) that links conversations, documents, and decisions directly to projects for greater efficiency.

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## Clean Up Rework and Useless Meetings

Cleaning up waste from rework requires clearing up day-to-day marketing management activities. Luckily, it doesn't require a lot of overhead. Rigorous work habits and simple process rules will often do the trick. Make sure strategic marketing goals are clear, so you don't waste time on unimportant projects.

Don't start a new marketing project without clear objectives and requirements. Create modest project plans with a special focus on deliverable hand-offs to coordinate cross-functional teams. Make sure every project and deliverable has a single, clear owner.

Bring an agenda to every meeting and record issues, decisions, and action items.

## Management by Exception

Streamline team meetings by eliminating updates on work that is going according to plan—just make sure the plan is up-to-date before the meeting. Focus instead on coordinating hand-offs, resolving issues, helping stuck team members, and removing obstacles from blocked projects.

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# Lightning Strikes

Budget cuts, competitor moves, PR crises: sometimes unexpected bolts from the blue shock a well-organized marketing plan into complete disarray. When things change rapidly, does your marketing organization absorb the shock and rebound nimbly? Or, does it end up in a panic that puts everything else on hold until the crisis passes? Insulating your marketing organization against sudden shocks requires a flexible marketing management process that expects change and adapts quickly.

## Ground Yourself against Unexpected Shocks

### Agile Sprints

Once you start working incrementally, you can fit projects neatly into weekly, bi-weekly or monthly work 'sprints'. Each sprint cycle, you strive to complete projects assigned to the current sprint, then realign priorities for any changes as you plan the next sprint. Sprints increase your flexibility, strengthen your focus on tangible results, and establish a regular heartbeat within your marketing organization.

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### Work Incrementally

Big projects reduce flexibility, while small projects increase it. Implement big projects incrementally by breaking them up into smaller ones. When lightning strikes, you can easily shift to something else without lowering productivity.

If you find it difficult to plan because you are constantly dealing with unforeseen changes, then you should consider adopting agile marketing best practices, such as working incrementally. When you know your marketing plan will change each month, then you should not commit to projects that will take longer than a month to implement. Break big projects up into smaller ones that fit into your known time horizon. Don't make rigid plans that extend out several quarters. Set long term goals and prioritize your backlog of projects accordingly. Focus on producing a steady stream of work based on your backlog. When lightning strikes, you just have to adjust your priorities, not your plans.

# Marketing Anarchy

Marketing managers have many choices. In particular, marketing managers must decide what they are going to do before they can plan how to do it. Should you improve your message or drive more traffic? Does your product need more capability or higher quality? Once decided, the real work begins. Without a clear strategy, each marketing manager chooses differently and you end up with marketing anarchy characterized by conflicting priorities, confusion, frustration and inconsistent, sub-optimal marketing results.

## Real-time Marketing Roadmap

Improve alignment and integration by linking campaigns and projects to strategy. Publish a real-time marketing roadmap that presents your marketing plan by strategic initiatives, such as “increase awareness”, “drive new business” and “build loyalty”.

Bring Order to  
Random Acts  
of Marketing

## Marketing-centric Views of Plans and Performance

Task lists are great for getting things done, but they don't help you decide if you are doing the right things in the first place. Don't just make a list of marketing projects. Create roadmaps, calendars, campaign plans and charts by market segment, channel, product, buyer personae, strategic initiative, customer value, and other critical marketing dimensions to see if your marketing work and results are properly balanced, prioritized and integrated.

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Your marketing strategy must be more than a plan. It should include clear cross-functional goals and priorities that facilitate everyday decisions by constraining marketing choices and clarifying marketing tradeoffs. You can't just do a presentation or send out a memo. Marketing strategy must be baked into your marketing management process to link everyday work to strategic initiatives, keeping work in step with strategy even when priorities change. It should enable every marketing manager to make coherent choices and avoid wasting time on random acts of marketing.



# Angry Mobs

Everybody wants something from marketing. Sales wants leads. Support wants a community website. The CFO wants more revenue with less budget. And, every CEO has a pet marketing project. Keeping stakeholders happy, particularly when they have conflicting priorities, is a never ending challenge of every marketing department. If you consistently miss stakeholder expectations, you'll find yourself facing a frustrated and angry mob.

## Market Marketing

The best way to avoid angry mobs is to set the right expectations in the first place. Communicate key marketing strategies, priorities, plans and decisions broadly to all interested stakeholders on a regular basis.

## Marketing Management Survival Tactic

# Quell Stakeholder Riots

## Co-opt Your Critics

People tend to take care of their own. If you want real stakeholder buy-in to your marketing plans, then you should include them in your planning process. In fact, you should collaborate with stakeholders on the actual work to tap into their ideas and perspectives. When you co-opt your critics, they don't just buy into your plans, they co-own the results.

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You can't please all of the people all of the time, but you can build buy-in and co-opt your critics. The best approach to quashing marketing stakeholder problems is to involve stakeholders in the solution. First and foremost, keep stakeholders apprised of marketing plans and performance. Marketing blackouts encourage stakeholder riots. Proactively solicit feedback on marketing plans and source suggestions for future marketing programs. Collaborate directly on important marketing projects, so your stakeholders are as committed to success and own the results as much as you.

# Zombie Apocalypse

Rapid organizational changes can wreak havoc on marketing productivity. High growth, corporate reorganizations, acquisitions and sudden turnover can create scenarios where the marketing department is full of new, inexperienced and potentially unmotivated marketing managers. Even the most senior marketing managers can freeze up while coming up to speed on entirely new surroundings. Welcome to the marketing zombie apocalypse, where the blind lead the blind and nothing gets done except trying to keep yourself from being eaten alive.

## Set Benchmarks and Examples of Superior Performance

It's hard to tell if you are doing good if you don't know what good looks like. When everyone has a clear picture of superior marketing performance, then it's easy to tell when marketing managers are living up to their true marketing potential.

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When ramping new or inexperienced marketing team members, it's best to be more explicit about what, when and where things need to get done. While experienced, senior marketing managers are proficient team leaders, more junior team members need to be led. They are also less likely to raise the alarm when they are stuck or overloaded, and have no internal benchmark for good performance. Priorities and tasks should not only be explicit, they should be visible to the entire team, so marketing managers can detect and resolve individual problems before they impact other team members and marketing deliverables.

## Reanimate Unproductive Team Members

### Define Task Plans and Monitor Progress

When tackling an entirely unfamiliar project, even the most experienced marketing managers appreciate a little detailed instruction. Also, unmotivated and underperforming staff need to realize that they are bringing down the entire team. The best way to handle both of these difficult marketing management situations is to define specific task plans and monitor progress until the suffering individuals are back up to top performance.

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## About Markodojo

Markodojo [marketing management software](#) helps marketing managers lever up by empowering marketing teams to be more strategic, more creative, more focused, more productive and more agile. Markodojo scales where spreadsheets and project management tools fail, providing an integrated platform for marketing planning, marketing project management, marketing team collaboration, marketing relationship management and online feedback tools that bring marketing closer to customers and sales. To learn more, visit [www.markodojo.com](http://www.markodojo.com) and sign up for a free trial.



## About the Author

Joel York is the CEO and founder of Markodojo and a respected thought leader in the software community. He shares his knowledge on the popular blogs Chaotic Flow and Cloud Ave. Prior to founding Markodojo, Joel was a career CMO and built multiple marketing departments from startups to hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. Joel got his first exposure to agile at Deloitte Consulting. A lifelong student of agile principles, Joel has applied agile methods in marketing, engineering and manufacturing. Joel holds a BS in Physics from Caltech, an MS in Engineering Physics from Cornell and an MBA from the University of Chicago.