



What's The BIG IDEA?!

How to understand your potential customers and their unique motivations for buying – then wow! them with a big idea that sells.

Your best resource for creative solutions to just about any business communications need imaginable.



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What's The BIG IDEA?!

How to understand your potential customers and their unique motivations for buying – then wow! them with a big idea that sells.



Planning on doing a little marketing for your business? Then you need a BIG IDEA! Ideas like, “Where’s The Beef”, “It’s The Real Thing”, “I Can’t Believe I Ate The Whole Thing!” “When EF Hutton Speaks...”

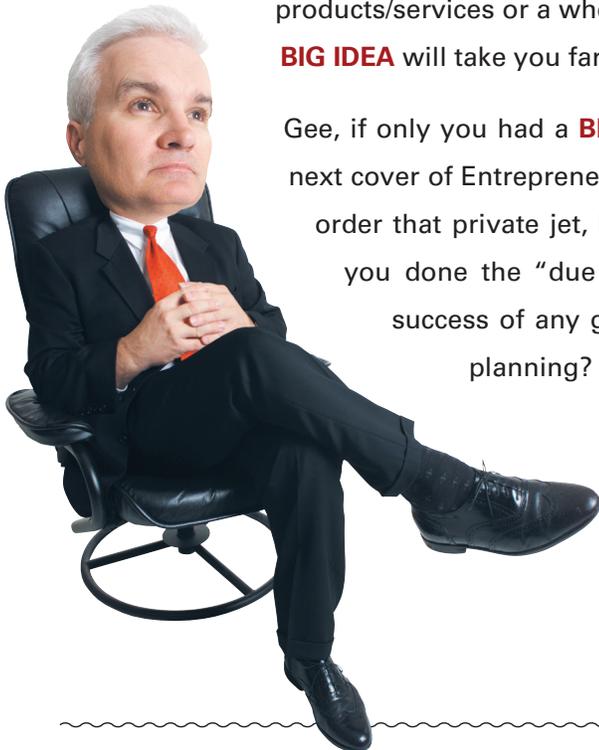
Looking for more than just a clever headline?

Well, the **BIG IDEA** sold more VCRs than its far superior competitor, Betamax. The **BIG IDEA** turned a little-known German import car into an American icon named “The Beetle”. The **BIG IDEA** is what made *H&R Block* – well – *H&R Block*.

Be it an ad headline, a unique way of presenting your products/services or a whole new business model. That **BIG IDEA** will take you far.

Gee, if only you had a **BIG IDEA**. You could be on the next cover of Entrepreneur Magazine! But, before you order that private jet, let’s think this through. Have you done the “due diligence” necessary to the success of any great idea? The research? The planning?

You know, the hard stuff.



Sales 101

So, let's start with the basics. Ask yourself the following questions:

> What are you selling, specifically?

Widgets, technology, professional services?

Peace of mind, brand trust, status?

> Who are you selling to?

Professional Buyers, large distributors, consumers?

Male, female, younger, older?

> Why should THEY buy your product or service?

What are their needs for products/services like yours?

What are their perceived pain points?

> Why should THEY buy it from you?

What makes you so special they should choose you instead of your competitors?

> What do you really want to tell THEM?

Target your messages to best target your customers' needs and their expectations.



In marketing, just like in the broader category of "Sales", it's all about the customers' needs. Never about yours. Get to really "know" your product or service offering(s) from your customers' perspectives. Live and breathe this stuff – as a buyer of what you sell. Jumble the answers all together in your head until they're second nature.

Got it?

Say What Needs Saying

Okay, now we can start defining your marketing message(s). Not the exact words or pictures yet, but the essential messages you want to send to the world. Your messages might be based on price benefits, quality, convenience, problem solving or any of dozens of other possibilities. As long as they're derived from the 5 questions in the previous section, then there's no 'wrong message'.

Exercise:

We've all heard about the importance of a good 3-minute elevator speech. But what if you were only allowed one sentence in which to sell a captive audience of attention-deficit executives your product or service? What would that one sentence be? That's your **core sales message** — maybe even your new tag line.

Okay, now widen that scope to 3 sentences. Better? How about 5 sentences? Maybe, but in most marketing vehicles, that's about the upper limit.

Those one, three or five statements are your **basic sales messages**. Never stray from these messages as you continue through this process. Whatever happens. Never forget that this is the whole reason you're here in the first place. To sell a product or service. So, don't treat these messages lightly.

What if you were only allowed one sentence in which to sell a captive audience of attention-deficit executives your product or service?



This isn't Saturday Night Live

Unless it reinforces and delivers your basic sales messaging, it's not a sales campaign—it's a skit! No matter how funny your friends think it is. The **BIG IDEA** is like that sales person who knows all the jokes and keeps the whole room in stitches. Sure, they'll remember his jokes, but unless his reasons for buying are obvious and strong, those jokes won't make the sale.

We've all come to enjoy those *GEICO*, *Progressive* and *Farmers* commercials, right? We like the characters, the scenarios, the punch lines. But, take away the humor and they still they have two big elements going for them.

1. A Strong Sales Message All of these companies stay right on point with strong sales messages - redundantly. Otherwise, they wouldn't sell any insurance.

2. Over and Over and Over and... It's estimated that GEICO's annual advertising spend is \$1.2 BILLION DOLLARS per year. That's how they run those commercials tens of thousands of times a day. Repetition, repetition, repetition.

The next time you find yourself laughing at a "great" ad — on TV, in print, on-line, ask yourself the following:

- a. Would it have made me want to buy the product if I was in the market?
- b. Will it make me remember the company the next time I'm in the market?

If the answers are anything but a resounding, "Yes!," the commercial or ad was just an expensive skit or piece of art.

Entertaining, but underwhelming,
does not a **BIG IDEA** make.

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**Repetition, repetition,
repetition.**



Don't Sell the Steak; Sell the Sizzle!

Elmer Wheeler, circa 1930's

One of the greatest sales experts of the century taught hundreds of sales organizations how to increase sales through applied psychology. His name was *Elmer Wheeler*. He was one of America's best known sales experts of the 1920's, 30's and 40's.

Elmer made his living helping others become better sales people — and is credited for making the *Hoover Vacuum Cleaner Company*, well, the *Hoover Vacuum Cleaner Company*.

"Don't sell to people," said Elmer. **"Give them a reason to want to buy from you."**

His instructional books and albums introduced pop psychology to the realm of marketing—advising would be salespeople to pay more attention to WHY people wanted to buy and less to what they were selling. Most advertising and sales theories of the last 80 years have built their basis on his theories.

He knew the importance of selling...

Benefits; not features. **Solutions;** not problems. **Feelings;** not facts.

"Sizzle and aroma has sold more steak than any cow," Wheeler said.

So, yes, by all means, sizzle up your thoughts and ideas. Find the most attention getting Sizzle possible. That's what the **BIG IDEA** is all about! Just be careful to remember why you're here and not to burn the steak in the process.

Pay more attention to WHY people want to buy your product or service — and less attention to what you want to sell them.



What do you want to accomplish?

Managing expectations can often be the most difficult part of the marketing task. In any undertaking, we need to rationally define our goals in order to rationally judge its success or failure. Spending marketing money is no different.

Are your goals reasonable or just outlandish dreams? Are you pinning all of your hopes on this one endeavor? Or, just hoping to see something positive as a result? *These are very different mind sets and require very different goal setting.*

So ask yourself, "Why am I doing this? What can I reasonably expect and how do I judge if its successful?"

- > Are you trying to actually make sales?
- > Generate leads for your pipeline?
- > Soften the way for future sales efforts by getting your name/brand out there?

Balance costs (including personnel time) against your potential gains. Of course, if your *Return On Investment (ROI)* potential is high, then it's easier to justify higher expenditures. (Such as renting a blimp and flying over a sporting event.)

The maddening thing about marketing efforts is, you never know. A magazine ad, digital marketing initiative or trade show presence — presented to the right targeted audience — might deliver qualified leads — or new orders — or new long-time customers.

Or, nothing.

That's where the **BIG IDEA** comes in. *(But we're getting ahead of ourselves.)*



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Or, nothing.

When is No News Good News?

“Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don’t know which half.”

Nineteenth century Philadelphia retailer, John Wanamaker

So, does that mean it’s “okay” to spend money on marketing initiatives and not hear a word of feedback? Not very often, frankly.

Oh, there are occasions when your advertising and promotional goals are aimed at exposure, or being seen or showing support. This is known as “Institutional Advertising” or “Awareness Advertising,” and most definitely has its place in any well-rounded marketing plan — provided your budget can accommodate the expenditure.

Even then, there’s a difference between a strong awareness piece that peaks interest or grabs attention — and the banality of many such pieces we see out there.

So, how do you get the most impact out of your hard-earned marketing money?

Now it’s time for the **BIG IDEA.**



Put on your thinking cap!

Finally! It's time to begin thinking about ideas. Not the **BIG IDEA** – not yet. Just ideas. Lots of them.

A tent barbecue for valued customers. BIG discounts for second orders. Donkey rides for customers' children. A sales gimmick to reinforce a slogan. A free window squeegee with every window purchase. A novel way of looking at your product or its solutions. A new incentive program for distributors. Participation in a Veterans' program. A hot air balloon.

An outrageous headline that drives your message home like "Where's the Beef?" or "When EF Hutton Speaks..." or "Just Do It."

Exercise:

Scribble your ideas on napkins in diners. Discuss them with friends and co-workers. Keep an idea pad by your bed at night. Schedule an hour of your time during the work day for this – treat it that importantly. Challenge yourself. How many ideas can you come up with in an hour (or a week) that would...

- a) attract the interest of your targeted audience
- b) stay relevant to your product or service
- c) stay within a reasonable budget

You don't want to offend people, but you do want to disturb their sense of normalcy – and force them to pay attention to what you have to say. Good ones, bad ones, obvious ones, impractical ones. List them all. The more, the merrier. This is the fun part.

Have at it!



How many concepts for BIG IDEAS can you come up with in an hour?

A day?

A week?



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Be a Bully!

This task is a little less fun, but has to be undertaken with an iron fist.

Exercise:

- 1.** Cross out all the obviously bad or impractical entries. *(Yes, we know you just loved the idea of the blimp with the flashing lights flying across a fan-filled stadium at night broadcasting your message to the masses. But have you seen what something like that actually costs? Unless your potential ROI truly warrants that kind of an investment – think again. Maybe an illustration of that blimp on a Sell Sheet to deliver your message?)*
- 2.** Examine the remaining ideas for relevance and delivery potential. Remember those basic sales messages we built earlier? Would these ideas deliver those messages? No? Cross them off. (Remember why we're here.)
- 3.** Now, make a new list of the remaining "good ideas". Like what you see? Feels good, right? Sorry, but we're not done yet. Cut *this* list in half by having the courage to throw away anything that would seem less than exciting or truly memorable to your customers. Be harsh. This is real money you're going to be spending, so this is no time to be soft.

You did it! Slogan, event or a new business model. Assuming the remaining ideas truly reflect your marketing message(s), the only criteria remaining are potential impact on your targeted market and the practicality of an idea's execution.

Congratulations. You've got a BIG IDEA!

Be harsh. This is real money you're going to be spending, so this is no time to be soft.



Now, What?

If you followed the previous steps wisely, you were left with a handful of strong, sales-oriented ideas for attracting the attention of your potential customers and delivering strong opportunities for the achievement of your goals.

The next step is to find the best venues for getting that **BIG IDEA** in front of your audience. Print ads, TV or radio spots, direct mail, social media, press releases, sales gimmicks, billboards, trade shows... There are numerous options for promotional exposure available to the smart marketing planner.

Remember, the **BIG IDEA** needs to reach out and grab attention. So, choose venues that deliver the best selection of your targeted audiences at the most advantageous times. Review them carefully and choose your battles wisely. Then deliver that **BIG IDEA** with pride, creativity and professionalism.

If you can do that – in print ads, radio spots, flyers, or sales conversations – then you have a great chance at closing the sale. That *is* the point of the **BIG IDEA**, after all. Grab someone’s attention long enough to speak your mind and accomplish your goals.

That’s the Biggest Idea of all.

— End —

**Find the best venue
and then deliver
your BIG IDEA with
pride, creativity and
professionalism!**



We raise a lot of issues. Of course, we’re here to help you with the answers. Need some professional guidance for your next Big Idea? We’d love to help. Just visit our website at: www.spowellassoc.com — or, give us a call at 845.651.1650 for a free, no-obligation consultation.

Steven Powell is the founder and creative director of *sPowell Associates*, an award-winning, branding and marketing studio based in the Hudson Valley. He has been helping businesses find and deliver their unique marketing messages for over 30 years. For several years, Steve hosted *Marketing By Design*, a weekly talk-radio show focusing on marketing and branding for small to medium-sized businesses. *A sampling of those recordings are available on our website at: www.spowellassoc.com/radio-show.*

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*A proactive creative services firm
whose principal contributors actually walk-the-walk.
What a Concept.*

Our Origins

In 2002, a talented, dashing handsome, award-winning NYC Creative Director [ahem...that would be me.] sick to death of his 15 years' daily commute and 'big-agency' mind-set — had an amazing epiphany.



Wouldn't it be an incredible gig to work locally in The Hudson Valley, and not waste hours every week commuting? And, wouldn't it be just—well—awesome to work at a 'creative' firm where every client was treated with equal care, attention to detail and dedication?

No inflated billing procedures; No tiers of talent for different clients; No jockeying for media commissions. Just great 'creative' — delivering targeted, brand enhancing messages to select targeted audiences. What a concept!

Our brilliant entrepreneur [again, ...me.] knew he was on to something big.

And, so it began... I officially hung up my 'country gentleman' shingle and assured my wife we'd be okay. Eventually, I believed it myself. Now, 15 years after that talented, dashing handsome, award-winning NYC Creative Director [...you know who.] left a good job in the city, I'm proud to say that he's stayed true to his vision.

Believe me, we make no claims to perfection. But when my associates or I make recommendations or offer up solutions, you can be sure they're creative, well thought out, arrived at through professional experience and insights, and have your best interests at heart.

Our Principals



Steven Powell
President, Creative Director

During his career, Steve has created award-winning sales and promotion campaigns for *General Mills, Dunkin' Donuts* and *Kraft Foods*, helped the *New York Hall of Science* raise funds for expansion and renovation, overseen design and promotion for national news stand magazines, branded and positioned two multi-million dollar companies for public offering and helped a national manufacturer re-brand its products through its packaging and advertising.

With pioneering work in advertising, interactive promotions, web sites and on-line games, Steve motivated millions of internet shoppers to buy, buy, buy in the 1990's for national brands such as *Kraft Foods, AutoBytel, Playgirl Magazine, Pop Secret* and *Wrigley's Gum* — collecting seven national awards in the process.

Since founding his firm in 2002, Steve has helped numerous regional and national organizations accomplish their marketing and communications goals through smart strategic planning, meticulous branding and memorable communications.



Edison Guzman
Director of Digital Marketing

Since 1997, Edison Guzman has helped business owners and organizations harness and exploit the power of the Internet through their digital marketing initiatives.

Throughout his career, Edison has helped start-ups quickly scale to self-sustaining revenues, then surpass thresholds many businesses never reach. His unique ability to recognize and leverage hidden promotional assets has helped numerous existing companies grow. Edison's simple, yet powerful strategies include *Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, Pay Per Click campaigns, Social Media Management, Reputation Management, Online Funnel Creation, Email Marketing, Video Marketing, eCommerce solutions* and *Content Marketing*.

Founder of one of the first companies to bring advanced digital marketing solutions to the Hudson Valley, Edison is also the published author of *Everything You Need to Know About SEO*, and *CourseVersity.com*, an educational portal helping business owners large and small succeed through their digital marketing.

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