

# The ABCs of & Marketing

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**Rajat Kapur**



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Our journey at &Marketing since we launched in 2017 has been the highlight of my professional career. What started as a vague idea that I could take my ‘big company’ background and apply it to [small and medium-sized businesses going through the digital transformation](#) became a living and breathing (and profitable!) company. And the experience has been, well, everything. Fun. Exhilarating. Frustrating. Interesting. Insomnia-inducing. And last, amazing.

A year ago, we realized that, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of startup life, one thing we had never done was stop and reflect on the lessons learned and the ups and downs along the way. As [Gary Vee](#) would say - “document the journey.” And so, our year-long series - the ABCs of What We’ve Learned So Far at &Marketing - was born.

For each letter of the alphabet, we chose one word or phrase that represents our story in a significant way. Entries varied, ranging from digital marketing, entrepreneurship, and startup life, to culture, ethics, and our multi-generational and remote workforce. It’s provided us a great deal of perspective on both work and life and has reminded us that, at the end of the day, we’re all just humans - humans who crave passion and camaraderie, and who want to make a difference in our communities.

We hope you enjoy reading and can find a bit of yourself, your team, or your company in our words. We welcome any feedback!

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To me, A is not only the first letter, but Attitude is one of the most important values to express. As I wrote in the &Marketing culture blog, my all time [favorite quote is about Attitude \(from Charles Swindoll\)](#).

In my 2 decade professional career, I have found that you can separate people based on how they see the world. An individual's success, and therefore a startup's success, is based largely on attitude. Managing the ups and downs of day to day life can be difficult. So, success depends largely on the optimism of the team doing the work. And it's tangible. Prospects and clients can feel it. Teammates can feel it. It's a vetting criteria for those we hire, those with whom I choose to spend my personal time, and everyone in between.

**“The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failure, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you... we are in charge of our Attitudes.”**

**— Charles Swindoll**



# B BUREAUCRACY B

**B** is for Bureaucracy, with a giant B. What we've learned so far is that in today's fast-paced business world, bureaucracy is the death knell for poorly run businesses. The single biggest reason is that companies are losing in the modern economy because of the lack of focus on customers and their needs. Call it internal focus, call it navel-gazing, call it what you want.

**One example:** Several years ago when I worked for a large company, I worked on a project where I was asked to prepare a PPT slide that was to be presented to our CMO and CEO for a major internal review. I was not given much notice, and it was described as urgent, so I dedicated an entire day to presenting the information about our project in a clear, concise, and compelling way (with nice pictures, and of course on only one PPT slide). I moved other meetings to make this happen. After 2-3 revisions with my team, at about 4:30 in the afternoon, I texted my friend [Ryan Oliver](#), who worked directly with the CMO to ask a question about the task. He simply replied. "I am working on the slides, can you just send me a quick bullet about that project - it's not a big part of the presentation." So, I spent an entire day on a page for an internal meeting that was not even used. Productivity wasted. Morale spent.

This sort of thing happens in corporate America every day.



But don't think that bureaucracy happens in large companies only. Many small companies have all decisions go through the management team because they "know better" or implicitly don't trust their teams. In a recent project for a much smaller client, the sales leader, frustrated at his management team's inability to let the team make even the tiniest decision, referenced this quote from Andy Stanley.

In rapidly changing markets full of uncertainty, which most of us are a part of, we have learned that organizations that can speed up and clarify decision making [Want an amazing book about decision making? [Principles, by Ray Dalio.](#)] by answering some basic questions: Whose decision is this? How do they get the right information? Who do they need to consult? These companies will win in the long run.

**“Leaders who don’t  
listen will eventually be  
surrounded by people who  
have nothing to say.”  
— Andy Stanley**



# CULTURE

**C**reating and maintaining a strong, balanced Culture is really hard. Especially with a multigenerational workforce. Especially with a virtual team and multiple people from the 'gig' economy who have other priorities. Especially in a startup.

The biggest thing we have learned about culture is that if you don't focus on building one you want, a culture will form anyway. Then you have to go back and fix it, and that's even harder.

We have two home bases in Philadelphia and Indianapolis, and several team members in neither location. Our team has grown really fast - we have 8 full-time, 4-5 'regular' part-time, and a bunch of 'extended' team members who we use for filling in gaps. The Indy team is more technical and has an office at a [local co-working space](#) because they need to directly collaborate and they prefer it (check out zWorks if you're looking for a great space and tell them we sent you!). Everyone has the option to work from wherever, whenever they need to get their jobs done. Most people work from home, I only assume, because nobody checks.

All of that said, we cannot say that we have a perfect culture, because it's a constant work in progress. But people seem to enjoy working here. While these aren't really documented anywhere (until now), here are a few things we "do around here" to maintain an upbeat and cohesive culture:

**Assume positive intent.** In all interactions, we try to assume positive intent. Just like a marriage, a good working relationship requires that those involved assume that the other person means well. If that goes out the window, you're in real trouble. If you assume positive intent, you can disagree (passionately) on the topic and not worry if the other person has an ulterior motive. You can also deal with failure and imperfection, which happens often when you're part of a small company that's introducing new ideas to companies who are trying new things.

**Try to remember that work is a part of life, not the other way around.** We have a culture of almost infinite flexibility. Our goal is to create a work environment where everyone enjoys one another's company, and we get to do our best work. We never 'demand' that someone works on a project - it's always a choice, depending on their abilities, bandwidth, and desire. It's OK to say no to a project. It's OK to work at night or early in the morning. We build little weekly or monthly 'fun' interaction times where we can get to know each other outside of the specific grind of a project deadline.

**Put the client's customer first.** This one is a little hard to get your mind around - but if we legitimately try to help our clients grow, then all the other activity seems to sort itself out. We think of our job as being a 'guide' for our clients to help their customers & prospects with whatever product or service they provide. We often say things like "If it was my money, here is how I would spend it" and we actually mean it, even if that means less work for us.



### Try to have clear roles & responsibilities...

This one was really hard. At the end of 2018 in our team 360 feedback, more than one person put some version of “because we go fast and are all remote, it’s hard to clearly know what my job is.” So, we created a clear document that explicitly states the expectations of every role in the company - irrespective of client or project. The team expressed appreciation of the clarity and has already upped their game as a result. I remember going to work in my 20s and not really knowing what I was supposed to do other than what my boss told me to do and thinking “There has to be more to this!”

### ...but embrace each person’s unique

**strengths.** To further complicate things, because we are an ‘outsourced marketing department’ - we have a huge variation of personalities, styles, and skill sets because today’s marketing department needs to serve at least these functions: strategy, branding, messaging, creative, web development, social, email, PR, influencing, SEO, & copywriting. As we have written before, we actually think that [diversity is one of our biggest strengths](#).

**“My tenet is to trust the person closest to the situation & if they like it, I love it. Set the objectives, boundaries & let people work. Step in when help is needed, ask questions, and support the journey.”**

**— Kathy Sterio**



### Expect team members to ‘make the call’ and ‘use their big brains’

– It’s amazing how many organizations don’t actually explicitly empower their employees to think of how to do things better. We borrowed the 3M philosophy of “20% time” - where every employee chooses or creates a project they think needs to be done. Of course, it’s vetted and thought through so we don’t have people spending tons of time on random tasks, but I’m simply amazed at some of the ideas. I’m 100% sure that I wouldn’t have thought of them (a few examples: creating a more secure way to store our clients’ data; documenting standard SOWs and SOPs for repetitive tasks; getting our company on [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#); simplifying our staffing).

### I learned this last one from a former

**manager, [Kathy Sterio](#).** Kathy has many amazing traits as a professional and a leader (and a human being!), but here’s a quick story to describe one that’s relevant here: Kathy managed me in my first marketing role after a 2-year leadership rotational program at GE. Early on, I went to her with some sort of a 30/60/90 day plan. Kathy reviewed it with me and simply said “Good luck! Let me know how I can help!” Honestly, that scared the crap out of me, but it forced me to do what I thought needed to be done, knowing that she would support me when things didn’t go right - and be there along the way for regular check-ins. Things sometimes didn’t go right, and she always had my back.

Kathy’s philosophy on this is something more managers should use to get the best out of their teams. That’s one very good way to build trust in your culture.

# D

## DIGITAL REVOLUTION

**A**s the digital revolution continues to turn the world on its head, there's one thing we've learned for sure when it comes to marketing: the more things change, the more they stay the same. Here's what I mean:

**How companies reach their customers has changed forever.** The Internet has become the dominant place for information and product intake for all ages and types of businesses. It's transformed how companies, including trillion dollar "old school" industries, do business - from SEO and paid search, to social media and email, to algorithms, analytics and automation platforms. It's enough to make your head spin (unless you're marketing nerds, like us - we live for this stuff). But the point is, the opportunities to communicate your message - and even predict your customers' behavior - have never been better.

**What the digital revolution hasn't changed are the strategic fundamentals of marketing.** Target audiences are the same, and customers still have problems that need to be solved. Businesses still need to find those pain points, and have quality products to serve as a solution. And of course, brands still need to tell a compelling story to convince people of why they are the solution.

The challenge is that the Internet has caused information overload and incredibly short attention



spans. Large companies have the budget to staff digital experts to "break through the clutter" (or they hire big agencies to do it). But where do small and medium-sized growing businesses stand? Without the same resources, some have fallen behind the curve. Sure, there are a bunch of marketing tools out there, designed to make internal workflows more efficient. And don't get me wrong - they do - but not when you don't have the time to figure out how they work.

The digital revolution's impact on small and medium sized businesses isn't just something we've learned about during the past couple of years, it's why [we exist in the first place](#). For those trying to navigate its seemingly endless pace, we're here to help you keep up.

I'll leave you with a quote from a former co-worker and friend of mine, [Jon Bostock](#), Co-Founder and CEO of Truman's (<https://www.trumans.com/>). Check it out - his company is paving the eco-friendly way in household cleaning. He reminds us of one of the greatest things the digital revolution offers: constant connection.

**"No category is exempt from the need to be constantly connected to your customers in an authentic way. Almost every customer can communicate with brands online, it's up to the brand to be positioned in a way that allows them to engage in a meaningful way."**  
— Jonathan Bostock



# ETHICS

**E**thics is a non-negotiable. This is obvious, right?

Wrong.

What we've learned so far is that you can't assume everyone takes ethics seriously. Many take it for granted, while others don't even think about it at all. In our two year journey, we've run into a surprising number of clients who try to cut corners, don't stay true to their work, or don't hold themselves accountable for their end of the bargain. I'll share two examples.

The first was a client with whom we had a written agreement that they'd pay us a bonus if we grew their pipeline. And when we did grow their pipeline, they refused to pay it. That same client also verbally agreed to an additional scope of work, yet later denied approving it and didn't pay us after we did the job. We gladly parted ways with them.

The second was a client with whom I became "friends." Long story short, part of my house (like my personal house) flooded, and this client's significant other ran a contracting business. They quickly came and resolved the issue for us, and assisted with working with our insurance company to make sure we were reimbursed. But they then assumed that we'd give them all of our repair work in the future...and were not pleased when

**"The blind pursuit of profit at all costs is untenable. It is essential that we make money the right way."**

**— Indra K. Nooyi, Pepsico**



we didn't. It was a clear ethical breach and, by the end of it, was borderline insurance fraud (which I reported).

So, what happened with these clients? We fired them... and I'm proud of it. Another agency would likely continue that relationship for the sake of a dollar. But we're neither typical nor are we an agency. If anything, we're the anti-agency, and we're not afraid to turn down business or end relationships if it's a cultural mismatch (read more on our values [here](#)). Sacrificing my soul - or that of my team - is not worth it. I'd trade business for ethics any day.

Ultimately, ethics (or lack thereof) will impact culture, and culture is the cornerstone of a successful business. Every decision you make, client you partner with, or new team member you hire makes a difference in the long-run. We're about honesty, transparency, and respect. If you don't play well with ethics and what we believe to be decent human behavior, we won't be successful partners!



# FLEXIBILITY

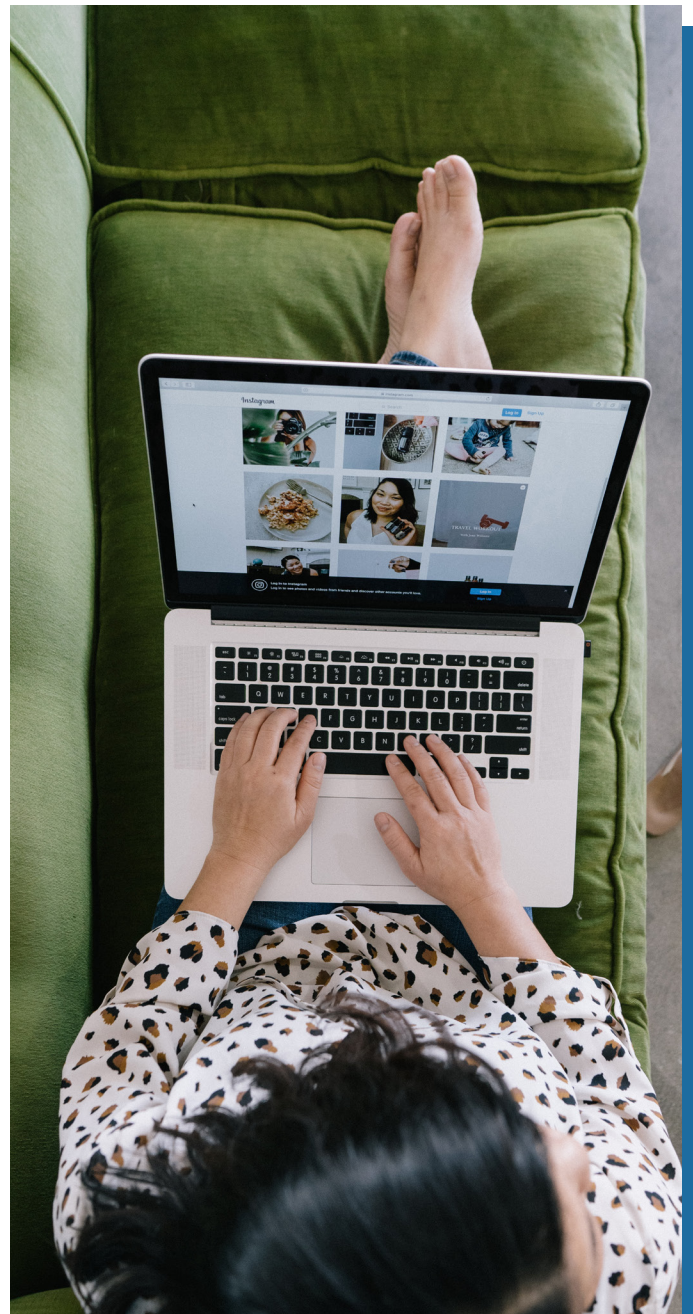
“You got to get speed, demon speed. Speed’s what we need; we need greasy, fast speed.”

— Mickey (Rocky’s trainer in that awesome scene in Rocky 2)

Earlier in this series we talked about the digital revolution and its seemingly endless pace. Things are changing not just month to month or week to week, but day to day and hour to hour. In our constantly-connected world, we’ve become conditioned to think less, do more, and work faster.

This can be especially difficult for small and medium-sized businesses, as they’re understaffed, strapped for time, and have employees wearing multiple hats. What we’ve learned is that growing businesses need flexibility in the support they receive from their partners. Rigid approaches no longer apply. Growing businesses neither want - nor can they afford - the large-scale support that most agencies offer. Instead, they want a service that is scaled perfectly to fit their unique needs. Sometimes that means 20 hours of focused work a week, and other times it means just a few hours of senior counsel a month.

Embracing speed and flexibility is also a huge advantage for smaller companies against larger, slower competitors. Large companies are often plagued by micromanagement and have a slew of internal processes. While some of these processes enable companies to scale, others completely kill productivity. Most small businesses don’t have this same level of bureaucracy, so they can be nimble and make decisions faster. That’s why we [built flexibility into our model specifically with this in mind](#).



# G

## GRATITUDE

**W**hen working in a startup, there are many ups and downs. Many. Even in the course of one day. One moment you see that the major campaign you launched for a client was successful (yeah!), and in the next, the client you had been hoping would sign the SOW decided to delay their decision (boo!).

There's one thing I have that helps me get through all of these times, and it's the ability to, at least once a day, stop and be grateful for something. It's a practice that was inspired by Lewis Howes, a pro-athlete, entrepreneur, and speaker, who has faced his fair share of trials and tribulations (check out his podcast [here](#) - it's worth it!)

My family incorporated this practice of gratitude into our nightly dinner routine. It makes me stop in my tracks to hear my 10 year old talk about his day in the 4th grade and what he's thankful for (it's usually playing football at recess!), or to hear that my 5 year old is grateful for his teacher. All of a sudden that conference call that didn't go well doesn't seem that important. I highly recommend this routine as a way to 'get out of your own head' for any busy professional.

**“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”**

**— Albert Schweitzer**





# HUSTLE

**H**ustle is one of the most critical elements in a startup. Hustle is an attitude. Hustle means that you're willing to do something that's outside of your day job and expertise...without all the information you need. It means that sometimes, you'll drop what you're doing to complete a last minute assignment for a client, or help a teammate who may be struggling to hit a deadline.

Particularly in a small business, a hustler is a problem-solver. They recognize that sometimes we're learning as we go, and they put the extra work in to solve a seemingly answerable question. A hustler knows how to prioritize the mission-critical tasks and let go of what's not important.

**“Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion, or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle, or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle. When the sun comes up, you better start running.”**

**— Thomas Friedman**

What we've learned is that hustle should be in the DNA of a small company and a hiring criteria. Whenever possible, find people who are willing to go the extra mile without being told every single step. One of my favorite interview questions to ask a prospective employee is “Please give me an example of a project that you knocked out of the park without being asked... something you took on yourself.” Their response or confusion will speak volumes. This year, we asked each of our team members to create their own projects based on what they thought were our best opportunities. I was simply amazed at the ideas that came back.

Hustlers have ambition and want to better themselves and the company every day. It's a way of life and a key ingredient for success. If you've got hustlers on your team, your clients and company are in good hands.



# I

## “I” Versus “We”

Startups require a bunch of skill-sets. You need your strategists, your project managers, your writers, web developers, analysts, designers, and more. Many of our clients require each of these things, so they'll never be one individual rockstar. Success is born from a group of people executing on their responsibilities together, because we can't all be perfect at everything.

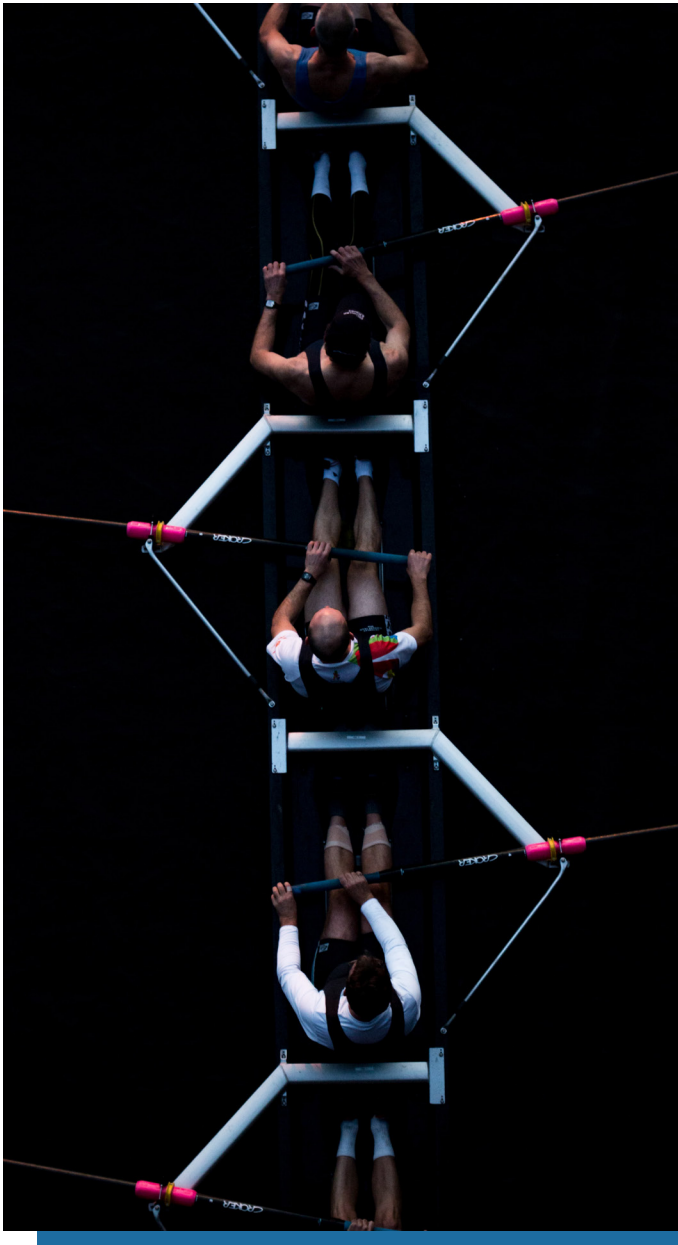
What we've learned though, is that having a team of talented individuals will not breed success on its own. There needs to be a sense of collaboration and cohesion, and frequent communication, or else things fall apart. Each team member must buy into the “I” versus “We” mentality - and it's easy to tell those who do, and those who don't.

An “I” person approaches their work in silos, and is focused exclusively on checking things off the list, and then checking out. They seek personal growth and personal growth alone. And when a problem arises, they tend to make excuses or point fingers.

A “we” person, on the other hand, is more of a team player. They see the greater goal and purpose behind the work they've accomplished, and they reflect on how their personal growth impacts the broader success of the organization or of the client. And when a problem arises, they look for a solution.

The reality is that many companies have both - and that's okay. No company nor single individual is perfect. What's crucial, though, is to have leaders in place who are constantly communicating the bigger picture and the impact each individual has.

**“No matter how brilliant your mind or strategy, if you're playing a solo game, you'll always lose out to a team.”  
— Reid Hoffman**





# JARGON

Jargon is RAMPANT in the marketing world - from PPC, keywords, and CRM, to form fill-outs, automation, and bottom of the funnel. The list is endless and frustrating.

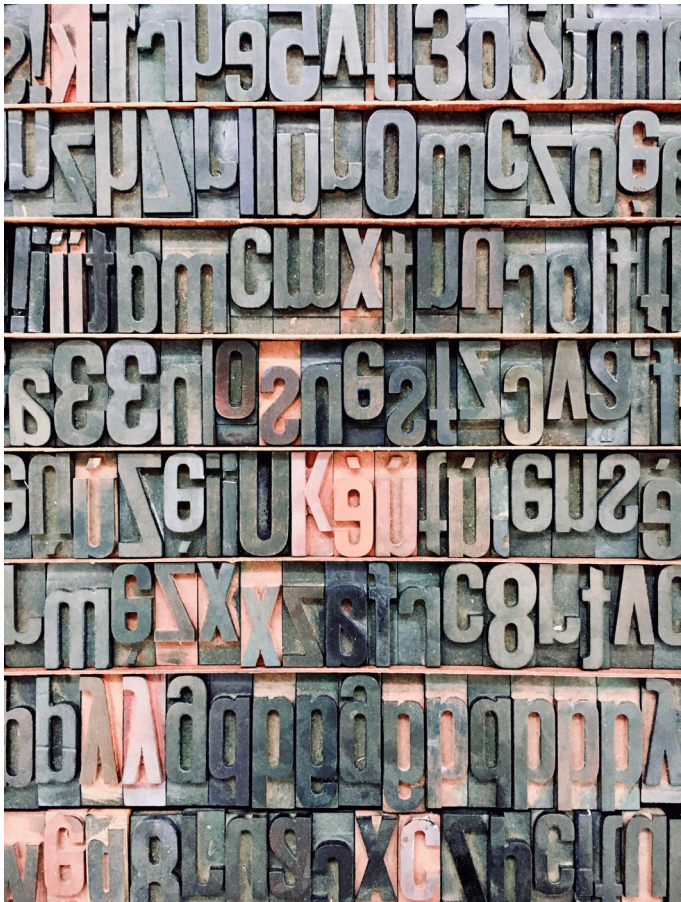
Jargon gets a bad rep (and for good reason), but dare I say internally...it's kind of a necessary evil? It's how we communicate and often times we can't express what we're working on without it.

The problem is when companies use jargon for the sake of jargon. Some use it to fill awkward silences on calls, and others use it to sound smart. Many use jargon as a security blanket when they have nothing of real value to add to a conversation (so they string together a bunch of meaningless terms to sound sophisticated). Spoiler alert: intelligent people see right through it!

What we've learned so far is that when jargon starts to infiltrate client calls, meetings, presentations, etc. we must break it down into every day terms. After all, most of our clients (and normal humans) have little to no marketing experience. So why should we expect them to understand what it means to optimize paid search or SEO? Jargon without immediate backup is just bad business because it causes confusion, can be alienating, and can taint your credibility. Jargon has the power to create an immediate disconnect between the consultant, agency, etc and the client, when in fact the goal is to become an extension of their team (by the way, this is where the "&" in &Marketing comes from!).

To further help with this, my colleague, Tracey Colla, [wrote a humorous article about "Paper Clip" campaigns, demystifying several examples of common marketing jargon.](#)

**“Our business is infested with idiots who try to impress by using pretentious jargon.”  
— David Ogilvy**



# K

## KINDNESS

**“In a world where you can be anything, be kind.”  
— Anonymous**



Earlier in this series we talked about ethics, and that while you'd assume it's a given in business, it's actually not. The same goes for kindness. It's fundamental to how we run our business at &Marketing, yet it's not something you find everywhere. In a world plagued by grabbing attention at all costs, internal competition, and an obsession with climbing the ladder, kindness is overshadowed by ruthlessness. Perhaps because many associate it with weakness.

What we've learned, though, is that kindness itself is a differentiator and can take you to the next level. And when you encounter kindness in its truest form, it really puts things into perspective. Here's an example.

A good friend of mine lost their 14 year old son to a tragic accident. What his parents only found out after he passed, was that he had spent his short life doing random acts of kindness for others, behind closed doors. This struck me at a deep level, not only because of our friendship and the tragedy, but also because of the kindness element. My wife and I helped start The [Kind Like Joey](https://www.kindlikejoey.org/) Foundation (<https://www.kindlikejoey.org/>) as a result. What's amazing is that the kindness didn't end with Joey; it had a ripple effect. Joey's goodwill toward others has inspired hundreds if not thousands of additional random acts of kindness (give the Foundation a [“like” on Facebook!](#)).

To me, a similar ripple effect happens in business. What you put in is what you get out. With clients, partners, and vendors, you have an opportunity to be unethical or selfish, or to be kind and build long-term partnerships based on trust. This often will give you more business (assuming you're also doing great work). When you're kind to your colleagues, you create a more personal connection, which will likely breed closer collaboration and ultimately produce better results. And if you're a business owner like me, when you're kind to your employees, you create a safe space for them - one where they're more likely to think freely and creatively and contribute new ideas without hesitation.

The bottom line is that kindness is good for both your health and your business. But don't just take it from me! There's plenty of research to back it up. Check out this [Ted Talk](#) to learn just how much you can gain from having a little respect and empathy - and how much you can lose from being rude!



# I LEARNING

I spoke earlier in this series about the digital revolution and its impact on marketing. With the rapid pace of technological change, we're learning something new almost every day. Beyond just marketing, we've learned that startup life itself is a constant learning process. Our ability to scale and find success is dependent on our ability to learn, be dynamic, and evolve. Here's what I mean:

**We're still nailing down which processes work, and which don't.** Pardon the cliché, but we're "building the plane while flying it." A 'work from anywhere' environment can be challenging (but rewarding, which is why we do it) and working with a multi-generational mix of full-timers and part-time contractors is a challenge, too. We're trying out different project management tools and modes of communication to figure out what works best. We're also working to standardize some processes across clients.

**Our people come from various backgrounds.** We attract all types of people who are curious about our culture here at &Marketing. Some of them have a twinkle in their eye when we mention that we're fully remote, some love our passion for helping small and medium-sized businesses grow, and others simply are excited at the idea of contributing to something that's new and growing. Regardless of the reason, we have to take into account the learning curve. Some come from agencies, some from the client-side, others from big corporations, and some from the gig economy. We've written before about how we believe [diversity is one](#)

[of our biggest strengths](#). The learning comes from us harnessing that diverse set of unique perspectives and experiences into our culture to make us even better.

**We serve (and learn from) a cross-section of businesses.** As a startup, we partner with a diverse group of small and medium-sized businesses. We'll get our hands dirty in almost any business situation - from true "startups" to companies who have been around for decades. We work with B2B, B2C, and non-profits, companies that make natural & organic foods, provide services, manufacture widgets, and the ones that distribute those widgets. As long as your company follows basic rules of ethics (see the letter "E" earlier in the ABCs of Marketing series), we'll probably give it a shot. This means we often take on new types of companies and situations that we may not be well-versed in yet, but that allow us to learn about new industries and bring best practices from others. We're certainly marketing experts, but there's a lot to learn with each new client.

**"If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room."  
— Anonymous**

**Almost everyone wears multiple hats.** I'm sure you've heard this one many times before, but it's true...startups require anyone, at any given point, to wear multiple hats. To sustain our business, it's important we keep a lean team, which often means we're short on bandwidth or people. Lucky for us, we've got hustlers on our team willing to jump headfirst into new challenges. Ultimately, without learning, there is no growth. We are constantly challenging ourselves with new types of people, new businesses to support, and new ways of doing things. Anything else would be boring!





**“Millennials are eager to make an impact, which makes them ideal for start-ups.”**

**– Neil Blumenthal, Co-Founder & Co-CEO of Warby Parker**

**B**ack in 2017, as we were just starting &Marketing, I wrote a piece about [“Harnessing the Power of Millennials.”](#) As we’ve grown, this has become truer than ever (and the clichés around the entitlement of millennials have gotten [even worse](#)).

For those still trying to “figure millennials out,” here’s some advice from what we’ve learned so far:

**Give them opportunities to guide their own career.** Millennials aren’t about the status quo. They’re open-minded and not necessarily trying to follow in the footsteps of their “superiors” or climb the corporate ladder. They want to control their own success (which is awesome) and they don’t quite care what other people think of them. The best thing you can do - and the way to help them reach their max potential - is to support this journey, not fight it. Help them carve their own path. The ideas of success differ from person to person, so give them customized options. Use those options as a sounding board to help them figure out what they want.

**Challenge and coach them along the way.** Despite how independent millennials are, they want feedback. But then again, who doesn’t? As products of the digital era, they are hyper-connected humans, so you should give them regular 1 on 1 connections (mine are weekly!). Empower them to create their own agenda and drive the conversation. Listen closely and always help them see things from multiple perspectives. And don’t always just ask about work - ask about life. Create a relationship and take a genuine interest in them as people.

**Look hard for the good ones, and bypass the not-so-good ones quickly.** It’s not hard to tell the difference between the good ones and the bad ones. While I am a huge proponent of the millennial generation, I won’t lie and say I haven’t encountered some of the self-entitlement, arrogance, and lack of professionalism that many people have complained about. But then again, can’t we say these things of anyone, regardless of when they were born?

**Focus on culture, ethics, and diversity.** Millennials are the largest segment of the workforce, and they care deeply about ethics, diversity, and culture. There’s some pretty compelling research that demonstrates the need to focus on this (sourced from [Deloitte](#)):

- Only 48 percent of respondents believe corporations behave ethically
- Just 47 percent think business leaders are committed to helping society improve
- A majority of Millennials across the world believe businesses “have no ambition beyond wanting to make money”
- 69 percent of employees who believe their senior management teams are diverse see their working environments as motivating and stimulating versus 43 percent who don’t perceive leadership as diverse

Ultimately, when interviewing a millennial, don’t mark them off the list before digging a little deeper. You might just find one of the most creative and driven people you’ve ever encountered (you also really can’t afford to, they make up a huge proportion of the workforce!). Learn about who they are, what they want out of life, and what success means to them.





**A**s an entrepreneur, you hear “no” quite a bit. No, I don’t want to purchase your product. No, I don’t want to partner with you. No, that idea won’t work. Or even no, I don’t want to work for a startup.

The worst kind of no is when you don’t even hear the word “no” at all. It’s an unreturned phone call or email from a supposedly interested prospect, or a “we’ll think about it.” Getting ghosted is the toughest kind of no because you put energy, focus, and time into understanding someone’s challenges and proposing a solution, only to get no response.

What we’ve learned so far about hearing the word “no” is that it’s important you don’t put all your eggs in one basket. Yes, hearing no certainly causes anxiety, stress, and lack of sleep, but the important thing is resilience and bouncing back. You need a clear path forward and other prospects in your pipeline, so that one missed opportunity doesn’t wreck your entire business. We follow the 25 percent rule: no single customer should be more than 25 percent of your business.

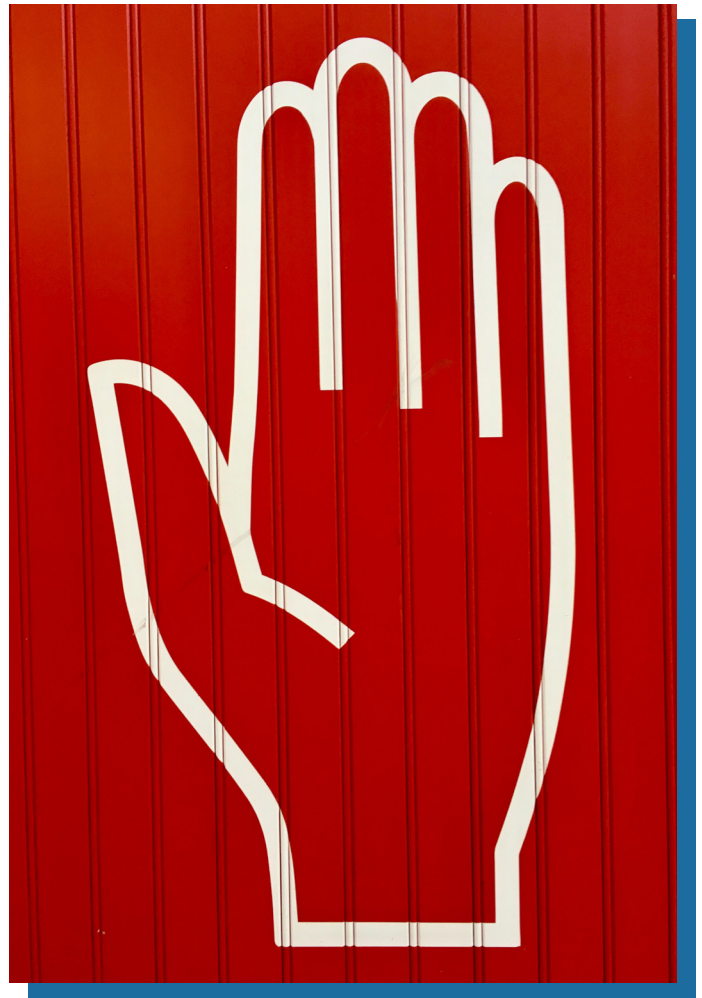
**“Constant acceptance breeds complacency and mediocrity. Rejection breeds determination and ultimate success.”**

**— Robert Wade**

We’ve also learned that the idea of “no” is twofold. It’s not just receiving a no (rejection), it’s also giving the word no (saying no to stuff).

When you’re an entrepreneur, anything and everything sounds good at the beginning. You’re trying to get on your feet with your business and you’re tempted to say yes to any and all ideas. But to stay nimble and focused, you have to say no. No to a prospective client who might be good money, but not the right culture fit for your business. No to a prospective employee that may be technically qualified, but just doesn’t seem like they have the right mindset or drive to work for a small, growing company. And no when you’re managing hard conversations with an important client and trying to protect your team.

It sounds simple, but it really all boils down to your goals. A new idea might seem cool and creative at the beginning, but will it satisfy your business goals in the long-run? Will it make your team happier and more productive? Don’t fall into the trap of saying yes to everything...it could get you into trouble!



# OWNERSHIP

**O**wnership is huge for our company, especially when working in an entrepreneurial and remote environment where we give so much freedom to our team. We put a high level of trust in our employees to get their jobs done, without micromanaging their every move. In our virtual world,

taking ownership means that even though you don't have the structure of going into an office every day and having your managers babysit you, you have enough drive to recreate that structure for yourself and hold yourself accountable.

Similar to what we mentioned earlier in this series about hustle, we've learned that ownership is a mindset and definitely a hiring criterion. People who value ownership take initiative to get the job done. They have a "can-do" attitude (it's an overused phrase, I know, but it's true), they use common sense, strategy, and logic, and they try to figure things out themselves before raising their hand for help. They take ownership of results, too, even if they couldn't necessarily control all of the variables.

I've also learned there's a difference between assigning an employee a project or task versus assigning them ownership. Assigning tasks reflects hierarchy, while assigning ownership is empowerment - it's giving your people a voice and allowing them to dig deep into the work, get creative, and figure things out their way. Certainly I'm always here to help and support, but we're trying to build a culture where everyone's perspective is valued and respected.

**"I believe to be a leader is to enable others to embrace a vision, initiative, or assignment in a way that they feel a sense of purpose, ownership, personal engagement, and common cause."**

**— Melanne Verveer**



# P

## PASSION

I could write a book on passion. In fact, this is probably the longest post I've written in this series to-date.

If you go into entrepreneurship for the money...you're an idiot (sorry for saying that, but I'm not really sorry). You'll also likely fail. You have to love it. Money for sure doesn't keep you working on a blog series at 12:15am, when you were up at 5:30am earlier that day. And it surely wasn't money that motivated me to leave my comfortable job at a big company to start my own business.

With passion comes an inherent desire to work hard at what you do. Passion means you're willing to make sacrifices, go the extra mile, and bounce back when adversity hits (and it hits A LOT in startup life). It means you're willing to try new things - even things that scare the crap out of you - because you're so passionate about where it might lead.

Passion also means you have a unique perspective. When you're passionate, you see things in ways that others may not, and you push the boundaries of what could be. For example, I certainly had some doubters when I started my own business. Is a company focused solely on helping small and medium-sized businesses grow actually sustainable? Well, we're two years in and doing pretty darn well. We went from a two-person company to a core group of 16 with several other as-needed contractors (in fact, we wrote about [our first in-person team meeting](#) in October of 2019).

Not to brag (or maybe to brag a little), but I'd say we wouldn't have gotten to this point without at least some passion.

Passion is particularly important when it comes to leadership and building a committed team. Without passion, I can't inspire my team to feel excited about doing their jobs well. And from my perspective, the good candidates that you want on your team aren't in it for the money - they're in it to make a difference and be a part of something bigger than themselves. The good ones gravitate toward passion.

**“You can only become truly accomplished at something you love. Don't make money your goal. Instead pursue the things you love doing and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off of you.”**  
— **Maya Angelou**

Something we've learned as a collective team is that passion plays a unique role in our virtual working environment. I don't think anyone on our team would lie and say that working remotely full-time doesn't come with its challenges. Sometimes you miss the routine of going into an office every day, and sometimes you miss collaborating with teammates in-person. But what keeps us going is passion. Passion for helping companies grow, passion for working among a group of incredibly smart and talented humans, and passion for disrupting what a “typical” 9-5 job is supposed to look like.

Last but not least, passion is good for business. If you're passionate, it means you genuinely care about your clients and helping them succeed. It's a differentiator. It sets you apart from self-serving companies who are only in it to make the big bucks. When you're passionate, you take the time to deeply understand your client's needs. You become a client partner - not just a vendor. And based on my experience, prospects recognize and appreciate passion.

If you combine passion with hard work, success will follow.



# QUIET

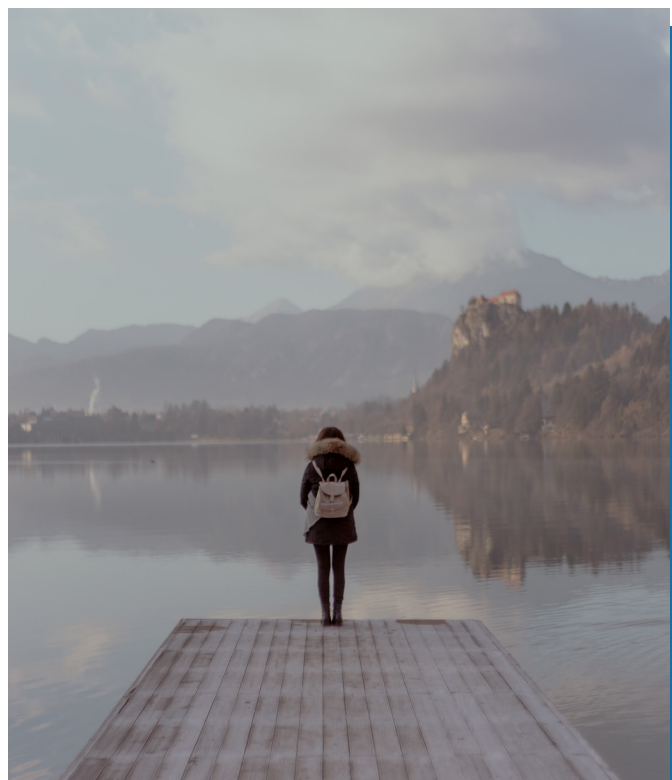
Quiet time...it's something that's hard to come by in startup life (and in 'dad of 3 young kids' life), but it's absolutely critical that you make the time for it.

When I first started &Marketing, things were nonstop (as certainly expected). I was trying to get the business off the ground, build a team, land our first clients, and figure out our internal systems and processes. Sleep was minimal, sanity was lost at times, and quiet time seemed impossible. I felt like the only way to get things done was to never stop moving. And our digital age doesn't make things any easier - we're constantly connected, which means people are always checking email, Slack, and of course...Instagram.

What I've realized, though, is that quiet time isn't just about me. It's about my team...and my family...and even prospects. It's about showing up for them and being the best version of myself I can be (I know, how cliché! But it's true). Without rest, my mind is cluttered and I can't think as clearly. If I don't take a step back, remove myself from my work, and prioritize "self-care" as the kids are calling it, I'll burn out, and that's good for no one!

Self-care also puts life into perspective. It's so easy to get consumed by the day-to-day happenings at work.

**“Take time off...the world will not fall apart without you.”  
— Malebo Sephodi**



But when I allow myself to rest and recharge (which I'll admit doesn't happen too often, but I'm working on it), I remember how lucky I am to have a beautiful family and an amazing team behind me. Quiet time allows for self-reflection...which is sometimes where the best thinking and ideas come from.

What we've learned as a collective team, too, is that quiet time shouldn't just be reserved for the evenings, the weekends, or vacation. Sometimes you need quiet time first thing in the morning, the middle of the day, or at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It's a 30 minute run outside, a drive around the block (maybe a few times), grabbing a coffee, or reading a book. Whatever it is - it's important. And that's the beauty of our virtual working environment. There are no babysitters judging you if you take a break. Do what you need to do, when you need to do it, as long as you get your work done and show up for clients.



# R

## REPUTATION

In my experience, many people early in their adult lives don't understand the importance of their personal brand. How people perceive you when you're not in the room. How you treat people, even when things aren't going well. Changing jobs. Working well with co-workers. Dealing with difficult managers. Negotiating with vendors and customers.

Those types of experiences are formative and often translate to future career success.

How does reputation matter in the real world? In the early days of &Marketing, a coworker from a previous job contacted me for help with a marketing problem she was having. She and I had not spoken in more than a decade. She saw a LinkedIn post of mine, and even opened with "I don't even know if this is the type of work you do..." We connected informally, she proceeded to explain her challenge, and after a few conversations, my team was kicking off a new project which turned into one of our biggest clients.

Were she and I best friends when we worked together? No. Did we work on several projects together before this? No. In between those conversations, she reached out to a mutual friend to ask about me and my business, and once she was assured that I was competent, hard-working, and ethical, she recommended me and my team.

Here's what we've learned so far when it comes to reputation:

### 1. Reputation helps you get your company off the ground.

You can't start a company without tapping into your network and having people put some faith in you. A good reputation builds trust, and when there's trust, people are more likely to buy into your ideas and even consider investing or partnering.

### 2. Reputation helps you grow your business, even when things go sideways.

Nearly all of our clients come from referrals, whether it be former colleagues introducing us to a new prospect, or existing clients referring us to prospects in need of marketing support. Reputation builds business. Additionally, we've all had those clients where things don't go exactly as planned, and you don't see the results you anticipated. Despite this, if you have a good track record, your client will trust that you'll figure things out, versus firing you on the spot...because with a good reputation comes trusting the process.

### 3. Reputation helps you find quality talent.

Similar to our clients, almost all of our new hires come from internal referrals - friends, old coworkers, mentors, etc. Because each of us as individuals has built strong networks and reputations among our peers, good people want to come work with us!

### 4. Reputation gives you competitive advantage.

If you and another company are pitching the same business and it's a tight race, your reputation could very well become the deciding factor.

### 5. You can't control the conversation about your reputation.

As mentioned in the example above, you are not always part of these conversations that can be vital to your career or your business. This means treating everyone, irrespective of title, seniority, or whether you 'get along' - with professional respect. You don't know when that seed will bear fruit.

At the end of the day, having a good reputation starts with ethics and kindness (we wrote about these in E and K earlier in this ABCs series). Treat people with kindness and respect, and do what you say you'll do, regardless of the circumstances. Your reputation is always on the line!

**"Reputation is who you are. It's your character, it's your brand, it's your identity."**

**— Jeff Kindler**

# STORYTELLING

So, what's your story?

...kinda sounds like we're on a first date, right? At &Marketing, this is one of the first questions we ask. I guess you could say we approach kickoff meetings like first dates. We want to know everything. Who you are, what you're passionate about, why your company exists, and what makes you different. Most importantly, we also want to know about your customers, because your story isn't just about you; it's about them - their wants, needs, and desires, and how you fulfill them.

If you don't know your story, we want to help you find it and tell it in a compelling way to your audience. Why? Here are a few things we've learned about the power of storytelling.

**Stories evoke emotion.** Stories, by nature, take customers through an emotional journey, whether it be sadness, frustration, or joy. These emotions create an intimate connection with your customers. And guess what? Emotion sells. [Buying decisions are 20 percent logical and 80 percent emotional.](#)

**Stories make you relatable.** Whether a customer is conscious of it or not, when they are first exposed to your brand, their question is, "Why should I buy from you?" Stories allow you to answer that question in a way that feels human. By doing your research on your target customers and identifying their pain points,

you can create "characters" that mirror them, craft stories that speak to the problems they're facing, and position your product or service as the solution. This is especially true for complicated or virtually unknown products or services, which our clients often sell.

**Your brand story helps focus and unify all of your marketing communications.** By using the [storybrand framework](#), we'll help you identify the core, overarching themes that you should communicate to your audience, which will lay the foundation for all of your marketing materials (I promise you, it makes things easier!).

**Storytelling doesn't just work for B2C; it's a must-have for B2B, too.** B2B companies often use stiff narratives to communicate to prospects. They lay out the facts of what they do, and hope someone will bite. They play it safe with their marketing out of fear that pushing the boundaries could harm their reputation. But think of it like Gary Vee - [behind every B is a C](#). A human is still making the buying decisions and, like we've already said, humans act on emotion. Without an engaging story to evoke these emotions, your product or service will seem dull and boring.

In today's digital world, we're bombarded by content 24 hours a day, which means we're competing for mindshare of customers. This has made it even more important to tell your story in a way that grabs their attention. If you need some help in doing this, you should check out the storybrand framework that we mentioned before - we're big fans and we even use it for our own marketing (we love it so much that we wrote an entire blog series about it - [give it a read here!](#)).

**"Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make but about the stories you tell."  
— Seth Godin**

# T TRANSPARENCY

(we're proud to say it doesn't happen often!!), we'll make it right...it's as simple as that.

Transparency is important because it builds trust. Our clients know that we'll always be honest with them and treat their business as our own. We don't sugar coat things or try to cover up our mistakes - we own them, make them known and, importantly, we come up with a solution. Most of the clients we work with know that everything is not always going to be perfect, and they value our honesty. This has created long-standing partnerships and many unsolicited referrals.

What we've learned is that transparency is important internally, too. I'm open about our business, including any setbacks we're facing or challenges I think are to come. Why? Because I recognize that we have a bright team with "big brains." They deserve a seat at the table, and I value their input on the business. I'm trying to dissolve hierarchy and foster community and trust. This has resulted in greater collaboration and innovation.

We also encourage transparency across our entire team. Perhaps you need a mental health day, or something important comes up at the last minute in your personal life that prevents you from working. Or, you're behind on a project unexpectedly. There's no need to hide it at our company. We get that life happens. Creating this culture of openness and honesty has resulted in stronger working relationships and better work results.

Ultimately, we believe that transparency is a huge driver of success. We go into more detail on this in a previous blog that you can check out [here](#).

**"I think the currency of leadership is transparency. You've got to be truthful. I don't think you should be vulnerable every day, but there are moments where you've got to share your soul and conscience with people and show them who you are, and not be afraid of it."**

**— Howard Schultz**



**T**ransparency is one of our core values, and one of our key differentiators as a company. In line with our focus on ethics (which we wrote about earlier in the letter "E") we believe having transparency is simply the right thing to do.

From our experience, many marketing firms out there completely lack transparency. They don't clearly communicate what they're actually working on, fail to meet expectations for unknown reasons, and yet still demand high retainers for their work. I built &Marketing to do the exact opposite. We set clear expectations from the beginning, establish a timeline for completion of work, and have regular check-ins with clients to update them on every step of the way. Not only that - but if we fail to meet expectations



**W**hen I started &Marketing, it wasn't out of the blue. It was for a reason. I knew that growing companies were in need of customized marketing support in this complex digital age, at a budget they could afford. The anti-agency, if you will. I found an unmet need, matched it with my strengths, and built a company. In other words, it all started when I saw an opportunity to be unique.

Being unique in today's world is not easy. With advancements in technology, the barriers to entry are low, which means the competition is high. But without a unique selling point, you'll get lost in the shuffle and left behind.

**“The person who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The person who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever seen before. ”**

**— Albert Einstein**

What we've learned so far is that in order to solve for this challenge of being “unique,” you must look outward and beyond yourself. Your business alone cannot determine its own uniqueness; it comes from your customers. Once you get started, you need to determine what the needs are from your clients and adjust your offering to accommodate that. What are your clients demanding? Where have other partners let them down in the past? From there, you assess your strengths and figure out how you can grow their business in a way that someone hasn't yet been able to. This means that uniqueness requires you to be agile and bold - willing to change and try new things quickly. It also means you have to break away from the safety of what's been done in the past.

Uniqueness is critical in business. Uniqueness creates a competitive edge. It's the reason why new clients become long-term partners, and it's why prospects choose you over another potential vendor.





# V

## VULNERABILITY

One of the earlier letters in this series was “H” for Hustle. We wrote that having hustlers on your team - especially in a startup - is a must, as they’re willing to do stuff outside of their expertise, even when they don’t have all the answers. And they recognize that we’re learning as we go, and put in the extra work to solve a seemingly unsolvable question.

This absolutely still stands true, but it’s also important to recognize that having that “go-getter” attitude isn’t sustainable all the time. Entrepreneurs and people working in startups are not these stoic super-humans who find an answer for everything. We can’t be tough every minute of every day. Sometimes we need to embrace our vulnerability. It’s called being human.

Vulnerability is a core leadership attribute that I try my best to display. If you ALWAYS have the answers and have your guard up, you’re going to melt down. I try to regularly admit “I don’t always know what I’m doing,” not only because it’s true, but because I want my team to feel the emotion of us trying to figure things out together, and that it’s ok to not always have the right answer.

What we’ve learned is that vulnerability itself is not a problem, but rather how we perceive it. We too often equate vulnerability with weakness, and in my opinion, that’s just wrong. It’s strength. It takes guts to be vulnerable. It’s letting go of control, swallowing your pride, and admitting you need help. It’s recognizing that everything won’t always go as planned, and overcoming that discomfort. It’s also being solution-oriented, like when a client asks you to do something that’s outside your skillset. Instead



of acting like we know what we’re doing and screwing it up, we admit when it’s beyond our capability. We love a challenge, but if we don’t know how to do something well, it won’t benefit their business. We’ve built trust with clients by taking this approach.

Brene Brown talks a lot about how the feeling of shame needs three things to sustain itself: secrecy, silence, and judgment. When we overcome these things, our shame dissolves and we simply own who we are as human beings. In a similar vein, avoiding vulnerability means we’re letting fear, insecurity, and embarrassment win. When we squash our fear, vulnerability becomes empowering. It ignites a desire to learn more, collaborate with others, and try new things.

**“Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity, and change.”  
— Brene Brown**



**A**s an entrepreneur, and in startup life in general, things don't always go your way (I've said this a bunch of times in this series). We find ourselves problem-solving more than we'd probably like (#trusttheprocess) and rejection is a reality we've accepted.

What we've learned is that because things are constantly changing and we move fast, you don't always stop and smell the roses. But celebrating wins is crucial to building a good culture, especially for a growing business. Sometimes the wins are small - for instance, we just launched a new payroll system that makes things MUCH easier, and we're super excited about it. Other times the wins are big (we're currently kicking butt at generating leads for most of our top clients).

**“Learning to celebrate success is a key component of learning how to win in the market.”**

**— Douglas Conant**



Celebrating wins is important for a few reasons:

**It unites your team.**

Sharing success breeds camaraderie. Especially for us in our remote environment, taking time to reflect on what we achieve as a group gives us a sense of purpose and pride. It creates unity, even when it's through a computer screen.

**It motivates your team.**

I think even the humblest of people don't mind a little recognition. Celebrating a teammate's success makes them feel valued. When you feel valued, you're motivated to do your best work.

**It balances out the rough patches.**

It's easy to get wrapped up in mistakes. Celebrating wins reminds your team that despite the challenges, hard work can pay off.

**It helps track progress against your goals.**

Goal-setting is super important in our company. We have our own company goals, and then we each have our own “SMART” goals that we're working toward. Celebrating wins is a good way to keep tabs and make sure we're achieving what we set out to do. It creates a sense of accomplishment.

**It creates a winning mindset...in client terms.**

We're all about results at our company. That doesn't mean we don't value the journey or find the silver-lining when things don't go our way, but we are hyper-focused on generating the best possible results for our clients...in their terms. Most of the time, doing just enough is not enough. For every client, we take the time to understand and quantify their key metrics (KPIs), and then build a plan to reach it. We then regularly measure our success in those terms.

When you celebrate wins, the feeling is infectious, and we start to chase it. It reminds us that we're not here just to do things for the heck of it - we're here to make our clients more successful.

Celebrating wins can be challenging in a remote environment. We're not all in one place to pop champagne on a Friday, but we make it work. We have a Slack channel called #celebratethewin, where we drop in comments about recent wins, big and small. We also do weekly shout-outs during our “Monday Morning Meeting” at 9am. It's a great way to kick off the week on a positive note.



**W**e often hear about the clash between Millennials and Gen X, but rarely do we hear about the ones bridging the gap between them: Xennials. Just as Millennials bring a unique perspective and approach to the workforce (see letter “M” earlier in this series), so do Xennials...and we have a few of them on our team, including me!

We’re dubbed “Xennials” because we were born on the cusp of both Gen X and Millennials, making us a hybrid of the two (late 70s/early 80s babies). Our micro-generation’s defining characteristic is how digital technology shaped (and at one point didn’t shape) our lives. We had an analog childhood and a digital adulthood. We understand social media, but we remember a time without it. We remember Walkmans as kids, dial-up internet in high school, and what it’s like to teach our bosses how email works. If you’re much older than us, you remember adopting technology and the internet in your 20s. If you’re younger than us, you can’t remember a time without the Internet and cell phones.

Here’s why having Xennials on our team has been invaluable to the growth of &Marketing:



**We adapt to change quickly & are willing to try new things.**

It wasn’t until we got to college that computers, cell phones, and a more mature version of the Internet became a thing. It all hit at once, just as we were learning how to “adult.” We had no choice but to adapt over and over again, as technology continued to evolve. Having this agility is super valuable at a startup; things change day to day here, and we’re still figuring out what works and what doesn’t. This doesn’t phase us.

**We serve as mediator.**

While Gen Xers are quick to criticize Millennials (and vice versa), Xennials “get” both of them. We’re young enough to understand the essence of Millennials, but old enough to still relate to Gen X. We bridge the gap and help them find common ground. This results in a successful multi-generational workforce like ours.

**We’re good teachers.**

I’ve heard before that struggling students make the best teachers. Why? Because of empathy. They understand what it’s like to not understand something. In a similar way, Xennials at one point knew nothing of digital technology...but had no choice but to learn it - and learn it fast. We became good “teachers” of technology for Gen X, because we understood their vantage point. It therefore doesn’t surprise me that the Xennials on our team are natural leaders.

**We mesh well with a range of clients.**

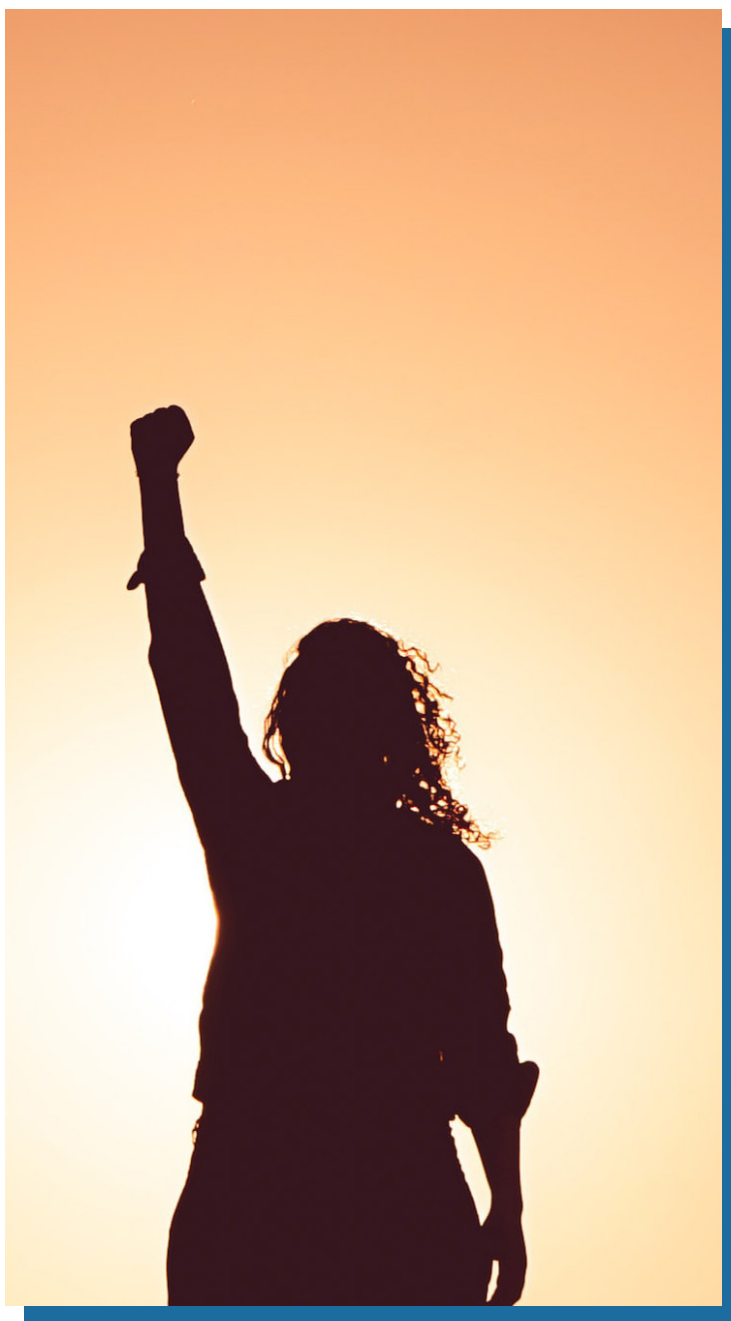
Some of our clients understand digital marketing, while others don’t. Xennials relate to both. Regardless of the client’s digital prowess, an Xennial knows how to communicate on their level.

Our multi-generational workforce is one of our favorite team characteristics at &Marketing. Each generation brings its own flavor and perspective, which breeds collective creativity. Homogeneity is boring!

**“When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become a wiser, more inclusive, and better organization.”**

**— Pat Wadors, Former Head of HR at LinkedIn**





**E**arlier in this series, the letter “N” was for “No” (hearing no, facing rejection, and saying no to things that are bad for business).

There’s a time and place for saying no, but the same can be said for saying yes. We’ve learned there are some pretty convincing reasons to “just do it.”

**You have to try new things and stay a little foolish, or else you’ll lose the entrepreneurial edge.**

Saying no all the time creates complacency, which is basically the arch nemesis of entrepreneurship and startups. You don’t make progress by playing it safe. Seeking new opportunities and ways of working gives you a competitive edge.

**Saying yes is a great way to learn, even if you fail.**

One of the fundamentals of &Marketing is using the MVP methodology (minimum viable product), where you try a bunch of things as fast as possible to see what sticks. It’s an idea I discovered in the book [“Lean Startup” by Eric Ries](#), and has really shaped my thinking. You start by identifying a problem that needs solving, and its potential solutions, and then develop tests to quickly and cheaply solve that problem. They shouldn’t be fully baked ideas - the point is to get an initial reaction from customers on the concepts. If they respond well to something, you refine it. If they don’t respond well, you ditch it. Either way, you gain valuable insight without investing too much time.

We used the MVP methodology when building &Marketing (testing which offers clients will buy) and we routinely use it for projects with our clients.

**Saying yes encourages innovation.**

If you’re a leader in your organization, what you say and do has a trickle down effect. If you decline every new opportunity that comes your way, it can instill fear in your team - fear of failure, fear of trying new things, and fear of thinking outside the box. On the other hand, saying yes projects confidence and creates an environment of creativity, innovation, and risk-taking.

Like all decisions we make, choosing yes or no boils down to two things: goals and ethics. Does the prospective client partner [share our core values](#)? Could a teammate’s new idea bring us closer to one of our goals?

**“Take calculated risks. That is quite different from being rash.”**

**— General George Patton**



**Z**eitgeist: “the spirit of a generation or a period of time.”

This word could not be more fitting to close out this series. In a way, “The ABCs of What We’ve Learned So Far at &Marketing” represent the spirit of our company from our inception until now.

We’ve covered a lot of ground since we first started writing this series a year ago, from digital marketing, entrepreneurship, and startup life, to culture, ethics, and work-life balance. The stories and insights we’ve shared come not just from my personal experience, but from our collective zeitgeist at &Marketing.

Here’s what we’ve learned so far about why you should “document the journey.”

#### **It gives you perspective.**

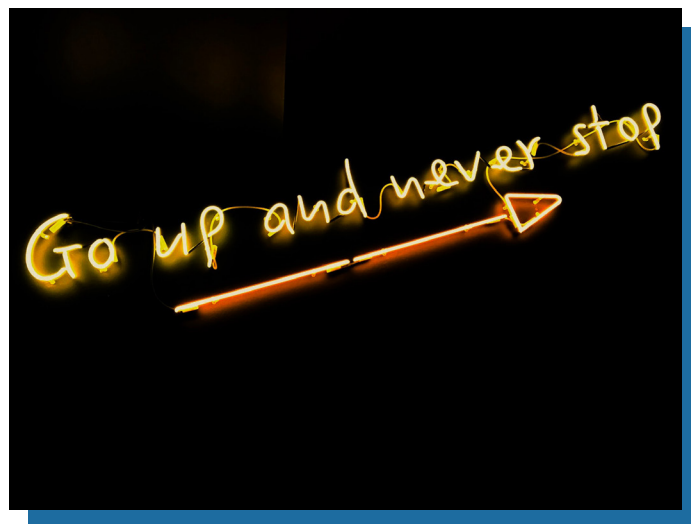
At our company, we’re hyper-focused on generating results. We don’t win until our clients win. We take pride in that, but this series has reminded us to savor the journey and recognize that everything we’ve learned along the way is a “win” in and of itself.

#### **It holds you accountable.**

[Research shows](#) that you are 42 percent more likely to achieve your goals if you write them down, and we’ve found this to be true. We’ve written extensively about ethics, [values](#), and culture - who we strive to be as individuals and a team, how we treat each other and our partners, and how we go about business. When we write this stuff down, we’re reminded of why we exist, which inspires us to do our best work.

#### **It brings humanity back to business.**

We might live in a digital world, but let’s not forget we’re still human. Behind every computer screen is a person



with a story. Sharing our candid, unfiltered journey hopefully makes us more relatable and helps us build a community with like-minded people.

#### **It inspires others.**

We’ve found many people who have identified with our mission and our perspective on work and life. In sharing our journey, we’ve had the opportunity to make a difference for those navigating a similar path.

#### **It becomes a historical artifact.**

It’ll be interesting in a few years to read back on these “journal entries” and be reminded of our beginnings. How has our zeitgeist changed? How has it stayed the same? I can’t wait to see how we evolve. Understanding your past provides a more complete picture of your present.

I’m somewhat sad that we’ve reached the end of this series, but am so proud and grateful that we’ve taken the time for self-reflection as a company. We hope you’ve enjoyed reading and have found value in our stories!

**“Dissecting the zeitgeist and understanding what is truly relevant in culture is a unique talent that creates a tremendous opportunity.”**

**— Gary Vee**

