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# The Way of the Golden Rule

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# Chapter

## Because People Matter

People *do* matter. This book shows you how to be a successful marketer while acting ethically. It's about the idea that you don't have to be crooked or mean-spirited to succeed in business. It's about the idea that the success strategies of a business formed in an attitude of abundance and grounded in ethics and cooperation are powerful and long-lasting. They also help you feel good about yourself even while bringing in profits.

Your parents and teachers probably taught you to treat others the way you want to be treated, play fair, and cooperate. This book is about the idea that you can use those principles as a cornerstone of your business and that you can design marketing that not only follows this precept but harnesses its incredible power to bring success and abundance into your life.

Too many businesses see marketing as a weapon of war. They think that to succeed they have to climb over their competitors, fool their customers, and herd their employees into constricted conformity. We think that's just plain wrong.

Marketing is a series of partnerships—of courtships, really. Businesses that succeed with this model understand that they have to woo their customers, just as a suitor woos for the chance to marry. And just as a successful marriage is built on years of mutual communication and meeting each other's needs, successful marketing looks for a deep and long-lasting relationship based on meeting the needs and wants of everyone involved. That means your customers, your employees, your suppliers, and, yes, even your competitors. You can knock someone's socks off on the first date, but if you betray that trust afterward, you become your own biggest obstacle on the road to success.

And just as in a courtship, you want to go as fast as possible but as slow as necessary. The singles scene is littered with the carcasses of relationships that never went anywhere because on the first contact,

## 4 ◀ GUERRILLA MARKETING GOES GREEN

one person came on too heavy, too fast, or too self-involved. Many business failures result when companies spend too much time crowing about how great they are and forget to listen to their prospects.

Always remember that successful marketing is about how you can add value for the other person. And the most effective way to add value is by developing a long-term positive relationship with a customer, just as it is with romance.

So stay out of marketing divorce court; be trustworthy and add value for the long term. It takes work to achieve a successful, long-lasting marriage, but the rewards are worth it. Similarly, you have to work at a successful long-term relationship with all the other interest groups that interact with your business. It's got to succeed for everybody involved.

Remember, too, that in our Internet era, scandals and problems never go away. In 2009 as we write this, you can still find thousands of articles about business scandals of the past, including a juicy little *Forbes* magazine chart that details the 22 worst U.S. business scandals of 2000 to September 2002.<sup>1</sup>

Just as a romance that's based on false promises and miscommunication is doomed to failure, so business relationships based on greed and backed by false promises aren't going to work over time. But the good news is that if you treat others well, they will become your best marketers. The better you treat others, the more they will want not just to do business with you but to *bring business to you*.

You make your own success by helping others succeed—you succeed without selling your soul. Think about this style of business as a practical, day-to-day expression of the old Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would like others to do unto you—a precept found in every major religion.<sup>2</sup>

Although we believe very strongly in the Golden Rule, this is not a religious book. Rather, it's a book based on a code of ethics. Your ethics might or might not be religiously based; the important thing is that you have an ethical basis for your professional or business behavior.

The modern business world doesn't usually assume that business should be based on ethics. But we do. We'll assume that you're reading this book because you really want to do what's right. But perhaps you've been told for many years that Nice Guys Finish Last, and you aren't sure it's really possible to succeed, thrive, and be profitable while doing the right thing.

We're here to tell you that you *can* succeed and still have a clear conscience. In this book, you'll encounter many success stories that put a practical handle on this philosophy. You'll see that others are doing very well by doing good and that you can, too.

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Spend an hour or two with this book, and you may find that you don't have to live in a dog-eat-dog world—and that in fact, when the dogs learn to work together, they can accomplish much more than any of them could on their own. Think of the incredible weight a team of sled dogs can comfortably pull across the snow; no single dog could accomplish that. Thus, when you join forces with others—even those you've been trained to think of as your competitors—truly amazing things can happen.

This is an opinionated and personal book; we make no pretense otherwise. It is based on our combined 80+ years in marketing. We've built thriving decades-old businesses using the principles in this book. And we want you to do at least as well.

### ■ LESSONS AND ACTIONS

- Marketing is like a romance: subtlety works better.
- The Golden Rule actually works in business.
- Success is not only compatible with ethics, it's easier.

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