



14 RULES for Successful High- Growth Marketing

by Jeremy Epstein, CEO
Never Stop Marketing
(@jer979)

Why You Should Care

For nearly 5 years beginning in January 2012, I was the VP of Marketing at [Sprinklr](#).

When I started, the company had 30 people and was valued at \$20 million. Today, there are 1400 employees and the company is valued at over \$1.8 billion.

I was fortunate to work for a great CEO and with many extremely passionate, dedicated, and talented people, and we had a great product. In other words, it was a serious team effort.

The purpose of this document is to share some of the lessons that we learned and used along the way.

The guide is in two sections.

Part 1 is about Marketing Execution.

Part 2 is about Leadership & Operating Principles.

Big-time caveat. Rules can indeed be broken and there are **definite** exceptions to every rule. I just suggest these as the starting or default position.

It is my hope that other start-ups will find this of value.



Jeremy Epstein
CEO, Never Stop Marketing

PART 1: Marketing Execution

“ *Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.* ”

Thomas Edison

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Rule #1: Don't Confuse Activity With Outcomes

Activity feels good. Make a checklist, get the stuff done, check it off. But that's not what you are paid to do.

If your goal is to lose weight, and you say “well, I'm going to the gym every day, but the scale says nothing has changed,” then you are focused on activity, not outcomes.



It's critical to be SUPER CLEAR with yourself - and your team- about what you are trying to accomplish.

[For more on this and a specific example, see this post.](#)

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Rule #2: Define Your Market Before You Do Anything Else

If I had a Bitcoin for every time I've heard someone say, “our market is everyone,” I'd have [real problems with the IRS](#).

Let me make it concrete.

France has over 2,000 miles of coastline, the bulk of it on the Atlantic side.



When the Allies were planning to invade Europe during World War II, they didn't say "let's land everywhere." They figured out the best point to concentrate the bulk of their forces and go from there.

That's exactly what start-ups (which have fewer resources than General Eisenhower had) need to do. Pick a beachhead.

In the very early days, Sprinklr knew we were going after social media managers at Fortune 5000 companies with more than 50 potential users in the next year, more than 5 social channels, and more than 50 tweets per day.

That was it.

If you didn't meet that criteria, we simply said, "sorry, we're not for you," and we moved on.

The clarity of whom you serve (and whom you do not), how, and why is essential.

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Rule #3: Build Your Community of Advocates

While the advertising on the Super Bowl can be funny, emotional, or sexy, don't get caught up in the glitz. You're watching the [Alamo of brand advertising](#) and, unlike the really big guys (or people who don't care about their money as much), you don't have cash to burn.



The fundamental, earth-shaking shift that marketing has undergone in the past ten years is the explosion in the number of channels and the hyper-connectivity among people-anywhere, anytime, for free.

To think that marketing would not change dramatically when the entire structure of modern life has been so upended is insanity.

That's why our entire marketing effort began and focused almost entirely on our natural communities.

As we've all seen during the past election cycle, you're not going to change people's minds.

Key point here: You're going to be far better off finding the people who naturally agree with your worldview and turn them into raving fans than pretty much anything else.

I consider myself a disciple of [Seth Godin](#), having become a fan after hearing him speaking in New York in 1998. All we did was take his various ideas and put them into practice.

He calls this ["First, Ten"](#).

He's not alone though. [Clay Shirky](#) suggests 100 (I fell in love with his [book 9 years ago](#)). Kevin Kelly says it's 1000.

Again, the concept is the same.

All we did was execute against it.

My personal favorite was our events. We did over 100 meet-up style events around the world, hosted by our clients and prospects, in which the presentations were attendee-driven.

For some more concrete ideas of how to cultivate your fans, [here's a free eBook](#).

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Rule #4: Ask Not What Influencers Can Do For You, Ask What You Can Do For Them

If someone asked you for a favor every week for a year, how would YOU feel about them?

Influencers are the [Dexatrim](#) of Marketing.

The thinking goes, "if we can just get the big names in our industry to tweet/post/talk about us, our awareness problem goes out the door."



Of course, every other start-up in the industry is thinking the exact same thing.

So, the “influencers” (what that means is a subject for another article) are bombarded by requests (really, spam) saying “hey, here’s my great product/service, can you just tell everyone about it pretty please, with sugar on top?”

Influencers are people too. They want VALUE. For them, value comes in the form of information, data, and insights about what is happening in the market.

- Can you connect them with customers?
- Can you help them get speaking opportunities or buy their books?
- Can you give them data that they can use in their own presentations so they look smart—and you are the source of their smartness?

First, add value. Then, ask for help.

Do that and you will earn their trust and their recommendations.

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Rule #5: Be Principled in Your Marketing, But Do What’s Necessary To Grow

I’ll admit that -early on- I was a bit too radical in being committed to a 100% [permission-based](#). I learned that sometimes-especially when you are starting out and no one has heard of you- you need to take smart, calculated risks, be a little aggressive, and push your prospects.



It’s difficult to acquire the customers you want on an inbound basis. You, your executives, or a team of Inside Sales types may need to interrupt the lives of your target customers and make them an offer. Don’t be ashamed of that, even if you don’t have permission...yet.

But DO reach out with clear value (for them, not for you). Do it in a conscientious way that treats your prospects like the people that they are.

I call it [“Maya Angelou Marketing.”](#)

“People won’t remember what you say. They won’t remember what you do. They will remember how you make them feel.”

When you interrupt someone, how you make them feel about the interruption (it was worth it or it wasn’t), will determine everything that follows.

A good example is contained in this [post](#). It’s about how we directed our Inside Sales team to do 1:1 outreach.

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Rule #6: Do Creative Outside; Do PR In-House

You’re a technology start-up, not a creative agency. When you have a contract with a creative agency, you will more easily stop yourself from doing all the stupid things you come up with that you would just do if you had creative in-house.



The “Shiny New Object” syndrome is really, especially at start-ups looking to move fast. You protect yourself from questionable creative ideas (and there are many) by putting the costs of paying them as a governor. This creates the natural checks and balances that you need.

Without this built-in protection, you increase risk because you’ll end up burning a lot of time and money on the debatable creative ideas since the resources (namely your employees) are already paid for.

That being said, having a junior designer on staff who is just polishing PowerPoints so your sales guys and execs don’t put up total garbage does pay for itself.

On the flip side, PR agencies are great when you need surges of attention. For big “moments in time” (e.g. funding rounds or major product announcements), call in the reinforcements.

But the real value of PR comes from patience, focused storytelling, and non-transactional, external relationship-building. That's how you climax to a series of great featured articles. You need someone with sustained attention and loyalty to your company. Plus, it's almost always way cheaper.

Bottom line: in the very early stages, particularly in a disruptive market, you're going to pay an agency a ton to educate them. The ROI isn't there.

Key caveat: every now and then, you find an agency that REALLY gets an industry but they are few and very far between.

If you want to get super-technical, this is an extension on Coase's [Nature of the Firm](#).

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Rule #7: Don't Spend Too Much Money on Tech, But Do Over-Invest in Quality Prospect And Client Data

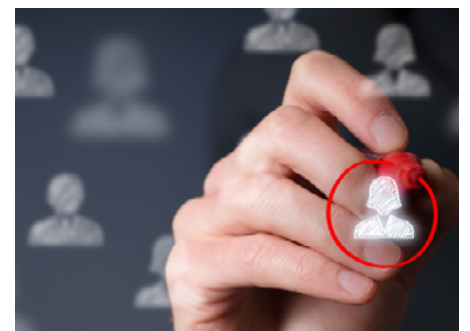
This is simply a build on “garbage in, garbage out.” It's far better to have a low-cost tech solution when you are starting out and spend more on getting your data and operations right than going big on a product.

If your client and prospect databases are poor, it will hurt you every single day and on every single campaign. The earlier you clean those up, the better.

As you improve your data and operations, then you can invest in your technology stack to optimize.

[Sprinklr](#), ironically, was on the other side of this equation.

Sprinklr was (and is) an enterprise-focused solution. So, even though we were built for large companies, when many of them were just getting their feet wet in social media, they opted for a cheaper, less robust solution like Hootsuite or Spredfast.



Once they were ready to get out of the kiddie pool and really compete in the realms of social marketing and customer experience at the Director, VP, and C-suite level, large brands would come to us.

Do that and you will earn their trust and their recommendations.

First, add value. Then, ask for help.

PART 2: Operating Principles

To [paraphrase](#) Yogi Berra,

“90% of all marketing is execution, the other half is all mental.”

These are the guidelines by which I tried to lead the department.

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Rule #8: No Lead Left Behind

I learned this from my former boss at Microsoft, [Christine Zmuda](#). As a marketer, you work hard to create net new leads, so you can nurture them and generate demand for the sales team.

It's a damn shame when you do an activity (an event, a content marketing piece, whatever) and you don't track everything religiously.

You and every one on your team should be **obsessed** with knowing exactly where every single lead is always.



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Rule #9: Leave It All on The Field

Some people confuse this with “Go Big or Go Home.” It’s not the same thing.

If you are going to do something, you can’t do a half-assed job. You do it as best you can given the time frame you have and don’t “phone it in.”



But, as a leader, how you approach each task models the behavior that you will get from others.

Which is connected to...

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Rule #10: Don’t let the Perfect be the Enemy of the Good...

or the corollary from Steve Jobs “**Real Artists Ship.**”

Your job is to put items in market. You must be sensitive to the needs of the company and larger market trends. Respect your brand yes, but you can’t wait and dilly dally forever.

“Ship it!”



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Rule #11: Make Little Bets

You can [read the book](#) as well. You continually test and iterate, test and iterate. As things work, you operationalize them and then make additional little bets on top of them.



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Rule #12: [Commander's Intent](#)

I had the privilege of spending [24 hours on the USS Carl Vinson](#) where this mantra was drilled into my head.

As a leader, your role is not to tell people how to do their jobs or, even, necessarily what to do (you can coach them.) Your job is to clearly articulate what you are trying to accomplish.

“What is the desired outcome?”

If you do that, your team will find new ways to achieve it when the original plan fails (which it will most likely), as [von Clausewitz wrote](#): “no plan survives first contact with the enemy.”



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Rule #13: Communicate the Strategy

Write your strategy statement. Use the framework in [this article](#). Make sure everyone knows it.

You will know if you are failing by doing an occasional pop quiz on your team. Ask them “what’s our strategy statement?” Have them write it down for you right there. If everyone doesn’t write the same thing, you’re not doing your job.



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Rule #14: [Never Stop Marketing](#)

It’s obvious, but it’s not.

There are times when you need to slow down, plan, regroup, but you should never bring the efforts to a complete standstill. The car must keep on going as it takes a lot more energy to get going from a cold start. Many people make this mistake. Please don’t.



Conclusion

As a history major, I believe that history is one of the cheapest ways to learn from the mistakes of others.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it might get you going in the right direction, save you a lot time, money, and headaches and free you up to make other errors.

Good luck and...[Never Stop Marketing!](#)

About Never Stop Marketing

[Never Stop Marketing](#) helps the CEOs of Series A and Series B technology companies accelerate market awareness, perception, and growth– with less risk.

Relying on a tested and proven methodology for the era of connected and empowered customers known as “Community Driven Marketing,” CEOs looking for high-growth will:

- gain assistance in strategy and execution from a seasoned senior marketing executive
- improve their positioning and messaging
- understand how to leverage natural communities and word-of-mouth to drive cost-effective results
- prepare their marketing organization to scale

Never Stop Marketing works on a fixed-fee basis to minimize risks, and receives partial compensation in company equity, so your interests and ours are aligned.

To find out more, www.neverstopmarketing.com

About the author, Jeremy Epstein



Jeremy Epstein, CEO of [Never Stop Marketing](#), has 20 years of international marketing experience in helping to bring innovative technologies into the mainstream. Most recently, Jeremy was VP, Marketing at [Sprinklr](#) which grew from a \$20 million valuation and 30 people to \$1.3 billion valuation and 900 people in 3 years.

Previous work experience includes Microsoft and consulting to start-ups, mid-market firms, and enterprises, including JNJ, Yes To Carrots, and two NY

Times best-selling authors (Dan Pink and Gretchen Rubin). Jeremy also spent 3 years living and working in Frankfurt, Germany and Tokyo, Japan.

Jeremy is the author of numerous whitepapers and a book, appropriately titled “[It's ALL on the Blog, DON'T Buy the Book](#)”, and has presented to hundreds of audiences in 15 countries. Jeremy has been the top-ranked speaker at multiple conferences including Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conferences and Microsoft CIO summit, among others.

Jeremy currently works with some of the leading and most innovative companies in the blockchain/decentralization space including OB1/OpenBazaar, and Storj. He also facilitates the Decentralized Marketing Network, a peer-to-peer network for start-ups looking to disrupt major industries. In December of 2016, he edited and published a collaborative eBook with 33 of the biggest influencers and thought-leaders called “[Blockchains in the Mainstream: When Will Everyone Else Know?](#)”

Jeremy takes great joy in being an early adopter of new technologies, celebrating the victories (like buying Bitcoin at \$80) and the defeats (too many to list) equally.

Described by more than one client as a “shot of marketing espresso,” Jeremy discovered his calling for marketing while living in Tokyo in 1997 after reading Peppers and Rodgers «The 1:1 Future» and hasn't looked back since.

Jeremy was a History major at Johns Hopkins, a skill which he wholeheartedly believes prepared him for the marketing profession.

By far, the toughest and most rewarding job he has is to be a kind, thoughtful, and sensitive husband to his wife of 16 years and a patient father of 3 kids on the precipice of being teenagers.

You can connect via [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) or email Jeremy@neverstopmarketing.com

Dedication

A big thank you to [Brian Kotlyar, AVP of Marketing](#) at [Sprinklr](#) for much inspiration, assistance, and refinement of these ideas and this guide.