

10 Ways to “Recession-Proof” Your Business*

* from *Marketing Made Simple* by Donald Miller and Dr. J.J. Peterson



Building a successful business is tough even when the economy is booming.

What about during a pandemic? How are you supposed to stay afloat? How do you steer your business through a global recession?

Since no one knows what the economy will look like in six weeks or six months, let's focus on a business reality no one disputes:

To survive in ANY business climate, you need marketing that works.

Now more than ever you need a clear message that resonates with customers. **This isn't the time to practice "random acts of advertising."** As the economy reopens, the last thing you want is a confusing website that doesn't generate leads or forgettable emails that don't get opened.



You need a marketing plan that results in sales.

Ironically, in March—the same week government leaders began issuing shelter-in-place orders—Donald Miller, author and CEO of StoryBrand, released his new book, *Marketing Made Simple*.

A terrible time to try to launch a book, right?

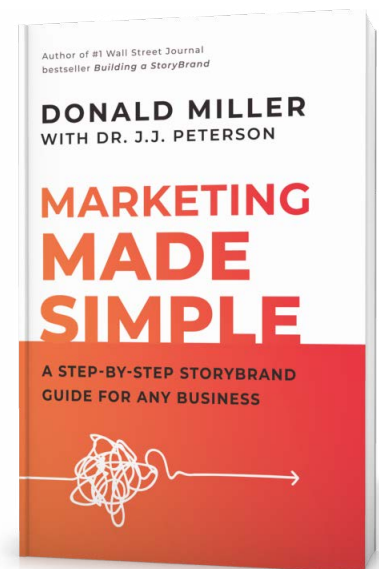
Or maybe *perfect timing*.

Marketing Made Simple is the anticipated sequel to Miller's 2017 bestseller *Building a Story Brand*.

The first book explained how critical it is for businesses to clarify their message. The new book takes that idea a step further, giving companies a practical, five-part plan for communicating their message to customers.

Marketing Made Simple is packed with great insights. (In fact, I recommend you [order it](#) today and read it ASAP.) In the meantime, while you're waiting, here's a taste of the book's marketing wisdom.

Let's call this mini-review: *10 Ways to 'Recession-Proof' Your Business*.



1 | Tap into the power of storytelling.

Repeating the big idea of *Building a StoryBrand*, Donald Miller (and co-author Dr. J. J. Peterson), remind readers:

What your customer really wants
is to be invited into a story.

(Marketing Make Simple, p.99)

That's not news.

“Story” is all the rage right now in marketing. **However, “story-driven” messaging *doesn't* mean what most people think it means.** The authors are quick to remind business owners and marketing directors to...



Tell the story of your customers, NOT the story of your business.

“Most businesses,” the authors note, “make the enormous mistake of telling their story to their customers....Customers are not interested in your story. They are, rather, interested in being invited into a story that has them surviving and winning in the end.” (p.12)

It's true. **Customers don't give a hoot about the hobbies of your employees.** And they didn't click over to your website to learn the history of your business. **What are they looking for? Help in overcoming a problem!**

Those who realize the epic story of life is not about them but actually about the people around them somehow win in the end.

It's counterintuitive, but it's true.

(Marketing Make Simple, p.77)

Therefore Miller and Peterson conclude,

If you want customers to take the next step in a relationship with your brand, you need to enlighten them about how you can solve their problem and help them survive.

(Marketing Make Simple,13)

A third business-saving tip...

3 | Be clear.

We can always count on StoryBrand to hammer away at the importance of clarity. Sure enough, in *Marketing Made Simple*, Miller and Peterson plead,

“Don’t be cute, be clear. Simplify your message and repeat it over and over using the same language and customers will finally figure out where you fit in their lives.” (p.27)

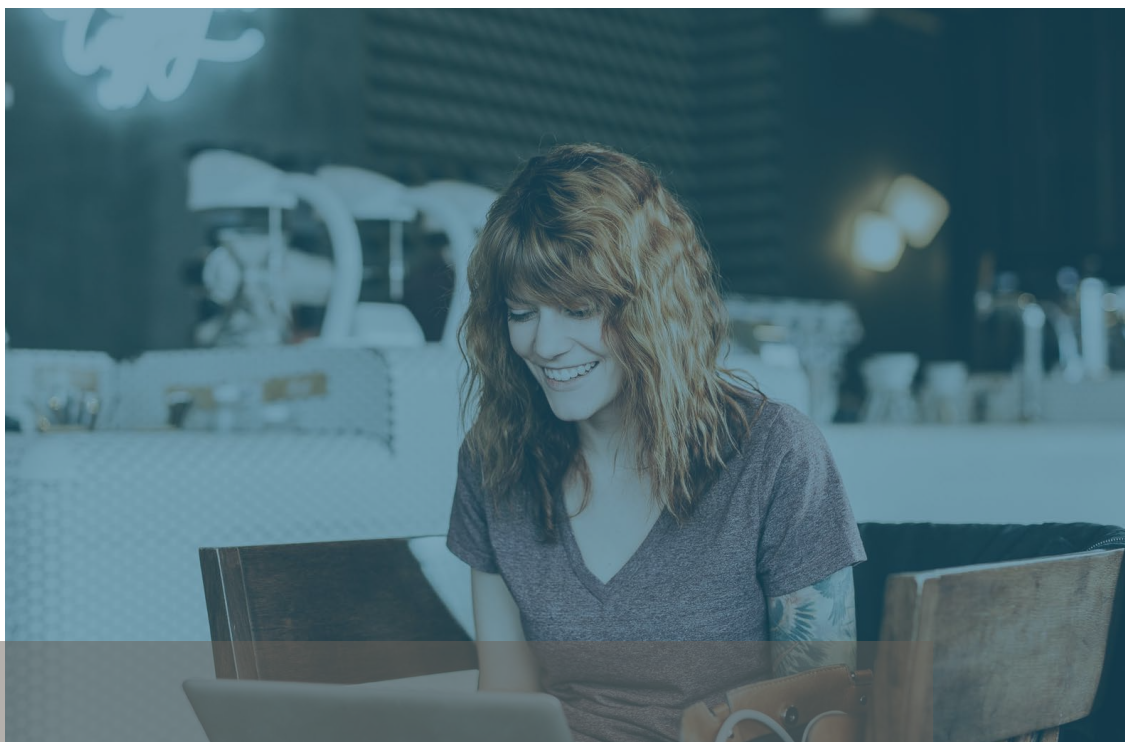
Clarity sells, while cute and clever confuse.

(*Marketing Made Simple*, p.44)

“The word *creative* is often just confusion in disguise.” (p.175)

Of course, if you can be clever and/or creative *while* being clear, great. Otherwise, **always stick with clear.**

The fourth way to “recession-proof” your business?



4 | Be memorable.

Why are we subjected to at least 15 Geico commercials a day reminding us that, “15 minutes could save you 15% on car insurance”? Because, the authors note, successful companies know:

Good marketing is an exercise in memorization.

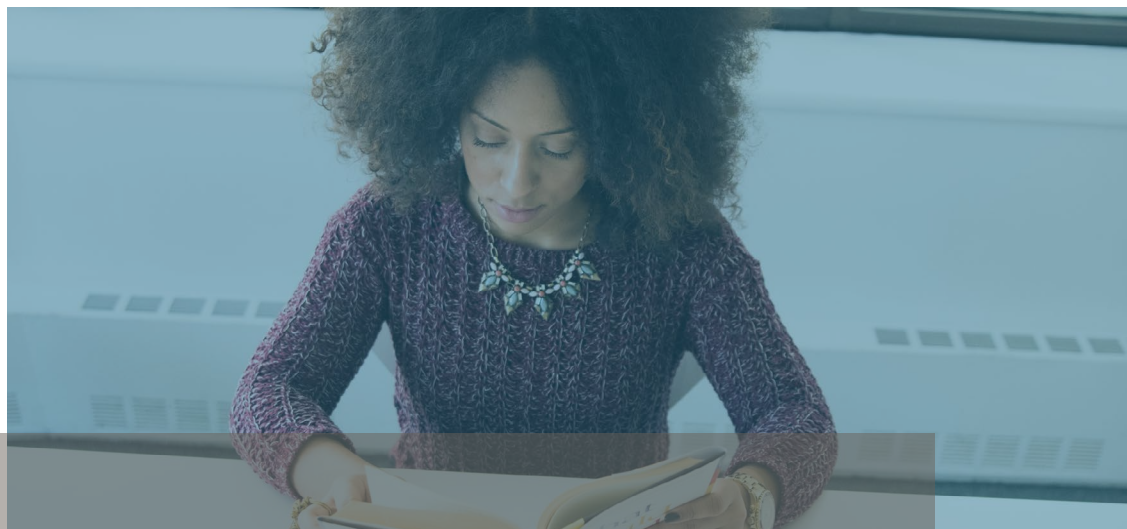
(Marketing Made Simple, p.25)

Being memorable, they explain, “means you have to speak in clear, simple language. And that language needs to tell people how you can help them survive.” (p.59)

If you do this consistently, then after customers have “memorized your talking points, you will take up valuable real estate in their brains.” (p.26)

This is huge. Why? Because when they’re *finally* ready to plunk down their hard-earned cash, they’ll think of you!

These first four tips are valuable marketing reminders, but they’re not the primary emphasis of *Marketing Made Simple*. The goal of the book is to convince readers to...



5 | Create a sales funnel.

The book begins with this bold assertion. “The easiest and best marketing plan starts with a sales funnel.” (p.vii)

The authors argue that **a simple sales funnel is the most natural way to build a relationship with customers.** They cite how this approach has worked and is *working* (as you read this sentence) for thousands of small, medium, and large size companies.

So, what marketing tools combine to create the most effective sales funnels? Miller and Peterson list five:

- ✓ A one-liner
- ✓ A website or landing page
- ✓ A lead-generating PDF
- ✓ An email **nurture** campaign
- ✓ An email **sales** campaign

Then they provide clear, step-by-step instructions for creating each of these tools. Let’s look at them quickly, one-by-one.

To grow your business (especially during a recession), you need to...



6

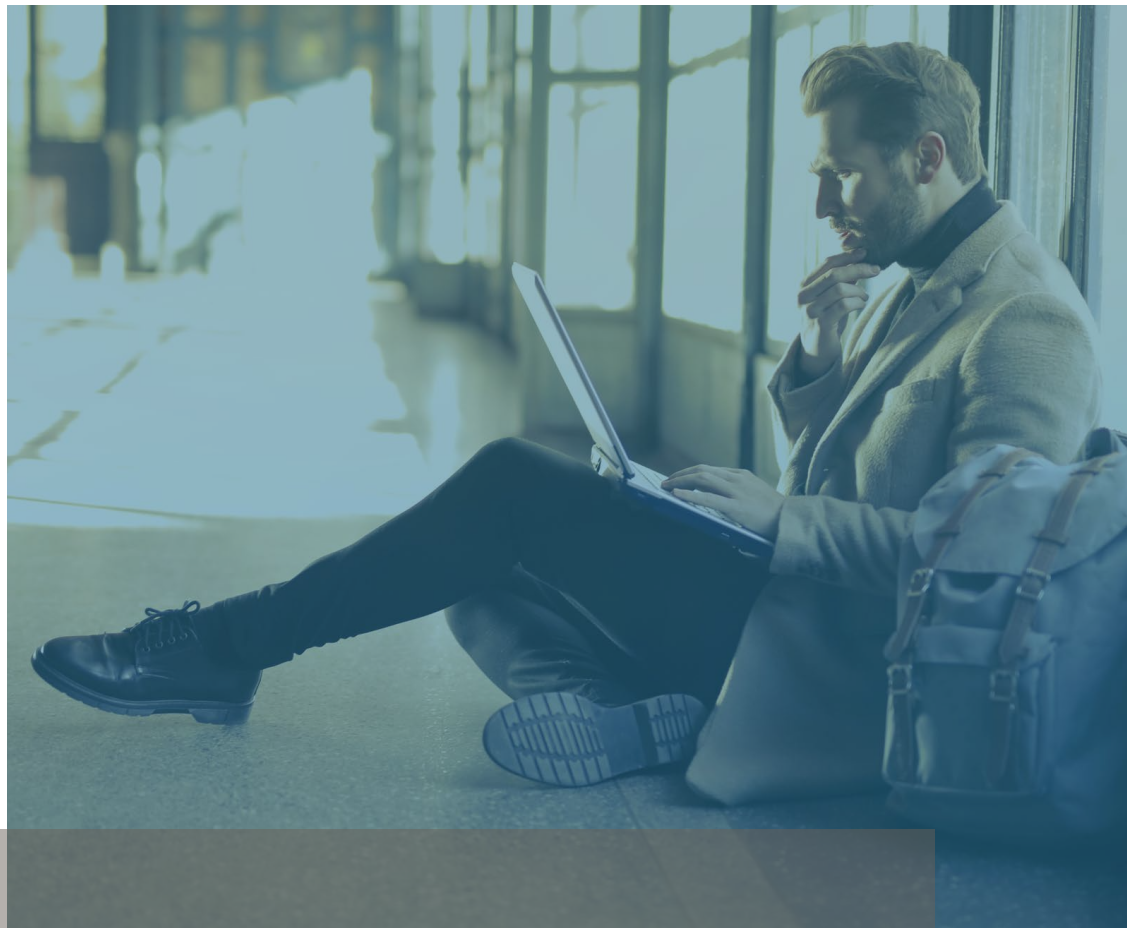
Come up with a one-liner.

A one-liner is a concise ‘description of the story you are inviting people to experience.’ Miller and Peterson argue this is a sure-fire way “to make customers curious about your brand. A one-liner makes people lean in rather than tune out” (p.37)

The most powerful tool any of us can use to magically open doors is a one-liner.

(Marketing Made Simple, p.37)

After showing a simple formula for creating a memorable one-liner, the authors talk next about the need to...



When you start using your intriguing one-liner, curious customers will begin looking for you online. That means you can't afford to screw up your web presence. Sadly, many companies do just that.

"The biggest mistake clients make when it comes to websites," Miller and Peterson say, "Is making them too complicated. Most businesses need a website that serves a single purpose: It creates sales.... **Your website should be a sales machine.**" (p.54)

The authors remind readers: "**Your website is not a place for you to celebrate yourself.** Your website is a place where you sell your customer a product that solves their problem and makes their lives better." (p.55)

Remember, words on a website sell products.
It's great if the site is beautiful, but without
the right words, the site won't sell anything.

(Marketing Made Simple, p.56)

To those curious about what needs to go on an effective website, the authors write, "**There are nine sections of a website that we've seen increase sales time and time again.** Each of these sections are like hooks in the pond: the more of them you include, the more fish you will catch." (p.57)

Those nine "hooks" are described in too much detail to discuss here. Let's just say that Cyberspace would be a better place if each company and every web developer would read this one chapter.

After creating your new one liner and website, it's vital that you...

Design a good lead generator.

A lead generator is a free asset (e.g., a downloadable PDF, a series of videos, etc.) you offer potential clients in exchange for their email address. **A lead generator is valuable because it piques curiosity, offers value, and establishes your authority.** Here's how the authors describe this gradual sales process:

“Think of the one-liner as the first introduction to somebody and your website as the first, second, and third date. Your lead generator, then, is going to be the first time your customer actually commits.... While giving you their email address is not a financial commitment, don't be fooled. It's still a very big commitment.” (p.114)

What should you put in a lead generator? Any valuable information, tips, or expertise that will position you as a guide and help your customers solve a problem.

Lead-generating PDF's do not have to be complicated...you should be able to create an effective lead generator in a long weekend.

The key is not to overthink it.

(Marketing Made Simple, p.118)

These pieces of marketing collateral are so vital, the authors urge readers: “Never stop thinking about lead generators. **You should probably spend about as much time thinking of lead generators as you do creating products.** Why? Because without them you probably aren't going to sell many products anyway.” (p.127)

After that, Miller and Peterson encourage business leaders to...

“But email marketing doesn’t work!”

While it’s absolutely true that *bad* email marketing doesn’t work, *good* email marketing works wonders! In fact, email marketing is a relatively easy way to grow your business! The authors’ thoughts on this subject alone are worth the price of the book. A sampling:

“If somebody gave you their email address, they are expecting you to email them. You got those digits, now follow through!” (p.137)

“The absolute best way to stay in a relationship with a customer is to email them. Depending on the kind of email campaign you are creating, you will continue piquing their curiosity, further enlighten them, and call them to action.” (p.20)

If you’re not emailing your customers at least once each week, you’re missing out. And worse than missing out, you’re being forgotten.”

(Marketing Made Simple, p.158)

“People buy when they’re ready to purchase, not when you’re ready to sell....you are most likely to close the deal if you are around when they’re ready to buy....**It’s absolutely essential that you are emailing your list consistently with valuable content.**” (p.142, 143)

And speaking of closing deals, that’s the tenth tip for making your business “recession-proof.” You’ve got to...

An effective sales funnel ends—where else? With a sale!

However, people won't buy unless and until you ask them to buy.

Not having a clear call to action is the equivalent of telling customers you don't really believe in your product and don't think that product can solve their problems and change their lives.

(Marketing Made Simple, p.63)

The authors point out that if you've been emailing your customers regularly, they're wondering "where this relationship is going." They're looking for some kind of offer to accept or reject. "By putting yourself out there and asking for the sale, **you are going to be rejected quite a bit. But you are also going to be taken up on your offer.** There is a name for businesspeople who fear rejection. We call them broke." (p.160-61)



Marketing Made Simple offers a proven, doable plan for building relationships with customers in which everybody wins.

They get the products or services they need to solve a problem. You get the revenue you need to keep your doors open—**even in a global recession.**

The book’s message summed up?

Marketing should not be complicated, and it should work.

“It is wrong,” the authors declare, “for a marketing company to charge you money and fail to get you a return on your investment. It’s an equal injustice that you, personally, would spend your time on an effort that does not pay you for your work. Your time is too valuable for that.” (ix)

You do not have to struggle with marketing.
You can be confident, proud, and see a return.
If you execute the plan that is in this book,
you will succeed. (6)

If you’re worried about how you’re going to steer your business through all this global uncertainty, I suggest you:

- ✓ Get [Marketing Made Simple](#).
- ✓ Read it.
- ✓ Do what it says.

And if in the process of completing step 3, you find you need some help, [schedule a call](#). As a StoryBrand Certified Guide, I’m trained and ready to help you implement everything the book recommends.

There’s no question we are living in—to borrow a tiresome phrase—“unprecedented times.” But maybe that just means with better, smarter marketing, your business can be poised for unprecedented growth?

Len Woods *StoryBrand Certified Guide & Copywriter*
lenwoods@gmail.com

A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a light-colored blazer, sitting at a desk. They are holding a blue pen and writing in a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook is open, and there are several sheets of paper on the desk. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window with blinds. The overall lighting is soft and professional.

1

Get in Touch

When you schedule a call, we'll spend 30 minutes talking about the unique challenges your business is facing and discuss solutions.

2

Get Better Words

Based on your specific needs and budget, I'll help you hone your brand message and create marketing collateral tailored uniquely for your business.

3

Get More Business

With messaging that gets attention *and* results, you'll be free to focus on serving more customers and growing your business!