

CHOOSE ONE QUARTERBACK TO CALL YOUR MARKETING PLAYS

by Trey Ryder

Sole practitioners and small-firm lawyers have a major advantage over other lawyers: They can often make powerful marketing decisions without delay.

This doesn't mean larger firms can't. But larger firms have one inherent disadvantage: In many cases, lots of people want to be involved in the marketing decisions.

THE QUALITY OF A MARKETING DECISION is based on (1) the time it takes to decide, and (2) how much the result has been watered down by compromise. Here's how to calculate the quality of a marketing decision.

TIME REQUIRED: Take the square of the number of people involved.

DILUTION: Subtract 20 percent for each participant after the first.

For example, when two people make the decision, it will take four times as long to make and will be only 80% as good. When three people make the decision, it will take nine times as long to make and will be only 60% as good.

David Ogilvy, founder of mega-ad-agency Ogilvy and Mather, related this story: David walked into a room of 12 executives who were reviewing marketing proposals. The chairman told Ogilvy he would have 15 minutes to make his presentation. When he heard the bell, he was to stop.

Ogilvy said, "Sir, before I begin, please tell me how many of you will be involved in making the marketing decisions."

"All 12 of us," came the reply.

Ogilvy requested, "Please, sir, ring the bell," and he left the room.

Marketing is like football. The quarterback makes a decision, sees how far the team advances, makes another decision, then reviews the team's progress. Decisions can be made quickly because they are made by only one person. Can you imagine how long it would take if the entire football team offered input and then everyone had to agree before they could make the next play?

If you aren't happy with your marketing quarterback, choose someone else. But don't fall into the trap of allowing more than one person to call the plays.

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