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## Merenda's Marketing Tip: Delay Gratification

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A crucial concept in marketing (as is in life) is that of delayed gratification.

Stick with me for a moment through a general discussion of this behavior, and it will become obvious how it applies to your marketing.

The ability to wait for rewards is a classic characteristic of anyone who is going to be successful. In fact, psychologists have identified this ability as the key indicator of a child's future success. Because rewards do not always come instantly, people who learn to work hard, or invest their time and wait for payment, recognition, or some other form of "gratification" are the ones who will achieve the most in life.

Often, of course, the longer the delay, the greater the reward. A worker who spends the day's pay getting too drunk to return to work the next day will never become a doctor or lawyer.

The opposite is the need for instant gratification, which is practically a definition of immaturity. I-want-what-I-want-and-I-want-it-now behavior is normal in a baby, typical of many young children, and dangerous in adults. At its extreme, it results in all kinds of criminal behavior. "I don't want to work, and wait to save money, so I think I'll steal it."

And, of course, there are legions who profit from this immaturity, including people who sell magic diet pills, lottery tickets, expensive golf equipment, and phony university degrees. Those who market these things know that their customers hope to buy the reward they are unwilling to work and wait for.

What has all this to do with your marketing?

Many attorneys approach their marketing programs with exactly this level of impatience, not to say immaturity.

They are not committed. They are not willing to work. They are not willing to invest or risk their dollars. They are not willing to wait. They want a marketing program that will hit a "home run" right away. They want to hit the marketing lottery and they are disappointed with anything less.

And of course, there are lots of marketing firms that are only too willing to prey on this weakness. They sell "systems" that are "guaranteed" to make you thousands, if not millions. They push direct mail programs with "free" mailing lists, and "seminars in a box" and programs that promise to double your revenue in three months.

Do any of these programs work? To some extent, yes. Are they appropriate for some people? Absolutely. Almost any marketing is good for your business, and as Woody Allen points out, 90 percent of success in life consists of simply showing up.

Marketing works! That's the good news. The other news — perhaps not so pleasant if you lack the maturity required for delayed gratification — is that marketing works the same way everything else works, by application of consistent effort yielding eventual results.

In my own business, it is not unusual at all for an attorney to become our client two years after our first meeting. It is highly unusual, on the other hand, for a prospective client to say "Wait right here while I go get the check."

If you think of the marketing-sales process as a pipeline, it becomes obvious that in order to make sales come out at one end of the pipeline (the one that spills out money), you have to stuff the entry to the pipeline. Some prospects will travel that pipeline faster than others of course, but they still must make the journey.

Those who have the maturity, patience, commitment, and character to wait for the prospects to become clients will see a great reward. The others will say, after a suitably brief period, "This doesn't work!" Then they will quit marketing or buy into the next get-rich-quick marketing plan.

If you are one of those who understands delayed gratification, realize this: Once you have the pipeline running, and you are realizing steady rewards, you must never, ever stop your marketing efforts. When you stop, or even pause, what happens? You create gaps in the pipeline, gaps that will eventually result in a bad month, or a bad year.

There are many people, of course, who can be patient and persistent if there is a guaranteed reward. In this life, however, there are only two certainties and you know what those are.

It takes much more intestinal fortitude to proceed and persist when the reward is certain, but not guaranteed. Those who can do it are the marketers, and they shall inherit the earth. The others will inherit the wind.

*Author Mark Merenda founded Smart Marketing in 1994. Since that time he has built it into one of the country's premier marketing firms for financial professionals. ElderLawAnswers members and site visitors receive a 33 percent discount on personalized marketing consulting. For more, [click here](#). Mr. Merenda can be contacted by telephone at (239) 403-7755 or by email: [mark@smartmarketingnow.com](mailto:mark@smartmarketingnow.com). The company's Web site is [www.smartmarketingnow.com](http://www.smartmarketingnow.com)*

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