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The Guerilla Marketer's 10-Round Ammo Clip

"Guerilla Marketing" claims more than one definition. But for our purposes here, unlike "conventional" marketing, let's say that "guerrilla" practices:

- are off the beaten path
- jump out at you when you might be least suspecting, just like the guerilla warrior
- are typically less costly
- might not make it into the first few chapters of a classic textbook on marketing
- allow the small-to-medium competitor to level the playing field against the big-bucks/deep-pockets marketing bullies.

It would be great, wouldn't it, to organize these guerilla practices into business categories and channels of distribution? But, there isn't enough space available here and, besides, such tidy arrangements don't fit the guerilla spirit, do they? So, category and channel aside, here's some ammo in case you find some day you need to "go guerilla":

1. "The Toss"

I met a car salesman once who said he never missed a high school football game in his community - Friday night or Saturday. He'd sit in the bleachers, his heavy weather coat pockets stuffed with business cards. After every score, no matter which side cheered, he'd toss two handfuls of his cards up in the air, confetti-style, spreading the word about his name and business. I love that guy! This is community-level guerilla marketing in a simple yet theatrical way.

2. "The Magnet"

Speaking of cars, if you use your car as part of your business, especially where delivery or service are



by Peter Cronk,
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concerned, the magnetic pliable sign, attached to the car doors, both driver and passenger side, is an effective, yet relatively inexpensive way to convey reminders of your business identity at the point of contact. Quick-print shops and ad specialty houses are good sources. A more costly but popular alternative is "the Wrap"—wrapping your message in full-color vinyl around your car, truck, even busses. The Wrap turns any vehicle into a mobile billboard.

3. "Burma Shave" Signs

Still out on the road, taking aim at the driving public, there is an opportunity for the guerilla marketer to emulate the great technique of the Burma Shave(r)

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shaving cream signs. That is, small road sign billboards (really yardstick-sized horizontal signs on tomato stakes) in serial fashion, delivering a limerick, or other memorable multi-part message about a product or service. I saw a major discount store chain deliver reminders about a clearance sale at their local outlet via this technique at on and off-ramps to the major traffic artery in its community. Drivers travel these ramps at slow enough speeds to read these messages. They're smaller, more intimate, and much less costly than traditional billboard advertising. And unexpected, in the true guerilla spirit.

4. The Indoor Billboard

Taking a cue from conventional marketers and their large-format outdoor advertising aimed at automotive traffic, some smaller organizations, wishing to communicate with their employees in unconventional ways, put the "indoor billboard" to work. These messages are located in hallways, in employee lounges, in thoroughfares of factory or warehouse, any place where employees move or congregate. Sometimes the message is workplace safety. Sometimes it's a reminder of employee benefits. Or any message that's near and dear to the employer. No matter, it's an easy-to-use, relatively inexpensive employee communications tool.

5. In the Rest Room

Working with what you'd have to call a "captive audience," a variation on the Indoor Billboard is a message placed in the restroom. A local utility company used strategically placed signage in its employee restrooms to remind its workforce of key topics/issues important in that workplace. And, I've seen restaurateurs use the rest room as a place in which to remind patrons about menu items, beverage specials and upcoming entertainment offerings, too.

6. At the Workstation

One of my favorite guerilla devices is an ad specialty item placed on the workstation desktop. Showing off your company name and other "call-to-action" information, this weighted plastic accessory is intended as a reference document holder for the worker at the computer. But it also doubles as a "cable caddy" for laptop users who are plugging/unplugging cables at both ends of the workday. All the while, your message is there at the workstation, where there is a singular environment for sending/receiving messages.

7. The Sandwich Board

At the special event, or wherever there's a crowd, you have a splendid opportunity to remind passersby of who you are and what you do. And, sometimes, in this free-for-all atmosphere, the guerilla marketer is truly in his/her element! The itinerant "sandwich board," i.e. the human-borne, A-frame panels, fore and aft, and connected by shoulder straps, conveys your reminder to the crowd. "Eat at Joe's Place" is how this venerable message technique is most often recalled in the cartoons. But the sandwich board is a tool which can bring your message to where the crowd is (kind of a poor man's Piper Cub aircraft, trailing an "Eat at Joe's Place" banner in front of the beach and the army of swimmer/sunbathers found there). I have seen business-to-business marketers use the Sandwich Board at trade shows to drum up visitors for their exhibits.

8. The Hand-Controlled Blimp

You've seen these miniature helium-inflated, remote-controlled aircraft at sporting events (a poor man's Goodyear Blimp). You can get them at Radio Shack, or via mail order catalogs. And you have to add your own custom identity to the "inflatable." But, again, at

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special events, or wherever there is a crowd, these devices give you a means to grab attention in a novel and memorable way.

9. The "Leveler"

The Web, they say, is the great "leveler" among business competitors, enabling a small-to-medium-size business to come across as the equal of the much larger companies in its category. That is true, to a degree. But, we have seen enough poor Webmanship among companies large and small to make this comparison less valid - and less valuable - than it should be. The greatest leveler, in the next five years, it says here, will be the videophone. Long a vision of science fiction, but still to be delivered by the telecommunications industry, the videophone will allow the smallest company to come across just as well as the largest company. "Stage presence" and sense of theatre will determine who does, and who does not, impress the listener/viewer as professional and authoritative and trustworthy on this small screen). So, guerilla warriors, get thee to a mirror, and be ready for the videophone revolution that will enable you to out-finesse your clumsy, self-conscious and not-ready-for-prime-time competitors! (A New Age of Personal Grooming may dawn as well.)

10. The In-person Visit

Perhaps the guerilla marketer's most lethal weapon is the good old fashioned, in-person, in-the-flesh, up-close-and-personal sales call!

In today's wired age of doing business from a distance, the failure of salespeople to "press the flesh" with the customer may be the biggest sin of all. Remember the old United Airlines TV commercial where the world-weary manager enters the conference room to report that a longtime client just fired the company, and announces, "People, from now on things are going to be different"? He then distributes airline tickets all the way around the table, exhorting his comrades to restore the personal contact to their business relationships. I have always wondered, in this day of distance-marketing, why that airline did not "dust off" that commercial to revive business air travel. Turns out a competing airline did just "dust off" that idea. In their TV spot, a business team is gathered 'round the conference room table and one of them is unable to reach Gridley to plug him in to the meeting via teleconference. That's because Gridley has jetted into town that morning, and, at that very minute, he is walking through the conference room door to join his teammates "live" and "real-time." What an odd way of doing business! And what a fearsome weapon for the guerilla marketer!

For further study: *Guerilla Marketing, Secrets for Making Big Profits from Your Small Business*, Jay Conrad Levinson, Houghton Mifflin.

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