



Trust your gut, but verify

Thursday, January 26, 2023 06:00 AM EDT
By [Deborah Daily](#), Co-founder & President, Buckaroo Marketing | New Media



A famous man quoted the Russian proverb, “Doveryai no Proveryai.” Translated it means trust but verify. Experience has taught me that’s a sound piece of advice for business leaders, too.

I say that after dealing with countless business owners who have said “I trust my gut” when making important decisions about marketing or other strategies. What we refer to as “gut feelings” are really the instincts we develop based upon our experiences. I’m sure you’ve had the experience of meeting someone or considering a business deal and felt all sorts of alarm bells warning you something wasn’t quite right. We credit our guts because that’s where we often feel that anxiety.

Much of the time, those warnings from our gut are on target. Most business owners (myself included) can recall situations in which ignoring those gut feelings led to regret. Maybe it was an interview with a candidate who had a great resume but turned out to be a lousy hire. Perhaps it was an equipment purchase that quickly generated buyer’s remorse. It could have been an estimate that came back to bite you.

It’s good to pay attention to what your gut tells you, but when you ignore information that conflicts with your gut, you’re less likely to succeed. When you base critically important strategies solely on what seems to be the right course of action, you haven’t thought them through.

When we meet with a prospective client for the first time, one of our first questions is about their current marketing activities. We ask what they’re doing, why they chose that approach, and how well it’s working for them. I never cease to be amazed at how many companies invest a substantial amount of money into specific marketing channels not because of any proven facts, but because their gut tells them it’s the right thing to do.

Even more disquieting are the typical responses to “How’s it working for you?” Most of the time, we hear answers like “I guess it’s doing okay” or “it seems to be working” or “who knows?”

Rarely does a prospect reply with something like, “We received 42 percent more sales leads through this approach than what we’ve been using, and on average, we’re able to turn 10 percent of those leads into sales.” A response like that tells me that company is proactive, because they’re not simply guessing about what to do. More important, they’re paying attention to how strategies perform, so they can adjust their efforts to become more effective.

Another common example of putting too much faith in one’s assumptions involves knowledge about business competitors. On multiple occasions, I’ve heard company leaders describe who their competitors. After we performed some due diligence, we uncovered long lists of other competitors of whom they were unaware, or just didn’t realize a company they knew about competed with them at some level. “Oh, I didn’t know they did that!” Without a clear understanding of your company’s competition, how can you conduct accurate planning or know how to differentiate your business?

All this doesn’t mean there isn’t value in trusting one’s gut. I’ve had the pleasure of working with companies who had a gut feeling that a particular strategy would be a good approach, and it turned out to be true. For example, they may have noticed another vertical that was similar to their primary target and thought it was worth exploring. But they didn’t simply get a gut feeling and pour money into it. Instead, their gut feeling encouraged them to ask important questions and triggered serious research. They didn’t make a business decision until they had enough evidence to make that decision with confidence.

Marketing and advertising may not be brain surgery, but science is the foundation. Marketing professionals know what works and generally understand why it works. That’s a key element of the value we bring to the process. We recommend strategies based upon proven performance, not because our gut is telling us Approach A makes more sense than Approach B.

I would never suggest you should ignore those gut feelings and the lessons you’ve learned along the way. But when you’re tempted to make an important decision based solely on what your gut is telling you, take heed and spend the time to verify your gut isn’t misleading you (or it’s really reacting to what you had for lunch).

Deborah Daily is co-owner of Buckaroo Marketing | New Media, a Fishers-based advertising agency established in 1999. She can be reached at dldaily@gobuckaroo.com.

MOST POPULAR STORIES

- Options for charitable giving
- National tech layoffs could create opportunity in Indiana
- City of Aurora suing insurer for coverage after paying more than \$233K to fraudster
- Spherion Staffing opens Jeffersonville office
- IUPUI awarded \$2M grant for biomedical training program
- Sassy Sauce seeing steady success

PERSPECTIVES




Options for charitable giving

Philanthropic giving by Americans in 2021 totaled nearly \$485 billion! Of that amount, individuals like you gave 67% or \$327 billion. Question: Are you using the best strategy and getting the most “bang for the buck” when donating to your favorite charity?...

EVENTS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Doing More With Less: Maximizing Your Business's Resources


 Feb 21 @ 8:30am

We've all heard the phrase "less is more," but when it comes to business, how do we put this into practice? At "Doing More With Less,"...

[View Full Calendar](#) [Submit An Event \\$25](#)

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27

2023 Indiana Safety and Health Conference & Expo

 Feb 27 — Wed Mar 1





OUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS.

[Learn More >>](#)





Inside Indiana Business
A division of IBJ Media

1 Monument Circle, Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46204

PHONE: (317) 634-6200

FAX: (317) 263-5060

NEWSLETTER@IBJNEWS.COM