

9<sup>TH</sup> COMMANDMENT

# Integrate, Don't Specialize.

As our individual universes get more complex we, as a society, have leaned further and further in the direction of specialization to solve our problems. This approach permeates virtually every aspect of our lives.

If you have a pain in the big toe of your right foot, you go to a doctor who specializes in the big toe of the right foot. Not the left foot, the right. Does your child have trouble reading? Let's get him a tutor for reading. Are your product sales lagging? Better hire an ad agency — specifically one that has experience promoting the exact widget you sell. It all sounds like a logical approach to solving specific, well-defined problems. But maybe not.

Increasingly, we are coming to realize that specialization may deal with the problem but not necessarily with the cause. The big toe started bothering you because of something wrong with your right hip and you started compensating for it when you walked. Your child had trouble reading because his eyes weren't tracking properly so he couldn't focus on the

words properly. And your product wasn't selling because your website was fatally flawed and people were uncomfortable completing transactions on it.

In all of these cases the specialist was in the worst position to solve the **right** problem the **right** way. A more holistic approach was necessary. That's why professionals who can integrate a range of disciplines are more effective in getting to the root cause of a problem. Then you have the option to employ a specialist, who will often not be the same one you would have selected to execute the solution.

This phenomenon is perhaps more true in marketing than in any other pursuit. Clients are forever defining a problem and hiring specialists to implement the solution. This is the wrong approach for a variety of reasons. First, there is rarely only one cause for a marketing problem. Second, the number of options within the disciplines of marketing communications is growing ever

larger. Third, you can no longer solve issues with a single silver bullet. Fourth, client resources are never unlimited, so the challenge is creating the right mix of solutions that will lead to success. Firms who can — and want to — look at challenges using an integrated, analytical approach are in the best position to help clients achieve their business objectives.

**Specialization has a place in this world, but it takes second place to integration.**

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9<sup>TH</sup> COMMANDMENT**

There is definitely a time and a place for specialization. However, taking a holistic approach and considering a broad range of integrated solutions is the first step in solving any marketing problem.

## The Right Point of View Comes With Experience

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*"The Ten Commandments of Marketing" series is the distillation of our decades of experience, epiphanies and, of course, mistakes, into something useful. We welcome your thoughts and comments.*



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