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When Competitors Copy Your Marketing

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In the marketing industry there is a lot of follow-the-leader being played. During my 23-year marketing career there have been countless times when I'd make an aggressive move, just to see my bigger competitors follow six months to a year later. What often happens is the thought-leader (not necessarily the biggest company) makes a marketing move, and competitors copy it.

To dominate your competitors, you must isolate your marketing. Choose one place to advertise that is target-rich and absent of your competitors. It probably won't take long for them to jump in, possibly with a bigger presence than your own. That means your competitors aren't thinking for themselves, they're letting you do it from them.

If you want your marketing efforts to be effective, don't take the easy way out and simply follow the leader. Look at what your competitors are doing to get a useful awareness of the competitive landscape, but avoid the temptation to mirror their media buys or Web site format. When planning your event schedule, don't attend shows merely because your competitor has posted them on their site. What guarantee do you have that their marketing team made good decisions? They could have blindly followed another competitor, and then you have whole industries making bad decisions.

Bottom line—be the thought-leader. All the time. It's the best way to win.

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