



MARKETING STAR



Mike Moran: Distinguished Engineer for Content Discovery at IBM

[By Anique Gonzalez]

Mike Moran may be a lot of things—author, engineer, blogger, Internet aficionado—but he's not quite sure that he should be considered a marketer. "I have to tell you, I don't even know if I'm in marketing yet. I talk to a lot of marketers, I write about marketing a lot, but I don't know if I'm really a marketer yet. Maybe someday," he says.

While in college, Moran, a distinguished engineer for content discovery at IBM, studied accounting, which had more to do with the fact that his friends were accounting majors than an actual interest in the field. Soon, however, Moran realized that it was not the career for him. "By the time I got to my third year in college, I thought accounting was something that if I died and I went to hell, that's what they'd make me do." So, Moran did what many college graduates do: he got a job in a field that wasn't related to his major.

Working nights at IBM, where he ran a bursting machine, Moran soon began to use his free time to teach himself computer programming. He quickly became so skilled that he developed something that the research department had been working on. With his co-workers recognizing his abilities in that area, he was subsequently hired into the department. While there, Moran worked on several critically acclaimed and award-winning products that, to his dismay, did not sell well with consumers. What Moran discovered was that the reason consumers weren't buying the products had nothing to do with the products themselves and everything to do with how they were being marketed.

Motivated by this, Moran returned to school and received an Advanced Certificate in Marketing Management Practice from the Charter Institute of Marketing. And when he

returned, this time to IBM.com, he began to utilize the theoretical marketing principles he had learned when working on company projects. "What I started to figure out was that the real secret of marketing on the Internet had to do with having the right kind of feedback loops for what you were doing

and being able to change what you were doing over and over and over again until you started to get something that worked," Moran explains.

After gaining the attention of the company's marketers, Moran began collaborating with them. "I worked with several really gifted marketers, and I also worked with some marketers who weren't quite so gifted. The ones that really struggled were the ones who had learned how to do things on all sorts of offline media, and what they really wanted to do was to make sure at all costs that they had rung every little bit of risk out of the project."

This created significant obstacles because campaigns would take so long to reach the consumer that they would become ineffective by the time they did. Especially with something involving the Internet, taking months to complete a marketing program doesn't just mean that campaigns are ineffective, it means that they are extremely likely to be completely obsolete.

According to Moran, this approach also means that marketers can no longer listen to consumers in order to determine what is working because they are too concerned with obtaining data that will prove that their decisions were correct. "And that is actually the antithesis of how you succeed both in direct marketing and on the web," he says. This led Moran to conclude that marketers

Q: What was the last thing that you ate?

A: A hand full of raisins.

Q: Throughout your lifetime, what movie have you watched the most?

A: It was either *Duck Soup* with The Marx Brothers or *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

Q: What is your favorite TV show?

A: I don't watch a lot of TV shows. I mostly watch baseball games. Does that count? I am a Cubs fan; and the Cubs motto is probably do it wrong slowly over and over again.

Q: What was the last CD that you listened to?

A: I'm looking at the top of the stack, and it's *Astro Lounge* by Smash Mouth.

Q: If you had an extra hour in the day, what would you spend it doing?

A: Oh boy. See, whatever I say it's going to sound bad. The first thing I thought of is I would spend more time with my wife and kids, but then someone will go "Well, why don't you do that? Why do you need an extra hour?" Now you're bringing out the Catholic guilt. These are the fun questions? Man, I feel horrible.



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need to do it wrong quickly instead of doing it right slowly.

Obviously, doing something wrong quickly does not mean that marketers should intentionally try to make mistakes or utilize tactics they know will not be effective. However, in the Internet age, when things move at such a rapid pace, speed can impact the failure or success of a product. Consequently, it is important that marketers interact with consumers as soon as possible, even if not in the correct way.

Attempting to encourage and to provide tools to utilize this approach, Moran has written *Do It Wrong Quickly: How the Web Changes the*

Old Marketing Rules, wherein he discusses the importance of trying many different approaches, studying the outcomes, learning from mistakes, and trying again. As long as marketers have the right feedback and listening mechanisms in place and are able to track how consumers react if something does go wrong, they can quickly alter it until it is effective. And being effective, and thereby motivating action, is the fundamental goal of doing it wrong quickly.

Ultimately, even though Moran may not be sure if he's in marketing, or even if he is a marketer, his knowledge, experience, successful track-record, and versatility suggest otherwise.

For more information about Mike Moran, please visit his website at www.mikemoran.com, where you can also sign up for his free Biznology newsletter and blog.

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Do It Wrong Quickly: How the Web Changes the Old Marketing Rules
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