

# The Forge Formula: **Tools and Techniques for Unstoppable Growth**

A growth marketer's confessional on overcoming industry-wide overreliance on digital marketing tactics to build stronger relationships and sustainable growth.

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A black and white photograph of a man with curly hair, seen in profile from the chest up. He is looking out of a window with horizontal blinds. The lighting is soft, coming from the window, highlighting his hair and the texture of the blinds. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the window and the interior of the room.

## The Marketing Industry is Burning. Are You Just Watching?

Let's not sugarcoat it: Most marketing today is a dumpster fire of automation addiction, metric obsession, and relationship neglect. We're so focused on feeding the digital machine that we've forgotten what actually drives business growth: human connections, trust, and authentic relationships.

The symptoms are everywhere:

- Marketing teams chasing quick-fix digital tactics while brand-building gathers dust
- Sales teams pitch-slapping prospects with automated outreach before building rapport
- Executives pushing for instant ROI while losing sight of long-term relationship development
- Companies treating their "digital transformation" like installing a vending machine for leads

The result? A myopic focus on short-term metrics that sacrifices genuine connection for quick wins.

# The Great Marketing Disconnect

How did we get here? It's a perfect storm of misaligned incentives, digital tunnel vision, and good old-fashioned fear of change.

Marketing teams have developed an unhealthy codependency with digital metrics. We've convinced ourselves that if something can't be immediately measured in a dashboard, it doesn't matter. This gravitation toward instant gratification has created a dangerous muscle memory—defaulting to paid campaigns and automated outreach instead of building genuine connections.

The problem goes deeper than tactics. We've created a culture where marketing success is measured in clicks rather than relationships, where “thought leadership” means parroting the same recycled insights, and where “personalization” means mail-merging someone's first name into a templated email.

Meanwhile, the C-suite expects predictable pipeline metrics while simultaneously wondering why their brand lacks the trust and authority of their competitors. It's the equivalent of trying to build a long-term relationship by speed dating—sure, you might get some numbers, but good luck building anything meaningful.





## The 5% Trap

Here's a statistic from LinkedIn that might keep you up at night: Only about 5% of your target market is actively looking to buy at any given time. Yet most B2B marketing strategies hyperfocus on this small slice of the pie, treating the other 95% as irrelevant.

This creates a vicious cycle:

- Focus exclusively on in-market buyers
- Neglect brand building and relationship development
- Compete solely on features and price
- Wonder why margins keep shrinking
- Double down on tactical marketing to chase more leads
- Rinse and repeat until obsolete

The most frustrating part is knowing that when the other 95% enters the market, they've already made up their minds about who they trust and want to work with. If you've been invisible to them until now, good luck making that shortlist.

## A Tale of Transformation: The Weidenhammer Story

Sometimes the hardest changes to make are the ones that aren't forced upon you. Weidenhammer has been successfully delivering IT services and solutions for a half-century. We have long-term clients, steady growth, and a proven business model. By conventional wisdom, nothing was "broken."

But here's the thing about success: it can be the enemy of transformation. When you're doing "well enough," it's easy to ignore the signs that you could be doing so much more.

For us, the wake-up call wasn't a crisis, it was an aspiration. We looked at where the market was heading and asked ourselves a hard question: Do we want to be a successful technology firm, or do we want to be a transformative force in our clients' businesses?

The answer led us to completely reimagine our approach to growth. While we've always been a respected technology solutions provider with deep client relationships spanning decades, we recognized an opportunity to be something more. We're evolving from being primarily known as a solid IT services firm into a true strategic transformation partner—one that forges lasting relationships and drives fundamental business evolution for our clients.

This isn't just a marketing pivot or a fresh coat of paint on the same services. It's about shifting our entire approach to client partnerships. Instead of waiting for clients to come to us with technical requirements, we're proactively engaging with them about their business challenges and aspirations. Instead of simply delivering excellent IT and creative solutions (which we'll always do), we're helping shape the strategic vision that drives those solutions.



### **This transformation means:**

- Deeper engagement with clients' business strategies and goals
- More proactive consultation before technical solutions are defined
- Greater focus on long-term business outcomes versus project deliverables
- Stronger emphasis on strategic partnership at every level of engagement
- Renewed focus on helping clients navigate complex digital transformation





## Comfort and Change Don't Coexist

Like any significant transformation, this evolution has brought some natural challenges. As we implement our vision, we're working through several common change management dynamics:

### The Comfort Zone Bubble

It's human nature to find comfort in familiar routines and established processes. Even positive change requires adjusting well-worn patterns and embracing new ways of working with clients.

### The Skills Evolution

Growing into an even more strategic role means developing and highlighting new capabilities alongside our strong technical expertise. Our teams are embracing opportunities to deepen their consulting abilities and strategic thinking.

### The Identity Shift

As our brand evolves, our team is expanding their professional identities—building on their technical excellence to become even stronger advisors and thought leaders.

# Forging a **New Path Forward**

The metaphor of forging isn't just clever branding; it's a perfect description of the transformation process. Like metalwork, reshaping a business requires:



Most importantly, you can't forge anything new if you're afraid to put the metal in the fire.

# A Call to Action for Leadership

To marketing leaders and executives reading this: You have a choice to make. You can continue optimizing your digital marketing machine, chasing incremental improvements in click-through rates and form fills. Or you can commit to building something more meaningful.

**Here's what that commitment looks like:**



## Acknowledge the Full Picture

Stop pretending that digital marketing alone will drive sustainable growth. Your brand, relationships, and reputation matter more than ever.



## Invest in the 95%

Build awareness and trust with future buyers before they enter the market. This means creating genuine thought leadership, cultivating community, and delivering value without the immediate expectation of return.



## Empower Human Connection

Encourage your team to take the time to build meaningful relationships. Shift the focus away from short-term metrics and prioritize lasting impact.



## Lead the Change

Your team will face internal resistance. They'll need your vocal support and protection to make this transition.



## The Choice **is Yours**

If you're content with your current growth trajectory and comfortable competing solely on price and features, you can stop reading now. Keep doing what you're doing.

But if you want to build something more enduring—if you want to create real competitive advantages and sustainable growth—you need to be willing to put your current model into the forge and reshape it.

The future of growth isn't about better automation or more sophisticated digital tactics. It's about combining the best of digital capabilities with authentic human connection and strategic relationship building.

**The question isn't whether your current approach is broken. The question is: **Are you willing to transform it into something better?****

That's why we're making this change. That's why we're sharing this story. And that's why we believe the future belongs to companies brave enough to forge new paths to growth.



## Lessons from the Fire

This isn't just another theoretical manifesto about what's wrong with modern marketing. At Weidenhammer, we're in the thick of it, hammering out these changes in real time. Here's what we've learned about making this transformation real.



## Redefining Growth Itself

First, we needed to completely reframe what growth means. Too often, businesses see it as a numbers game: more leads, more sales, more revenue.

*Real growth means:*

- Building a network of relationships that generate opportunities organically
- Creating such memorable experiences that clients become vocal advocates
- Developing your team into trusted advisors, not just service providers
- Establishing your brand as a thought leader, not just another vendor
- Creating an ecosystem where partners actively want to work with you

This shift requires letting go of the “growth at all costs” mentality that’s afflicted modern business. Not every prospect is the right fit. Not every opportunity is worth pursuing. Sometimes the best growth strategy is having the courage to say “no” to business that doesn’t align with your vision.

## The True Meaning of Omnichannel

Let's talk about omnichannel, because it's probably not what you think it is. While many businesses scatter their presence across every platform they can find, true omnichannel strategy is more deliberate. It involves choosing the right channels where your customers already engage, and then delivering exceptional value across each one.

*Strategic omnichannel looks like:*

- Seamlessly connecting online and offline experiences (yes, offline still exists and matters)
- Ensuring your message and value proposition remain consistent whether someone's reading your LinkedIn post or chatting with your team at an industry event
- Creating content that serves a purpose beyond filling a content calendar
- Building genuine thought leadership that makes people think, not just nod along
- Investing in platforms and channels that align with how your clients currently make decisions

In short, true omnichannel strategy is less about being everywhere, and more about being where it counts and making each interaction meaningful.



## The Infrastructure of Authentic Growth

One of the biggest lessons we've learned is that authentic growth requires the right infrastructure. You can't build relationships at scale without the right foundation. This calls for prioritizing:

### Internal Alignment

- Breaking down silos between marketing, sales, and delivery teams
- Creating transparent communication channels that keep everyone informed
- Establishing processes that support relationship-building, not just transaction processing
- Building a culture where everyone understands their role in the growth journey

### Technology That Serves Relationships

- Using automation to enhance human connection, not replace it
- Implementing systems that help you understand and serve clients better
- Creating workflows that support long-term relationship nurturing
- Measuring what matters, not just what's easy to track

### Knowledge Management

- Capturing and sharing insights across the organization
- Building a repository of genuine thought leadership
- Creating systems for turning client successes into compelling stories
- Developing frameworks for consistent value delivery



The background of the slide features a dark grid pattern. Overlaid on this grid are numerous thin, light-colored lines and streaks that radiate from the left side, creating a sense of motion and energy. These streaks vary in length and direction, some pointing towards the right and others more chaotic.

## Cultivating a Growth Mindset

The hardest part of this transformation isn't the strategy or the systems—it's the mindset. We've had to cultivate what we call a "forge mentality" throughout the organization. This means:

### Embracing Discomfort

- Accepting that growth requires stepping into uncertainty
- Being willing to challenge established practices
- Learning from failures instead of avoiding risks
- Staying committed when results aren't immediate

### Playing the Long Game

- Investing in relationships before they show ROI
- Building authority through consistent value delivery
- Developing team capabilities beyond technical skills
- Creating processes that scale without sacrificing quality

### Leading with Value

- Sharing insights without expecting immediate return
- Solving problems before pushing solutions
- Building trust through transparency
- Creating content that educates and challenges thinking





## The Real Work Begins

Here's what nobody tells you about transformation: the hardest part comes after you commit to change. That's when you:

- Retrain teams who've built careers on the established way of doing things
- Rebuild processes that have been ingrained for years
- Convince clients that your new approach will serve them better
- Maintain momentum when quick wins are hard to come by
- Stay committed when old habits start creeping back

## A Final Word from the Forge

The marketing industry isn't just ready for transformation—it's desperate for it. Your clients don't want to be treated like data points. Your prospects are overwhelmed with automated outreach. Your team is burning out on tactical execution without strategic purpose.

The opportunity is clear: Build an organization that prioritizes genuine relationships, delivers real value, and creates lasting impact. It's harder than pumping more budget into paid ads. It takes longer than implementing a new marketing automation system. But it's the only sustainable path forward.

The choice, as always, is yours. You can do what everyone else is doing, fighting for smaller pieces of the same pie. Or you can put your organization into the forge and transform it into something remarkable.

**Just remember, the metal doesn't forge itself. You must be willing to apply the heat.**



### About **R. Jason Rowe**

Jay is a senior leader with over 30 years of experience. Prior to leading Weidenhammer's Commerce & Omnichannel Marketing team, he led marketing for enterprise IT services and ecommerce, as well as digital agency and media serving clients with his expertise in brand, GTM, and conversion storytelling. Jay helps clients to accelerate growth by aligning business goals with technology initiatives and investments.

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Weidenhammer is a national business and IT consultancy that strategically partners with our clients to achieve desired business outcomes. We provide holistic tech and business development services resulting in informed decision-making, lowered costs, improved performance and returns, and accelerated growth. With employee and client tenure of up to 40+ years, we provide 'family business' service, integrity, and reliability to growing small businesses and mid-market companies and our senior consultants and technologists have led business modernizations at every IT inflection point since 1978.