



Making Hard Choices: How and When to Shut Down Technology Marketing Efforts

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There's no time like the new year to reflect and reassess. Where are your marketing efforts working, and where are they stalled? Remember, for every hour spent on a technology going nowhere, your team could be digging for gold on a higher-potential technology!

But making the call to shut down a marketing effort isn't easy. You've done everything you were supposed to do: You built a quality marketing plan, you tailored your plan to expected ROI, and you launched and followed your plan. But...you aren't getting any traction with prospects. How do you make the tough call to cancel the effort and move on? Let's consider several examples of real marketing campaigns—and when and how Fuentek decided to close these efforts.

Example 1: The Fatal Flaw

During the technology commercial assessment you got excellent feedback on the key features and benefits of this technology. Industry leaders were anxious to learn more about the technology. So you launch an aggressive marketing campaign, leveraging your warm leads, cold calling, and social media.

Not long after you make contact with prospects, you begin hearing the same feedback—one particular aspect of the technology is not viewed positively by the prospects. While the prospects are totally enamored of the key benefits, this one particular aspect seems to be a show-stopper. You discuss it with the inventor, but there is no way to overcome this perceived flaw; it is inherent in how the technology works.

How incredibly frustrating! All of the major industry leaders have you on their speed dial list and are ready to license, save for this fatal flaw. Isn't there some way to overcome this?!

The tough and true answer: *No*. You've done your due diligence. The fatal flaw has no work-around, and without it, the technology cannot deliver the benefits that have everyone so excited. It's time to cut it loose. Need a silver lining? If you've invested time in developing various marketing materials such as a technology Web page, you can continue with a no-cost passive marketing effort. And when the next patent maintenance fee is due, you can reassess whether to continue with the passive effort or not.



Lesson Learned: If you are hearing consistently negative feedback, especially for the same reason, it's time to shut the marketing effort down and move on to the next promising technology.

Example 2: My Baby Isn't Ugly!

Where our previous example focused on reflecting on and reassessing your technology marketing efforts, now let's consider a technology transfer marketing effort that shouldn't have launched in the first place.

A client came to Fuentek with a technology that they wanted to market. They outlined a number of (what appeared to be) compelling market benefits, and in fact they had had great success using the technology themselves. They insisted that we kick off the marketing effort without first performing a technology commercialization assessment. They were persuasive and, against our better judgment, we agreed.

Immediately upon contacting prospects, we began hearing consistently negative feedback. The current state of the art had far surpassed this technology; no one was interested. Every week during our status calls with the client's licensing manager, we recommended shutting the effort down. Every week we were told to continue making calls. They were convinced that the technology was the best thing since sliced bread.

After two months of us telling them that we kept getting the same feedback, the message sunk in for our client that the technology was not licensable. The client finally agreed to shut it down.

Lessons Learned:

1. Don't market a piece of intellectual property without first doing a technology commercialization assessment. The assessment would have quickly and inexpensively determined what the client found out the hard way—that this technology was not commercially viable.
2. If you are marketing a technology and the feedback is consistently negative, be bold and pull the plug—sooner rather than later. Move your resources onto other efforts that have a higher probability of success. Remember, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results!

Example 3: A Roller Coaster Ride

In pursuing your marketing efforts, you may find that interest and the potential for success waxes and wanes over time depending on events beyond your control. Let's take a look at what can happen.

Your technology commercialization assessment for a piece of software yields positive feedback and interest is great enough to warrant moving forward with marketing.



Unfortunately due to resource constraints, significant time elapses between completion of the assessment and the start of marketing. In the meantime, key inventors move on to other projects, and thus have limited availability to support the marketing effort.

After launching the marketing effort, you quickly generate several viable leads. But without access to the inventors, you cannot demonstrate the software or enable the prospects to test it. The leads grow cold. The technology continues to be passively marketed with an online listing.

Sometime after moving into the passive marketing campaign, an unexpected national event occurs, spurring great interest in the technology. Organizations scramble to look for solutions to the event, many of which could be aided by your client's technology. Suddenly, the phone is ringing off the hook and the prospect pipeline is full again.

Unfortunately, the inventors still are unable to participate in the technology's commercialization, and the prospects are not interested in the technology without access to the inventors.

Lesson Learned: Lack of access to the inventors is always a high hurdle to overcome. No matter how good the technology is, if you cannot bring the necessary resources to bear, shut the marketing effort down and remove the technology from your Web site. Otherwise, you risk damaging your credibility by taking in leads that you do not have the resources to follow through on.

If you would like to discuss the concepts presented here in further detail, please contact Fuentek at info@fuentek.com or 919-249-0327.