

**The American Revolutionary War  
Living History Center (ARWLHC)  
& Experience!**

**Strategic Marketing  
Budget & Zero-based  
Simple Budget talk**

For Doctor Felix Lao by Martin CJ Mongiello



**ZERO-BASED PLANNING – TO BE OR NOT TO BE.** This question hangs in the air with every Chief Executive Officer before anything will be discussed with a marketing team! “Zero-based planning enables marketing teams to propose the best possible plan for the brand and for reaching the target consumer. The idea is not to be hindered by a strict budgeting number. Teams can “think outside the box” on how they may achieve a certain marketing strategy without necessarily having to pay for it. For instance, a team may believe that television is the best method for reaching the target audience, yet television time in the required markets is too expensive. But instead of the team cutting it from the budget, they may be able to find alternative ways to gain television spots. These could be through trade with television stations or partnering with local distributors to share the cost. If the team had been given a budget to work with, they may not have considered putting television into the mix. With Zero-based planning, you start at ZERO and build the best plan possible. You calculate the cost of implementing the plan, and then look for alternative methods. The goal is to be able to use the right marketing choices even if they seem out of budget! (Lao 2009)

Our entire approach has been based on Zero based marketing. Typically, as a group of veterans I find this to be easy – we do not have a lot of money! Therefore, we plan for the most and adapt and overcome to make it happen. A good example is the cost of television advertising – we just can’t afford it – so we begin to explore how to get on TV anyway. We have filmed several talk shows instead and been featured by CNN Headline News 33 and Channel 19 and WSOC TV via a number of creative ways!

This is but one example.

**PRICING AND BIDDING:** We do all of our pricing by direct bidding and contact for advertising and always get three bids from two other competitors. Costs can trim our marketing plan and send us back to the drawing board from time to time. If we can’t afford radio spots – then let’s host a show on a radio station that needs us! The list and reactions to that goes on and on. This is how we have continued to cope with budgeting challenges. We just don’t let them scare us – and we refuse to take no for an answer. I have always believed that creativity is stronger than any amount of money.

**BRAND EQUITY:** The importance of developing brand equity into our marketing plan and decisions - cannot be expressed enough! One of the most powerful areas that we focus on is that of differentiation. We have rapidly poised ourselves to rocket to the top of the international charts, and in one and a half years received a world award – because we are extremely different. Our product is also extremely relevant to the needs of a large customer base. This in combination with logo identification and constant/congruent signage has made for a strong brand (differentiation x relevance = brand strength).

Also the esteem associated with our high class service and product in combination with knowledge of what our product is and offers – has been high.

**YARDSTICKS:** We believe that our brand equity does well in the various forms of tactics that we utilize and have outlined. Furthermore, it is our intent to hire Harris

Interactive to employ one of their subsidiaries, Equitrend, for brand study analysis. Equitrend is a world leader in this aspect.

“Particular emphasis within the mass media category will include newspapers, history magazines, trade publications, continued television advertising, radio advertising, web and search engine optimization, stadium advertising and e-newsletters. “We will continue to employ our robot and android driven direct mail marketing programs via the United States postal service. Our glossy slick cards with digitized, exact handwriting are used in conjunction with first name placement in key areas of paragraphs. We quantify and measure these tactics with metric numeric’s fed to us from sendoutcards.com, return ratios showing failure via the USPS and database message with redemption ratios via card turn-in. We like to offer quantitative metrics where you can easily count up the number of cards turned in - to get something. This keeps it simple (Mongiello).”

In summary, we have a good multiyear grip on what works and what doesn’t. We will seek to continue to avoid areas that do not produce return on investment. We will escalate and intensify the tactics in areas that do produce a return track and prove continued use of them.

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Martin CJ Mongiello Sunday, December 06, 2009

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