



Q&A
JUMPSTART MY
MARKETING



CONTENT

What can you do now to control your destiny?	3
What can funds do to make a difference in the short term?	4
How can a fund jumpstart its marketing?	5
Should funds venture into the digital world?	6
Can you share tips for creating content?	7
What makes a PR program successful?	8
Do you have any ideas to support salespeople?	9
What's the final takeaway?	10
About SunStar Strategic	11

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW TO CONTROL YOUR DESTINY?

We find that asset managers that have a plan – who’ve spent the time to think out the goals along with the specific steps to achieve them – have greater control. A strategy on the front end is imperative, but as importantly, it has to be robust and include:

- Defining what and how to measure
- Determining when and what will you communicate with existing clients and prospects
- Researching how you can help educate advisors
- Assigning a dedicated resource to publishing relevant and timely content that’s wired into the market
- Articulating what success looks like from the beginning
- Committing resources of money and staff appropriate to your size, means and goals to execute on the plan
- Holding individuals accountable

WHAT CAN FUNDS DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE SHORT TERM?

The first step is to take an honest look at your mindset/strategy – is it working?

Then, be honest:

One of SunStar’s clients once spoke at a conference of peers. He said that his marketing efforts worked about 50% of the time - then admitted that unfortunately, he didn’t know which 50%.

That got a good chuckle from the group, but it points out a fatal flaw – you need to know. If that answer rings true for you, maybe in the next month or two, take time to audit what you have been doing and assess how successful you’ve been.

- **Is there a plan you had but abandoned?** If so, then it’s time to revisit it – is it still valid? Did parts of it work well, parts not? Which and why or why not?
- **Determine what’s measurable** – and meaningful to measure. That’s often difficult, but worth the effort. It will help you decide if you should make a change. Should you divert effort and money to something you haven’t done yet? What would you cut out? What should you expand?
- **Can you find some benchmarks?** Are other firms growing – but not yours? What are they doing? How are they different? Is there a leader you can emulate?
- **In the short term, it’s important to just pick one or two options you can get your arms around.**

HOW CAN A FUND JUMPSTART ITS MARKETING?

Do a quick, but honest audit of how key people in your firm tell your story. Fund companies as a rule are made up of very smart people, very articulate people. But more likely than not, every person puts their own special twist on the story. This is not to suggest everyone has the same rote answer – but there needs to be a consistency.

- **As a firm, know what you are focused on.** Is it innovation? Are you excited about healthcare? Do you emphasize quantitative or qualitative research? Essentially, is everybody singing from the same songbook? How about your materials and website? Same or not really?
- **This could be a great time to hold a firm strategy meeting,** if you haven't got this buttoned up already or if you had at one time but drifted off course. Alternatively, you could hire a professional firm to help make your messages compelling and consistent.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** If you are headed down the PR route, invest in some good media training.



SHOULD FUNDS VENTURE INTO THE DIGITAL WORLD?

Advisors want insight into the fund manager’s specific areas of expertise – not general market commentary. Our research looked at what advisors expect or want to find on a fund site. Their answers told us they have tons of resources readily available on the general outlook for the markets.

What you think about your specialty is the insight they value. (For the full research report, email: sunstar@sunstarstrategic.com.)

- **Websites should not be prospectus look-alikes.** This is the primary vehicle to get your story in front of as many investors and advisors as possible. When we develop websites for our clients, we work hard to show the personality of the firm – its back-story – as well as investment hypotheses.
- **Make a commitment to engaging advisors and investors where they are today – young and old.** Our research noted that over 80% of the advisors we surveyed are using LinkedIn as a resource for ideas. A statistic about Facebook claimed that, as of Jan 2018, over 80% of households in every income level had Facebook accounts. The range was 81 to 88%, but at the over \$100,000 income level, the percent was an incredible 86%. Even if you halve that for active users – it’s still a huge number. So, that ship is well out to sea – and fund companies who want to be known and relevant need to take advantage of this digital experience.
- **Beyond website social media, consider advertising/sponsoring.** This is how the world works today. Young adults are online constantly – not only connecting with friends, but watching news videos, listening to economic podcasts. They are reading blogs and doing all kinds of research. And, if they find an area of interest – ideally what your fund focuses on – that’s the opportunity to drive them to your web content.
- **A great deal of experts say that “buyer” behavior has already shifted to research driven.** If you believe what you read, no one shops anymore before they’ve googled. So, you need to have substance to offer which will drive prospects to you.

CAN YOU SHARE TIPS FOR CREATING CONTENT?



Content may be king – but not the lion kind. Creating content is a bear!

- **You don't have to write it all yourself.** There are professional writers, who can work on a given topic with original research. Or to keep the writing closer to “home,” they can work from your drafts or interview you. If you look outside your firm for writers, find people who are knowledgeable in finance – and with the compliance rules.
- **A professional design can go a long way in making what's been written comprehensible.** A professional graphic designer – especially one familiar with the industry and who understands what you are writing about – is going to make the material easy for your audience to absorb.
- **Each piece you create doesn't need to be a doctoral thesis** – most people have short attention spans and need just the bite-size essence of your thoughts – how will you make me money in an asset class or sector – why? Prove it to me in a compelling graph or chart.
- **Longer pieces are important, too.** They establish you as serious students of finance. And, they can be leveraged into shorter, more marketing-oriented pieces. You can take one 4-page paper, make social media posts from it, an infographic, even animated videos or one/two-minute talking head videos in your office to send out via email. These are great sales tools.
- **The biggest issue facing most firms is time** – a commitment to regular production.
- **In the next 30 days, gather the troops and brainstorm half a dozen topics.** Then have your marketing team if you have one or engage a freelancer or professional marketing firm to develop one of these topics each month for the rest of the year. Minimally, push them out to your own email list and post them website. In an ideal world, you could build a social media campaign around them. After the six month period, as you are planning for the next 12-18 months, you can assess the frequency and outreach of the program and decide to scale up or down.

WHAT MAKES A PR PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL?

Commitment! Whether you engage a professional or keep PR inhouse, you must have someone dedicated to the effort. There should be consistent commitment to the process – it’s really a marathon, not a sprint.

- **Getting great PR is the result of creating and nurturing great relationships.** Because of the relationships SunStar has developed over 2 or 3 decades with journalists, we can counsel our clients on hot buttons a reporter might have or writing style. If a reporter calls you, we can intervene and suggest whether the outcome will be great or just so-so or isn’t worth your time. If your PR program is internal, you’ll need to develop those relationships, too, so someone who’ll manage that program consistently for you will be key to making it successful.
- **PR is proactive.** Our account executives are constantly calling and pitching our clients’ expertise day-in and day-out. As a result, there are TV spots, print and online interviews. Over time, many have enjoyed feature stories in Barron’s and the like.
- **When interviewing, particularly if you are on TV or radio, you’ll want to take the prep time** to make sure your comments are spot on with your firm’s messages and current investment themes. The time you take to prepare will pay off because you will be clear, concise and on point. Often you only have 2-3 minutes to let people know who you are and what you stand for.
- **Messages must be compelling straight from the get go, with the buy in of all the top executives.** Before you get started with a PR program, the smartest thing you can do is to get all your executives and spokespeople in a room and refine your story: Who are you? What really makes you different? Then, arm your people with the resources they need. We highly recommend they be specifically trained on how to speak to the media. It can be a daunting experience when you are under the hot lights and getting rapid fire questions, especially if you are in a remote city using an earpiece. We know that your folks know the answers. What they or you usually need help with is staying “on message.”
- **Even if you are covered on CNBC or in Barron’s, it’s only your 10 minutes of fame.** There’s tremendous added value when you leverage that coverage. Post it on your website, share it on social media, email it, print it, show it with your neighbors!

Q&A: JUMP START MY MARKETING

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS TO SUPPORT SALESPEOPLE?

Whoever is managing your sales effort, provide the support they need.

- **If you have marketing people, have them accompany you on some sales calls.** I've done it as a marketing staffer and it's a real eye-opener to hear the questions or follow the logic of the advisor on the buying side of the desk.
- **Your writers and designers really need this first-hand knowledge** to experience and understand the kinds of objections heard. Makes all the difference in developing materials that will be used.



WHAT'S THE FINAL TAKEAWAY?

Look first at where you are versus a plan. Did you have one? If so, assess what's working and do more of it. If you wandered off the plan or never put one together, get started today on building a strategy for the next 18 months. Consider all the ideas above in the context of your size, resources and needs.

- In the short-term, to get the ball rolling, at your next management meeting, talk about which ONE of these ideas rang true for you – that you could implement in the next six months.
 - Is it the audit of what all your people and materials say about you today, or are you ready to commit to exploring or even beginning PR outreach, or a content program that can grow over time?
 - How about having your marketing folks go out on a handful of sales calls over the next few months?
 - Should you hire professionals to help?
 - Which one makes the most sense for you?
- **There's not one right answer or quick fix.** But taking a step back and choosing one action item might re-energize your sales efforts.



ABOUT SUNSTAR

DEDICATED TO YOUR GROWTH

SunStar Strategic specializes in providing PR and marketing programs for financial firms by:

- Developing outreach programs to attract and retain clients
- Enhancing your brand
- Strengthening distribution
- Creating new product launch campaigns
- Writing and designing professional content
- Managing a robust content marketing program
- Navigating compliance

25 + YEARS EXPERIENCE

Since our founding more than 25 years ago, we've worked with nearly 200 money managers and 20 leading regional banks. Our clients are counted among mutual funds, ETF providers, back office service providers, RIAs, wealth managers, and private banking divisions of large banks.

Are you ready to experience the positive impact a marketing program will have for you?

Give us a call to get started at 703.299.8390.

Q&A

JUMPSTART MY MARKETING

Excerpts from an interview with
Marilyn Dale, VP,
Creative and Digital Director
SunStar Strategic



Washington DC, New York, Chicago, Austin
300 N. Washington St., Suite 505
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.299.8390
sunstarstrategic.com