



Go Do

HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

LOU IMBRIANO

When I began my career in radio, I worked on the creative side of the industry. I was in the programming department and would write and produce for different shows. I devoured the newspapers every day looking for potential topics and comedy bits. It was fun, and my mind was thinking very differently from my later focus on how to build relationships and generate revenue. Although, I was already practicing the relationship aspect when booking guests for the show.

I was fortunate to take to both the job and the industry, and I was promoted along the way within programming. However, at some point, I realized that I was working at the only sports radio station in Boston. I never wanted to leave the city, but I thought that there had to be more for me in a career. At the time of this epiphany the station manager, Bev Tilden, was also running marketing. Bev had a very creative radio mind and she understood how to get listeners to tune in and stay tuned. As always in radio, one GM left and another came in and Bev just didn't click with the new GM. So, Bev was off to another challenge.

The new GM, John Maguire, came to me and said, "Lou, Bev is moving on. We love what you're doing in programming, so you're fine, but we will need to search for a new marketing director." I had a moment of clarity. It was like something you'd see on a TV show where everything stops around you, but you are still moving at full speed. In an all-out, overachiever, knee-jerk response I said "Let me do it."

John gave me a smirk and said, “Lou, you’re great at programming, but what do you know about marketing?” This was when I adopted my mantra that I still utter today when questioned or challenged: “How hard can it be?”

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John chuckled and said that the station needed someone with marketing experience, because it had the potential to become #1 in the ratings. Again, with more balls than brains, I pushed on. I asked, “How long will it take you to find a new marketing director?” He pondered and stated that it would be three months or so, which led me to a life-changing moment. I said to him, “Let me do it while you are searching so we don’t lose any ground. You don’t have to pay me anything extra, and if I’m slacking in my primary function, you say the word and I will focus purely on programming.” I’m paraphrasing, of course—that was almost 20 years ago—but that was the general conversation. I guess I made a valid pitch because he agreed. And once I got a hold of the opportunity, I wasn’t letting go.

Three months turned into a couple of years, and this inexperienced, untrained marketing director was overachieving and delivering beyond expectations. I'd never had a marketing job; I'd never taken a marketing class. Yet, here I was, marketing this sports station back into preeminence. The funny thing was that, at one point, after achieving some marketing success, I remember giving a programming concept to an on-air talent. He replied, "Lou, you're great at marketing, but leave the programming to us." Ha, I'd remade myself so much that I was now viewed not as a programming person with six years experience, but as a marketing guy.

And there was no looking back. Because I had no preconceived notion on how to market, it allowed me to be open to and create different ways to engage with our consumers—the listeners. The key to all of this was that I understood the programming of the station better than most. Because I was creating programming to engage and entertain the listeners, I had to know who the listeners were and what they liked. I was in tune with our listeners and I knew how to interest them so they would check us out. I knew how reach our listeners because I talked with and listened to them.

It's important to realize that the only true barrier in life is you. Sure, there can be obstacles that you face every day and people who are impediments to achieving your goals, but ultimately you will be the reason that you achieve or fail. I quite often tell folks that they just have to "Go Do."

You will see that two-word charge from me quite frequently on social media, because you never know when it will click with folks in need of motivation.

There are so many people out there with the “woe is me” attitude; what they must realize is that they are causing the woe and they are the only conduit for change. Excuses are easy to develop and are, quite frankly, a crutch to lead you to failure. The thought process behind failure is not that different from thinking about what your next steps to achieve success will be. You only need to adjust your approach and start seeing and believing in what’s possible. I realize that seems like a statement you would read on a mug or a bumper sticker, but it’s truly the foundation to your ability to achieve.

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Let me put it more bluntly: stop your whining, get off your ass and go get it done. If you put it in your mind that something is unobtainable, then of course it will be. That thought is pure rubbish—anything is obtainable if you put your mind and effort into it.

I grew up in East Boston, and my family did not have a lot of money or connections, so when it was time to go out and start a career, I had to start from scratch and build relationships and a network of folks. I am sure this is true for most people. I could have used it as an excuse for underachievement, but I was oblivious to the concept that I couldn't do anything because of that. I was blessed with a very supportive family that led me to believe that I was spectacular in every way.

The reality was that I was an average kid with average grades. I was okay in sports, but nothing special. But my family propelled me into believing that I was exceptional. The more they told me how tremendous I was, the more I tried to accomplish. They were actually right about me, but it wasn't my talent or skills that were spectacular, it was my approach and optimism that were the key components that allowed me to believe I could achieve anything. My family played a crucial role in allowing me to possess that philosophy.

So, there I was, with zero prior experience and zero marketing training, running marketing for a very popular radio station in Boston. The same confidence that I could take over marketing for the radio station also led me to my next marketing job. But most people simply shook their heads and questioned, "Why him?"

Becoming Director of Marketing and Events for the New England Patriots was an incredible quantum leap for this kid from East Boston with no formal marketing training. But, once again, I asked “how hard can it be?” It rang true and when I got into the position, I just rolled up my sleeves and got stuff done. While most people were analyzing the benefits of why things could work and the negatives to why they wouldn’t, I was out doing and making things happen. Again, more balls than brains, but it turned out to be effective.

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I believe you get the picture, but that’s only one piece of the puzzle. Because I wasn’t trained, I didn’t realize that I was doing research and analyzing the situation the way others with MBA’s might (and I stress might) approach things. At the radio station, I was a producer, and part of that job was speaking with callers to see if they had valid points to contribute to the shows. What I didn’t fully realize at the time, but makes perfect sense to me now, is that through those conversations I obtained a more complete understanding of our listeners. I understood their opinions and views, which led me to know their likes and dislikes. Knowing in-depth details

about your consumer puts you on a clear path to create products and services that they would actually purchase. It also allows you to understand how to communicate with them and, quite frankly, that's all marketing really is—knowing who to talk to about a certain product or service.

I did the same thing when I took over marketing for the New England Patriots. I went out to the parking lots and chatted with people tailgating at every game, and those conversations allowed me to understand the fans better. It also helped me know how to assist our corporate partners in better ways. So even though I wasn't analyzing graphs and pie charts, I was getting a clear picture of what our fans wanted. We also spent a lot of time talking with corporate clients and knowing what was important to them. We began forming great relationships with our customers, which allowed us to do more for them and grow our business. It really clicked for me when I realized that marketing was all about forming relationships with your customers at every level. For our corporate clients, we sold them signs, promotions and media to recognize revenue, but our true function was to help them do business. No one fully understood what a sign did for their business, but when you open doors and drive business for them, that tangible aspect is easy to grasp.

All of this helped me come to the conclusion that we couldn't just be marketers or sales people; if we wanted to be wildly successful, we had to change our methods and become Relationship Architects. The relationships we had with our fans and customers were the key to success and

revenue growth. So simple, yet most miss the point. We really began honing our skills in learning more about our customers. Even though it was research, it was done in a more “roll up your sleeves” approach to understanding our target demos and building unbreakable relationships with our consumers.

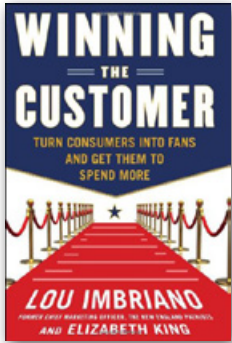
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The “go do” approach took an East Boston kid with zero marketing experience and allowed him to become a marketer. Not only did I become a Chief Marketing Officer for an NFL franchise, but with no marketing degree or PhD credentials, I was also asked to teach a marketing class at Boston College. As I enter into my fourth year of teaching, I am pleased to say that class always has a waiting list. It’s not the typical class, and I’m sure many educators could critique my unconventional methods to convey knowledge, but what matters to me is that, every year, multiple students email and call me to say that what they learned in class helped them get a job or gave them an edge in a meeting. It’s not about graphs and diagrams—it’s about results. That is why it’s so important to “Go do.” I do not know a lot, but I know that most people

reading this are smarter than I am. If I can break down barriers and become a marketer, then any one of you can do the same in any area you desire. And I'm not stopping, because I do not know where "Go do" will continue to take me. My most recent effort was a book about how to build relationships with your consumers to grow revenues, entitled *Winning the Customer*, and led me to you in this essay.

If you have been hemming and hawing in your current job or position in life and have been looking for a ray of light, stop moping, go out and do. Remember, never let anyone tell you that it can't be done or that you are not qualified—especially yourself. You can do anything you truly want to. If I can do it, anyone can. **Besides, "How hard can it be?"** 📌

Info



BUY THE BOOK | Get more details or buy a copy of Lou Imbriano's [Winning the Customer](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Lou Imbriano serves as President and CEO of TrinityOne. With a specialty in sports, TrinityOne is a unique marketing agency that takes a non-traditional approach to extending the brand of a company and organization. Imbriano consults with sports teams, venues and corporations all around the globe on marketing and operational strategy, as well as new business development and social media strategy. Imbriano also teaches sports marketing at his alma mater, Boston College.

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