

I was here first

Mass Device



[1]

I was chatting with a friend who's also in the medical marketing business. She reached for *The Boston Globe* magazine on my kitchen table and said, "Tell me what you think of this ad." It was for a major Boston hospital and said, in effect, that other hospitals are always copying them. With all due respect to the copywriter who did a fine job with the assignment given, we both felt the strategy was off. The overall effect was a little whiney. And as consumers, we thought, "Who cares?"

Being a pioneer has some obvious benefits in terms of establishing credibility, securing key customers and intellectual property rights. However, once a procedure or instrument is in general use, who invented it becomes less important than who's selling it at a better price. Or who's creating the next generation. Or most important, who's getting the best results.

In his article "[Behind Apple's Strategy: Be Second to Market](#) [2]," John Boddie writes, "[W]ith such prominent early exceptions as the mouse and the graphical user interface, Apple has rarely succeeded because of an appreciable first-to-market advantage." He goes on to cite other companies as pioneers in notebook, MP3 player and music-editing technologies. But in each case Apple was able to reach consumers through "the virtues of good design, ease of use, clever marketing and smart distribution. All these efforts were aimed at making sure potential customers understood the substantial differences between the first-to-market technologies ... and the appealing, thoughtful technologies that Apple's product offers."

It's not just Apple. Google wasn't the first search engine. Amazon.com wasn't the

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first online store. Zipcar wasn't the first car rental business by a long shot. In each case, someone took someone else's great idea and made it more thoughtful, more cognizant of the market's real needs.

On the marketing continuum, being a pioneer very quickly runs headlong into "what have you done for me lately?" It is a terrific support point, but not a communication strategy. To have a sustainable advantage, you must continually quantify your value. For that local hospital, a better message would have been "practice makes perfect." As inventors of a procedure, their doctors should have substantially more experience. It's a measure that resonates because it relates directly to a patient benefit. And in consumers' minds, their needs are what comes first.



A senior writer at Seidler Bernstein and an accomplished communications strategist and writer with a talent for conveying complex clinical products, technologies, and issues, Angel Micarelli has a track record of helping to create integrated branding and multi-channel marketing to support domestic and international sales. She's adept at using competitive profiling, target research, stakeholder goals and the clinical landscape to build blueprints for effective campaigns.

[SOURCE](#) [3]

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[2] <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4970.html>

[3] <http://www.massdevice.com/blogs/angel-micarelli/i-was-here-first>