



kiwi
creative

the **7 DEADLY SINS** — *of Designing for a* — **B2B Technology Brand**



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INTRODUCTION

There's no doubt that marketing for a technology company is tough. Your product or service is probably complicated to describe. The screenshots of the software aren't overly sexy. And how are you supposed to get people to engage with your (admittedly sometimes slightly boring) B2B brand?

But that challenge is also what makes your job so fun, right?

You know that it's important to play up ROI for C-suite buyers while mid-level managers care more about how their lives will be easier on a day-to-day basis. You're a pro at taking technical specs and turning them into compelling and relatable marketing copy. And you're always on a quest to provide the best marketing support materials to your sales staff so they can close that deal!

But since you're not a professionally trained graphic designer, what you might NOT know is how to bring all of your efforts together into an amazingly designed suite of print and digital marketing materials.

The good news? Your competitors are equally as confused.

From our years of experience working as creative and marketing consultants in the technology industry, here is our list of the seven deadly sins we see most B2B technology brands making on a daily basis.

Learn from your competition's mistakes and make YOUR brand better.





DEADLY SIN #1

Using *awful* stock photography.

Deadly Sin #1

USING AWFUL STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

We've all seen cringe-worthy stock photography (hopefully on your competitors' websites and not your own!). But nowadays, there's also a lot of high-quality, affordable imagery available for purchase online.

To get powerful images for your print and digital marketing materials *without* conducting a custom photo shoot, avoid these pitfalls:

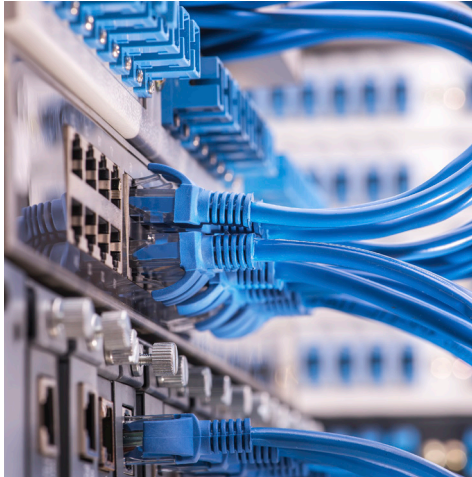
- **Lack of diversity:** Even if your company is staffed entirely by white males, your photo choices don't have to highlight that fact.
- **Too much diversity:** On the other hand, every ethnicity does not need to be equally represented in each photo. It will look forced.
- **Beautiful people:** Does everyone at your company look like a runway model? If not, seek out photos that represent "real" employees vs. overly glam models.
- **Cheesy poses:** Has your company ever really done a group high five? I didn't think so.
- **Generic photos:** Found the perfect picture, but your competition is already using it? Automatic pass. You don't want to look the same as everyone else in your field.



ONE LAST TIP FOR TECH COMPANIES

If you're a software company, be sure to mock-up screenshots of your product on real computers (preferably with people using it). Way better than flat jpgs of your user interface, right?

Examples of **GOOD STOCK PHOTOS**



Bonus Resource

Our favorite website for low-cost, high-quality stock photography?

[iStockphoto.com](https://www.iStockphoto.com)





DEADLY SIN #2

**Not *clarifying*
with icons.**

Deadly Sin #2

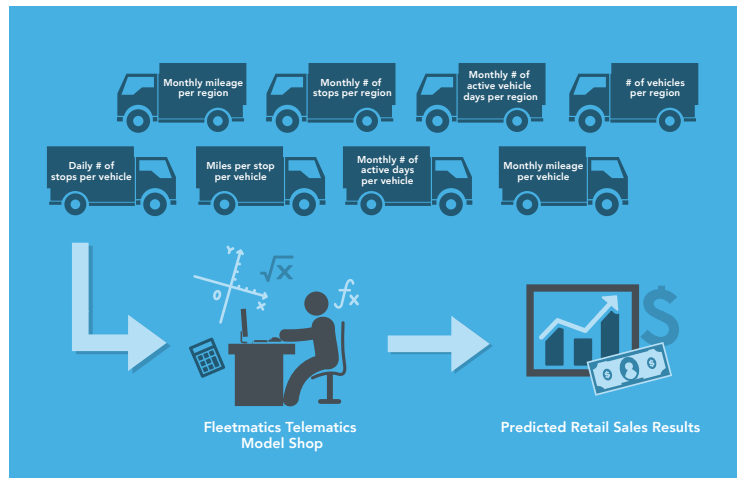
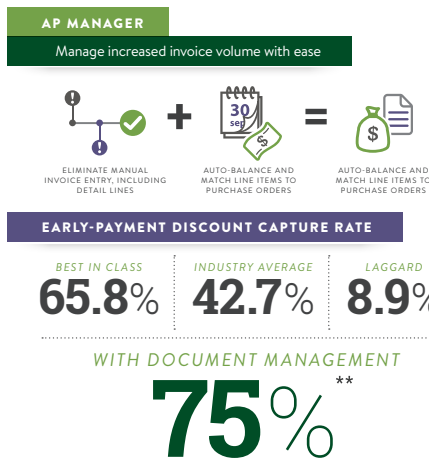
NOT CLARIFYING WITH ICONS

Case studies and white papers can be boring. Spruce up that long-format text with icons! Not only will the design be more interesting, but it'll make it easier for readers to quickly scan your content without missing the important points.

Here are some perfect ways to incorporate icons into your print and web marketing materials:

- **Services:** If people get easily confused by the technical services you provide, use a small icon to help clarify. A phone for technical support or a wrench for repair services are easy-to-understand options.
- **Industries:** Instead of just writing that you provide technology solutions for healthcare or law firms, add in an icon of a hospital or gavel.
- **Office Locations:** Have offices around the globe? Design a simple map with markers to showcase your international reach.
- **Client Profiles:** You could write that your client installed your software product on 17 vehicles, but it would be more impactful if you visually showed 17 individual truck icons to drive home the magnitude of the project.

Examples of **CLARIFYING WITH ICONS**



Bonus Resource

Our favorite resource for low-cost, ready-to-use icons for web and print?

flaticon.com



ONE OF 11
Certified Global

U.S. Offices



Vancouver, Canada
WESTERN CANADA OFFICE

Cleveland, OH
GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS

Toronto, Canada
EASTERN CANADA OFFICE

Dover, NH



DEADLY SIN #3

**Sticking to a
monotone
color palette.**

Deadly Sin #3

STICKING TO A MONOTONE COLOR PALETTE

Technology companies looove the color blue. But if that's the only shade you're using in your marketing materials, it can get really boring...really fast.

Here are great ways to incorporate a secondary color palette into your marketing materials without destroying the strong (likely blue!) brand you already have:

- **CTAs:** Whether it's a big ol' download button or an in-text call-to-action (CTA), use a bold accent color to draw attention to what you want the reader to do.
- **Typography:** If the main headline uses your brand's primary color, make subheads (or pull quotes or contact info) an accent color to avoid monotony.
- **Icons and/or Infographics:** Using simple illustrations to break up your copy? Make sure they incorporate a few accent colors to further stand out.
- **Color Coding:** If your overarching corporate pieces are designed in one consistent shade, consider "color coding" specific service-level materials to make it easier for your sales team to distinguish at a glance. Case studies about financial clients? Green accent color. Case studies about healthcare clients? Purple accent color. You get the idea.

Examples of USING ACCENT COLORS



**WELCOME TO
Carrier Services Gr**



Bonus Resource

Confused by warm vs. cool colors?
Check out our blog post.

"Color Basics for Branding"



COMPANY PROFILE

Piedmont Healthcare

Piedmont Healthcare, a not-for-profit, community health system comprised of 7 hospitals, 2,200+ medical staff and nearly 13,000 employees used an Independent Service Organization (ISO) to manage their ultrasound program before making the decision to move to in-house management program provided by PartsSource, a clinical engineering technology provider. Piedmont is responsible for 140 ultrasound systems and 476 probes.

PartsSource's Managed Service Program offers Piedmont a unified technology solution for flexible service and support that includes:



Piedmont Healthcare
is a not-for-profit, community
health system comprised of:





DEADLY SIN #4

**Writing long *and*
probably boring copy.**

Deadly Sin #4

WRITING LONG (AND PROBABLY BORING) COPY

Why are we talking about copy in an eBook about design? Because designers (and your readers) love white space...and long copy is the natural enemy of white space.

Let's be honest here, marketers. You might like to write about your technical service offerings, but people are lazy and don't want to read it. (In fact, according to Nielsen Norman Group, most users only read about 20% of the words on a page.) So instead of writing a 10,000-word eBook, try these tips to cut down on content, leading to a better design:

- **Highlight important info:** Don't write super long sentences, which turn into super long paragraphs. Pull out important info and turn it into subheads, bullet points, pull quotes, testimonials, sidebars...literally ANYTHING besides burying it in body copy.
- **Use visuals in place of words:** Can your point be explained more succinctly by using an infographic or icon? Do it. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words.
- **Leave out the fluff:** Does your company history need to be in every brochure? Do you need to describe every service in detail or just provide a bulleted list of your offerings? Understand the purpose of each piece and cut down copy until it addresses only the most crucial points.



ONE LAST TIP FOR TECH COMPANIES

Want a simple test to tell if your copy (and related design) is effective? Give your piece to someone unfamiliar with the project and start an 8-second timer. After it goes off, can they explain what it's about? Yes = pass. No = fail. It's that simple.

Examples of **SHORTENING COPY**



Interesting Fact

According to HubSpot, our attention span is only 8.25 seconds...that's shorter than a goldfish!



SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

Healthcare Payers | Appeals and Grievances

Drive member and provider satisfaction while enforcing compliance

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires that every appeal and grievance is completely tracked, managed and documented to certain specifications. Getting it wrong can mean lengthy audits, corrective actions and even stiff fines. Most health plans rely on complex manual processes to manage deadlines, expedite urgent appeals, document the appeal process and report internally and outside the organization.

The Kiriworks Appeals & Grievances (A&G) solution provides a

TRACKS ALL DOCUMENTATION,
REGARDLESS OF SOURCE

PROVIDES REAL-TIME
PROCESS INSIGHT

SUPPORTS COMPLIANCE WITH
DETAILED AUDIT TRAIL



6 HOSPITALS



1,000
MEDICAL STAFF



9,784
EMPLOYEES



DEADLY SIN #5

**Burying *compelling*
information.**

Deadly Sin #5

BURYING COMPELLING INFORMATION

What's the most compelling part about any case study? The incredible ROI your technology solution provided, of course. So why is that important info buried inside a long paragraph on the last page of your document?

Here are easy tips to get make sure your company's impressive results don't get lost:

- **Use infographics:** Is it more compelling to write that your software improved efficiency by 300% or to show that graphically through icons or charts. (Hint: it's the latter.)
- **Put stats upfront:** If your case study is more than one page, put the good stuff upfront in case readers don't scroll to the next page. Yes, you're giving away the ending...but that's ultimately what your potential clients want to read about anyway.
- **Add in testimonials:** Results are great, but a happy customer is equally important. Add in a testimonial to let your current clients brag on your behalf. Include your customer's company logo and/or headshot to make it even more personal.

Examples of HIGHLIGHTING KEY INFO



From the client

"We know they're able to make the right turns quickly a our goals. Repetition means they're providing a good p Our vendor, Alego Health, set the bar for us."

Dr. Ro

Associate Chief Medical Informa

Interesting Fact

According to HubSpot, infographics are 30x more likely to be read than a text article.

\$1.4
MILLION
NPV

\$1.4 MILLION NET PRESEN

With a positive NPV, reinforced t the decision to move forward wi throughout the organization.

\$75%

75% REDUCTION IN LOST

Increasing the efficiency of proci Alliance to pay outstanding bala early pay discounts.



PROCESS STANDARDIZAT INCREASED EFFICIENCY

Streamlining and electronically i process has led to less manual i delays and has simplified the tra



INCREASED COMPLIANCI

Franciscan Alliance was able to s compliance process with the adc controls built right into the proce

37.5%
↓

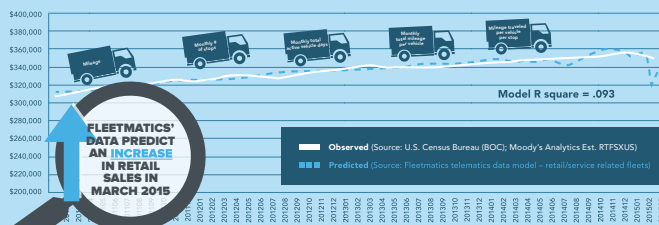
37.5% REDUCTION OF AP

The same 150,000+ invoice worl 24 FTEs and those resources are

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Report revealed a striking correlation between U.S. retail sales trends and small business services activity when compared side-by-side, suggesting that fleet activity is a strong indicator of economic health.

RETAIL SALES & FOOD SERVICES EXCLUDING MOTOR VEHICLE & PARTS U.S. CENSUS BUREAU VS. FLEETMATICS PREDICTED (RETAIL SECTOR RELATED FLEET ACTIVITY)





DEADLY SIN #6

**Prioritizing form
over function.**

Deadly Sin #6

PRIORITIZING FORM OVER FUNCTION

Good design is pretty. Great design is smart. Go beyond focusing on if something looks pretty and ask a tougher question: does this design help my reader get the info they need to complete my goals?

Here are some tricks of the trade to make sure your design is more than just pretty:

- **Put aside personal preferences:** Is green your favorite color? Too bad, if your technology brand's primary color is blue. Leave your personal preferences at the door and make decisions in the best interest of your target customers.
- **Make it match:** It's easy for marketing professionals to get "bored" with their brand after seeing the same design day after day. But what's boring to you is just starting to be recognizable to your customers...so stick with it. Consistency is key!
- **Design for conversions:** CTAs perform best in the middle or at the end of a blog post, when people are ready to convert. A phone number included on a website drive leads. Personalization leads to 6x higher revenue per email. These design decisions are about more than just aesthetics, they're about driving conversions.

Examples of **POWERFUL + PRETTY DESIGN**



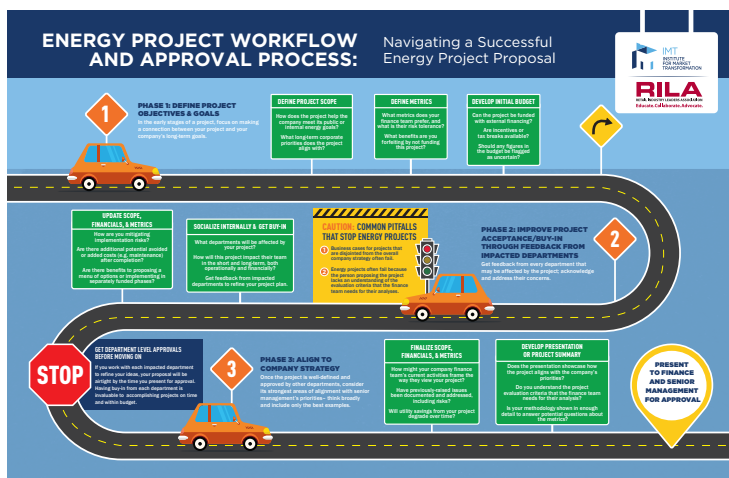
Bonus Resource

Need design-spiration for your website?
Check out this blog post by HubSpot.

“The 8 Elements of Modern Web Design”

CLARITY. CONSISTENCY. ACCELERATION

FLEETMATICS ENTERPRISE





DEADLY SIN #7

**Forgetting *a*
call-to-action.**

Deadly Sin #7

FORGETTING A CALL-TO-ACTION

After reading your sell sheet or downloading your white paper, people won't intuitively know that the next step is to call their sales rep. You need to tell them, *specifically*, what you want them to do. Each. And. Every. Time.

Don't waste your marketing dollars designing pieces that lead users to a dead end... make sure people know what to do next with these easy tips:

- **Call it out:** Don't put your phone number in the last sentence of body copy... call it out! Make it large, bold and colorful. Or reverse it out from a colored box. Or add it as a consistent header or footer element on every page. Literally anything to make it stand out from the rest of the piece.
- **Use compelling language:** The phrase "download now" is simple and straightforward, but also boring and overused. How 'bout one of these alternatives instead? Get your free download. Share your ideas. Get in touch.
- **Make it a button:** Sure, in-text CTAs can be effective, but visually something "pops" much more online when it's in the form of a button. Plus, from a usability perspective, buttons are easier for a person to click, especially on mobile.
- **Don't complicate matters:** Giving someone more options isn't always good thing. Example: Call our 800-number, or your local rep, or send an email to this generic address. Pick one preferred mode of communication for your customers so they're clear on what to do.

Examples of EFFECTIVE CTAS



Bonus Resource

Need ideas for how to design a better CTA graphic? Read our blog post.

"How to Design a Better B2B Content Offer Graphic"



Are You a B2B Inbound Marketing Master?

Think you've earned your black belt in inbound marketing? Rate your skills with this free scorecard!

In under five minutes, you'll learn if you've truly embraced best practice B2B inbound marketing tactics like:

- Why **lead scoring** is important to qualify prospects before passing along to your sales department
- How to properly use **marketing automation workflows**
- Why you should include **"smart" forms** on **gated content**

Last Name*

Email*

Company Name*

Website URL*

Get my free download!

CONCLUSION

By now, you're probably feeling one of two ways: either you're super inspired to run out and redesign everything or you're overwhelmed and don't know where to begin.

Either way, our advice to you is the same: start slow and smart.

First, make a list of the pieces most in need of a visual refresh. Then, make a list of your most important marketing assets (those that have the potential to drive the highest value sales). Whatever appears toward the top of both lists is where you should start.

With a little bit of effort, you should soon be getting positive feedback from management and increased engagement from potential customers...good design is always a win/win!



ONE LAST TIP FOR TECH COMPANIES

For more design examples from our portfolio, visit kiwicreative.net/portfolio

About the Authors



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Jen is the boss lady at Kiwi Creative, a marketing agency that helps B2B technology companies translate technical products and services into a highly effective sales message. A graphic designer by training, she now spends her days working as a marketing strategist and creative director on the agency's top accounts.

In addition to collecting quite a few accolades for her own work, she's also been a two-time judge of the Webby Awards and a repeat speaker at several conferences, including HOW Design Live.



GREG PALYA

*Digital Marketing Strategist
& Amateur Golfer*

With a background in sales and inbound marketing, Greg manages all of Kiwi Creative's client and internal digital marketing efforts. He has an MBA from Walsh University and is on a mission to complete ALL of HubSpot's certifications!

When not tackling Google's latest search algorithms, Greg enjoys playing basketball, golf, fantasy football and ESPN's Streak for the Ca\$h.