116 You Have to Earn the Right to Market

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Before you spend a dollar on marketing, you have to earn the right to spend it.

That means building something that can withstand the scrutiny that marketing invites. Because marketing is, at its core, an invitation — an invitation for people to come experience what you're claiming to offer. When they accept that invitation, the experience has to honor it. If it doesn't, you haven't just failed to convert a new Guest. You've given them a story to tell.

The prerequisite chain: marketing requires product. Product requires culture. Culture requires leadership. Get those three things right — in that order — and you have something worth amplifying. Get them wrong and you'll spend your marketing budget discovering exactly how wrong.

A badly managed business cannot execute great marketing. It can only accelerate the discovery of how badly it's managed. The marketing worked. The business didn't. Now everyone knows.

Earn the product first. The marketing investment pays back when there's something real behind it.

What Changes Tomorrow

Tomorrow, check the prerequisite chain before you invest in marketing: does your culture actually produce a product worth talking about, and does your leadership actually produce that culture? You have to earn the right to market by getting the chain before it right first.