Endless rivers of ink have been written about the importance of engaging the Hispanic market, and it makes sense given the purchasing power and the consumption trends easily attributable to this group. Despite all the arguments and reasons that have been espoused by Chambers of Commerce, Professional Trade Associations and Think Tanks, it seems that the message hasn't reach all the industries. Even B2C companies have done a much better job than the B2B firms have.

Just to refresh our memories with some data, it is important to remember the report published by Nielsen by the end of 2015, in which the market research company quantified the purchasing power of the Hispanic market at $1.4 trillion. But beyond purchasing power, the report presents important trends to consider, such as the fact that every year 800,000 Hispanics turn 18 years old, and that US born Hispanics now represent 64% of the total Hispanic population in the country.

What's happening in the construction industry? I recently visited an international expo, an event where the most recognized construction brands gathered to present their products, services and solutions. There were many creative approaches, but surprisingly not many oriented towards the Hispanic market, even when there was an important group of Latino contractors walking the show, and even when few in the construction industry can deny that Hispanics represent at least 75% of the workforce in the job site. What is more important is that the number of Hispanic-owned construction businesses grows every day, and even in the non-traditional

Nevertheless, when you ask a marketing representative at a construction/ building materials organization if they want to engage with the Hispanic market, I'm absolutely sure that 90 out 100 individuals will answer YES. The problem is that they don't know how to do it, and when most companies try to initiate something and challenges appear- budget shortfalls, organizational restructuring, shifts in goals- the easy answer is to get rid of the Hispanic marketing program. 

Now, I want to share some five tips of mine that every brand can think about, even those outside the construction industry.

1. Make a real commitment to initiate a Hispanic marketing program. Yes, make a commitment and do it. Prepare for the long run. When you are starting operations in a new market it always means challenges for the firm. And what do companies do when they face...
challenges in a foreign market? They incorporate capabilities to understand the market and compete. They don’t quit unless there aren't chances to win. So if you really want to win the Hispanic market for your brand, just decide to achieve it and prepare for the long term.

2. **For Hispanics, relationships come first then business**: in the much of the US there is the idea that you do business with people you know. Hispanics take this concept to an upper level. If you want to win the Hispanic market for your brand, something you may want to do is to build and nurture relationships with this group. Latinos may want to buy your products, but in the B2B world they want to know who represents the brand, and be sure that the representative will be available to answer questions and provide support. Don't forget that your brand isn't the only one in the market and after all is none provides support, then a good option is to buy the most known.

3. **Hire bilingual marketing & sales staff**: I have always promoted that if you live in a country other than yours you definitely have to become proficient in the language spoken in that country, but something that is also true is that it is always better if you can deal with somebody who understands your culture and background, and embraces you as another valued customer. Let's make up the following scenario: You are transferred to China by your employer. Many of the Chinese manufacturing companies understand that American corporations are growing in number in China, and are becoming an interesting potential market. Nevertheless, Chinese Marketing Managers don't understand American way of thinking very well and they aren't proficient in English, while Americans aren't proficient in Chinese. What would be your reaction if based on this scenario Chinese companies start hiring American marketing and sales executives who are bi-cultural and bilingual in English and Chinese? Wouldn't it be a sign of commercial opening? Would you prefer that they'd just say: “Nah... We don't understand that market and they don't understand us. Let's focus in selling our products to Chinese corporations”? So, start by hiring bi-cultural and bilingual staff. You and your brand will learn a lot.

4. **Not all Hispanic groups are equal**: Unfortunately, on more than a few occasions I have heard comments suggesting that Hispanics are a single group. There are 20 different countries in Latin America (there are other sovereign territories and dependencies) and the national sense is very strong among Latin Americans. For example, Not all Central American are equal. There are Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, among others. Citizens of these nations have commonalities, but are at the same time very different among them. Mexicans and Argentinians have some similarities (mostly that both countries speak Spanish, and some terms to name things), but they are more different than similar. This is important to consider when you are building your STP (Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning), before defining your marketing mix, as using the wrong approach can be prejudicial for your brand. I would suggest segmenting your communication according to the region where you are pitching your message or crafting multicultural message that can be well received by all nationalities.
5. **Be patient. Cultural differences can be burdensome**: This last tip can be a wrap up of the other tips above. I would like to emphasize in this idea because obviously the easy move is to quit and focus in the traditional and mainstream markets. Many companies and brands did that. They started vigorously after the 2010 census and the intensity declined over the years, to the point that many big brands abandoned the multicultural/Hispanic marketing approach. But let's review again the report published by Nielsen and we can agree that abandoning this market is not a smart move and is just a proof of a lazy marketing mindset.

It is pretty clear that the world as a market-place has changed (and this includes our local market in the US), and all we need to make adjustments to build a dialectic relationship with the new generations. This relationship must go beyond a mere segmentation to reach a full understanding of the cultural and social differences so we can turn them in revenue opportunities.