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MARKETING  
INTHE TIME  
OF CHOLERA

MARK GAYDOS

**6.5 FUNDAMENTALS FOR**  
**THRIVING IN A TOXIC ECONOMY**

**For Nick**

# Contents

Introduction	4
How to Use This Book	9
Fundamental One: Working on the Phase of the Sales Cycle That Needs the Most Help	17
Fundamental Two: Offering Value Throughout the Marketing Life Cycle	25
Fundamental Three: Keep the Message Simple, Sincere and Relevant	33
Fundamental Four: Driving Awareness by Leveraging the Power of Brands, Trends, Fads, and Initiatives	43
Fundamental Five: Your Customer's Experience Is Just As Important As the Message Itself	50
Fundamental Six: The Power of Indirect Marketing	67
Fundamental Six and a Half: Standing Out in the Crowd	74
Summary: Do You Really Know Your Customer?	81

# Thriving in a Toxic Economy

## Success in a Recession Is in Your Control—Not the Market's

**H**ow can your marketing organization thrive in a recession? How can you make progress when yours and your customers' budgets are being slashed and the overall economy is contracting? How can marketing make any noise when markets are becoming deafeningly quiet? How can your team drive leads when customers are not buying or are buying less as they react to the contracting economy?

Some companies never find the answers to these questions. They do poorly during a recession and some even cease to exist. Others, however, do find the answers and act on them. As a result, they thrive and prosper despite the challenging economic times.

So, what exactly are the magically powerful, fix-all answers to surviving a recession in the world of marketing and sales?

Many industry pundits will advise that this is the time your company should take risks and innovate, though you may have been trying to innovate even before the recession. Others will suggest you create new business processes or completely revamp your organization; yet you may not have the options, money, or time to do this.

A far simpler answer—not magical at all but extremely powerful and effective for surviving and prospering in a recession—is to focus on your marketing fundamentals. This is an exceptionally straightforward, uncomplicated concept, yet painfully difficult to execute properly. But how successfully you focus on your marketing fundamentals and act on them will determine whether your company thrives, does poorly, or simply disappears.

## What Makes a Recession Different for Marketing?

At the start of a recession, you probably still face the same amount of competition for that limited set of customers/deals/transactions. Your budget is still the same, if it hasn't already been reduced. And most likely your company and marketing team

are still being asked to deliver results based on approximately the same goals in this new, tough economic environment.

As the recession worsens and the economy contracts, the challenge for survival heightens. The main problem for a marketing team is that a contracting economy, provided all other elements hold constant, results in all marketing activities generating fewer results. Why? Because buyers are more sensitive and less willing to part with their money. Competitors are more aggressive and focused on getting all the business they possibly can; they will exploit any weaknesses your organization may have. Customers and prospects are less forgiving and willing to put up with errors or challenges in conducting business with your organization. Dedicated focus on your marketing foundation is far more critical than during a normal period, and effective marketing strategies are more essential to your business's survival than before the recession. Everything your marketing organization now does takes on greater importance, has more impact on your business, and ultimately determines whether your business expands, contracts, or disappears.

Given the heightened importance of all marketing activities during a recession, it becomes critical, even mandatory, that a marketing organization closely examine and execute its marketing basics flawlessly. Every part of the marketing process must be functioning at maximum effectiveness. Messages conveyed to customers must be sharp and polished. Programs must be executed faultlessly while also staying focused on accomplishing their goals. From product creation to messaging to lead generation to deal closing, marketing must give error-free support to the sales process. In a tough economic environment, deals and customers are more scarce, and you can't afford any slip-ups or flaws in your marketing activities.

Sounds straightforward, doesn't it? However, one of the real challenges is that most basic marketing errors are not so noticeable and easy to catch. Certainly a typo in an advertisement or in a piece of collateral is obvious and easy to fix. But the dangerous errors marketing organizations make are usually not so apparent and often go unnoticed because they are so subtle. Yet the ramifications of these errors are very real and potentially devastating, such as lower conversion rates between customer inquiries and leads; higher expense rates to generate leads; lower deal-closure rates, and less actual revenue for your organization. It's like an army fighting against a soft wind: They can't quite put their finger on it, but something always works against them at every turn. And as a result, every battle seems that much harder. This is what it is like when marketing basics aren't quite right during the challenges of a recession. Every phase of the sales cycle gets harder and results get weaker.

Often problems in marketing are hard to discern. For example, when messaging targets the wrong audience or conveys a weak value proposition for that given audience, often a marketing organization doesn't find out about the real issue. Instead, they generate poor results and continue to push forward, not realizing they could increase their results substantially by finding out why that message is not

resonating and fixing it. When prospects read a marketing piece and are turned off by a single word or erroneous sentence, most marketing organizations don't hear about it—at least, they don't hear about most such occurrences. These kinds of issues are very subjective and often fly below the radar of marketing teams because prospects are not going to contact you to tell you why your marketing was not interesting to them. Remember, your spouse might tell you when things suck, but prospects don't.

The margin of error allowed for your marketing programs/activities during a recession is reduced dramatically and dangerously. In a stronger economy, errors are more easily overlooked or at least dismissed as part of the cost of doing business. However, in a contracting economy, the ramifications of these types of errors are magnified immensely and can be disastrous, even fatal, to a marketing organization's effectiveness. Everything must work without issue; otherwise, marketing's activities run the risk of total failure.

Although this book emphasizes the importance of marketing fundamentals, it does not represent an excuse to slip into the paralysis of analysis. Too often marketing teams analyze things to such a degree that they impede their ability to execute. Rapid execution is the hallmark of any good marketing organization, and the proposal that a marketing organization evaluate their fundamentals should not be allowed to hamper the speed at which they execute. Perfection is not and cannot be the goal—if it is, your organization may never get anything done.

### **Fundamentals Are Key to New Initiatives**

Not only are fundamentals important to your day-to-day business in a recession, but if your company decides to innovate, these new initiatives or products or processes will be highly dependent on basic marketing principles. Innovating with new product offerings or new messaging or creating unique campaigns is all dependent on basic marketing being in place and functioning properly. If the basics are *not* in place, there really is no point in undertaking anything more advanced or implementing anything more innovative, as these initiatives will most likely fail without competent marketing support.

Consider the case of a computer hardware manufacturer that spent a significant sum of time and money developing a new piece of technology for complex datacenter environments. To announce the new product, the marketing organization sent an e-mail blast with new messaging targeted specifically at financial service customers. There was a huge response in the number of people who came back to the Web site due to this e-mail campaign. But was the campaign successful? You would likely think it was, as did the marketing team, but despite the Web site flurry of activity, the campaign ultimately failed.

From the perspective of the VP of sales, the blast was not successful because the campaign generated very few new sales. The manufacturer's Web site didn't have compelling collateral to engage the audience once they became aware of the product and came to the Web site. Marketing had not supported the entire sales process—only the initial-interest phase. Without solid marketing basics in place throughout the sales process, this company's innovation was not as successful as it could/should have been.

Has your company ever created a great deal of interest in a product but not captured the sales you were hoping for?

Your company's sales depend on marketing fundamentals being in place and functioning coherently as a complete, effective process. During a recession or in any sort of market with challenging dynamics, the importance of these fundamentals becomes extremely critical.

### **Why Do Fundamentals Become Weak or Get out of Alignment?**

You would think the one thing a marketing organization would perform well would be its fundamentals—functions such as messaging and campaign/program execution. However, a majority of organizations have something wrong with at least one of their marketing basics and many have elements wrong with several areas. Why does this happen?

The answer: Most organizations operate in one of two modes and usually oscillate rapidly between the two. They function both strategically and tactically. Strategically they will think of ways to innovate and perform new programs or create new messaging or target new audiences with their marketing activities. In other words, they are thinking of new ways of reaching customers with compelling messages to motivate them to buy. Yet the other mode in which marketing will operate is tactically trying to execute as many programs and campaigns as they possibly can. During a recession, they may even be asked to do more with fewer resources, so their tactical activities may increase, only exacerbating the somewhat frenzied situation.

Marketing must find time to closely examine its fundamentals. Because there is a always shortage of time and resources to do all the things you want to do in marketing, and even more so during a recession, there tends to be little time to ensure that certain key marketing basics are in place. People tend to leverage existing messaging or existing resources or just about anything they have done prior in order to execute more rapidly. There is nothing wrong with this in itself, except, every so often a marketing organization should step back and look at the foundation of their marketing programs to determine whether they are still on target and in alignment with the needs of the market. Maybe their messaging is no longer the right messaging for a particular market segment. Perhaps their once-effective templates are now "tired" and need to be refreshed. Maybe their case

studies and customer testimonials are just outdated and irrelevant to current market conditions. Marketing basics can get out of alignment in many ways. The market moves very fast today, and in a recession, you especially have to make certain all your fundamentals are effective.

### **My Provocative Challenge**

By now you are probably saying, “Of course fundamentals are important in just about any endeavor, including marketing. So what?” And my response to this is to offer you a provocative hypothesis: Your marketing fundamentals are out of alignment right now! As a result, you could be generating better results *today* with the resources you already have. The quickest way to increase your sales doesn’t depend on your making some bold move or to engage in a completely new way of doing business; instead it lies in doing what you already do today, but doing it *better!*

Here I challenge you to evaluate your fundamentals, not from your own perspective but from the perspective of your prospects and customers. For when you step outside of your organization and can objectively look at the basics of your marketing messaging, programs, and activities, from the same perspective as your customers look at them, you may find there are significant improvements you can make to increase revenue during any economic period, but especially during the challenges of an economic recession.

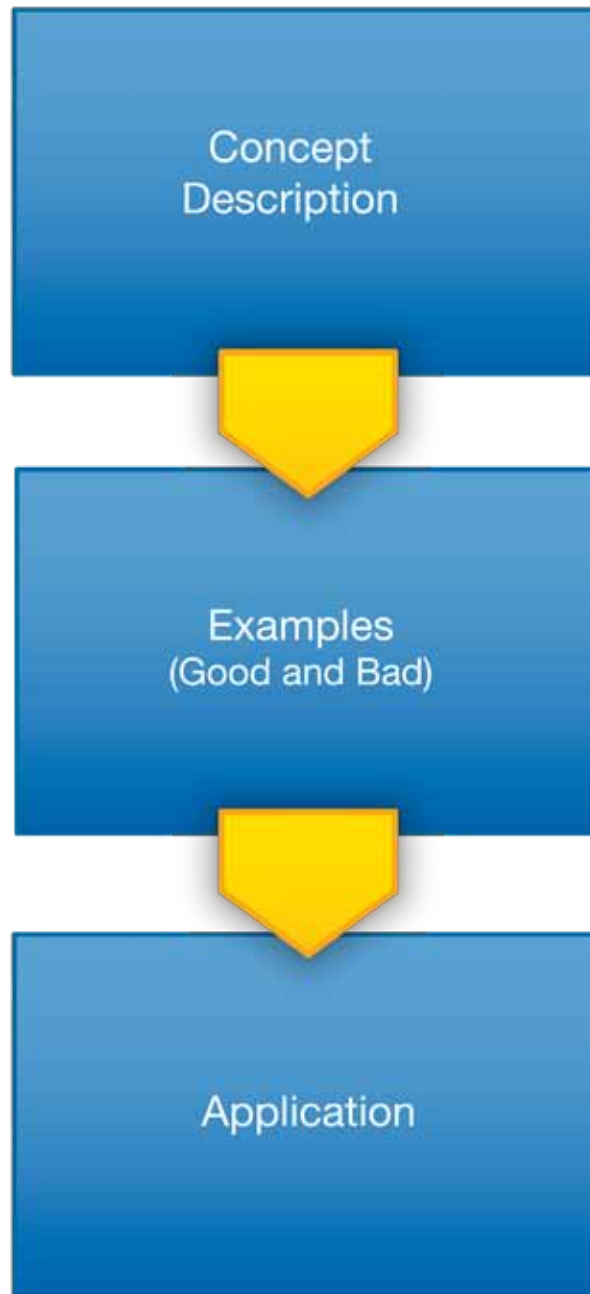
# How to Use This Book

Get it? Got it! Good!

**K**een appreciation, understanding, and practice of the underlying principles of marketing are absolutely essential to an organization's marketing and sales success. This book does not cover all the basics of marketing. It focuses instead on some of the more common issues that marketing teams often have with their marketing methods. Each of the 6½ fundamentals discussed in this book addresses an individual element of marketing. The book does not look at marketing from a strategic perspective but more from an operational view and more from the perspective of how to get more out of your tactics. Most likely your organization will be executing some of these marketing disciplines effectively. That's great. However, there's a good chance you can get more out of your current marketing efforts. This book will help you evaluate and think about your marketing basics in a new, fresh way. Not only does it help you think about these marketing principles; it attempts to give you ways to evaluate and potentially improve them.

Each chapter will cover one marketing fundamental and include three distinct sections. The first section will describe the essence of the marketing principle being examined. What is it? What is meant by it? Why is that fundamental important? And how do marketing teams often make errors with that area of marketing? The second section of the chapter will give examples of this marketing area being executed poorly and/or properly. The third section will offer ways in which your team might evaluate your own marketing basics and/or potentially brainstorm how to improve that area. In essence, the third section of each chapter, titled "Application," will enable you to ask yourself if you perform that function effectively and if there are potential ways to extract more value out of that specific area in your marketing. Thus each chapter has three sections: concept, examples, and application.

## Fundamental X



*Figure A-1: Design of Chapters*

## **Getting the Most out of the Application Sections**

The application sections in this book are presented in a way that you could potentially use them at a marketing off-site. The goal would be to go to an off-site (usually away from your office, though that is not always the case), take one or more of the marketing concepts, and discuss it/them among key marketing team members or stakeholders in your organization. To get the most out of these sections of the book, you must be as open and honest with yourself about your own marketing efforts as you can be. You can be certain that some areas of marketing your organization will do better than others. If this book helps you with just one of the areas, it will have been worthwhile for you. However, for you to get the most out of any section, you will need to be willing to honestly evaluate your own marketing and how you can improve it. Self-reflection can be very challenging, but it is essential if you are to improve your marketing foundation.

If you objectively evaluate how effectively your marketing team executes these 6½ fundamentals, you will find ways to improve your marketing in one or more ways. Often it is self-reflection that brings forth the best improvements in all parts of our lives, and your marketing team can certainly benefit from this truth as well.

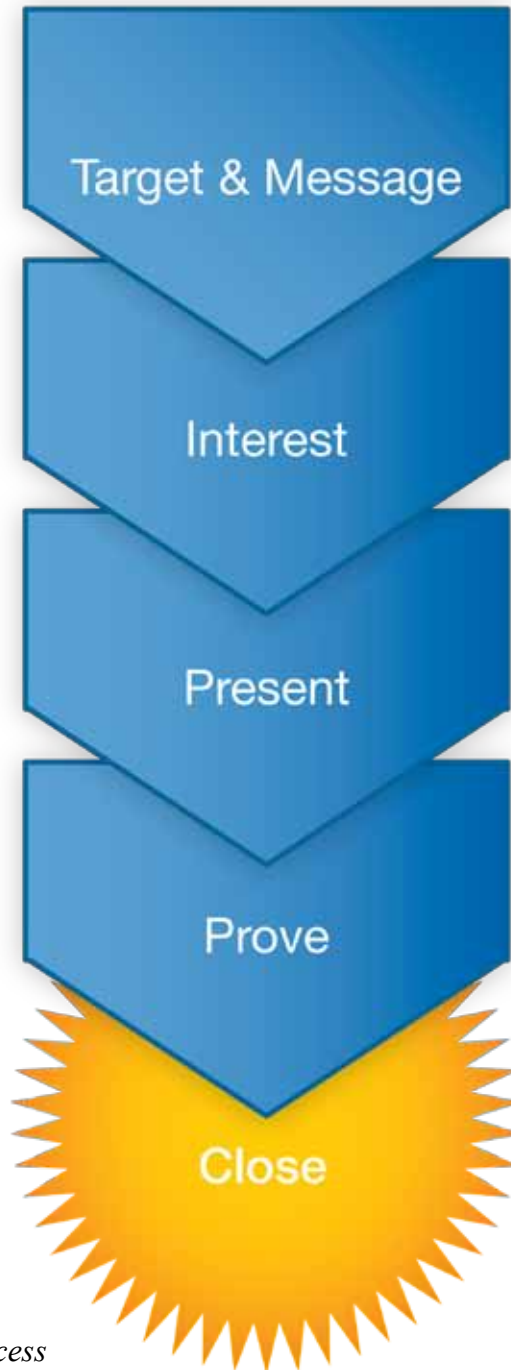
## **The Marketing/Sales Life Cycle**

Before we get into the 6½ fundamental rules of marketing during a recession, it will be helpful to explain the role of marketing in terms of a simplistic, phased sales process. The rest of this book will refer back to this basic model.

In most companies, one of the main functions of the marketing organization is to support the sales cycle by providing whatever tools, collateral, programs, messaging, advertising, resources, and leads necessary to ensure that the sales process flows smoothly. Even if a marketing organization focuses only at a high level to create brand awareness, it will perform this function in the name of helping the short-term or long-term goals of sales. In other words, if you are in marketing, you should be thinking about sales/revenue.

Breaking-down the marketing/sales process into the following five sequential phases of the sales life cycle is one of the most basic ways of looking at the marketing/sales process. These five phases are Target, Interest, Present, Prove, Close.

# Sales Process



*Figure A-2: The Sales Process*

## Target Phase

During the target phase, your marketing organization must first determine who their target audiences are: whom they are trying to influence or motivate to buy a given product and/or service. This phase is critical, for it is during this stage of the sales cycle that customized messaging is created to be used in later phases for each of the respective target audiences.

## Interest

Once your organization has successfully determined who your target audiences are, and has created compelling messaging for those various groups, you will then seek to make those audiences aware of your company and get them interested in a specific product. This should not be confused with the next phase where marketing presents a more complete story to the target audience. The goal of the interest phase is limited to getting the attention of the target audience using something related to your company or products. The time lapse between this phase and the next, when you actually present to the audience, may be seconds or months, or perhaps even years (e.g., a car company might interest you with a specific car, but it may be months before you go to their site to see a more in-depth presentation). The key during the interest phase is to get your products noticed and to generate interest for them among people in your target audiences.

## Present

Once you have generated interest in your target audience, you can move the prospect to the present phase. During the present phase, marketing or sales delivers the key-value propositions of the product: the reason(s) why the potential customers should be interested in purchasing the given product. This can be cost savings, increased revenue, time savings, or any of a variety of perceived or real benefits in the mind of the prospect. The key during this phase is focusing on the value the customer will receive, and not necessarily how the offering is different than other competitive products (though during this stage many marketing organizations will start referencing qualities unique to their products).

## Prove

The prove phase consists of two main goals: Validate in the mind of the potential customer the value propositions delivered in the present phase *and* convince them that your particular product is the one they should purchase to deliver on those value propositions rather than any competitors' alternatives. The main goal in this phase is to convince potential customers that your organization can fill their needs better than any other alternative.

## Close

In the final phase of this model, the goal is to close deals with prospective customers and convert them into actual customers. In some organizations, the marketing department may be completely responsible for this phase, whereas in other more “high-touch” businesses, the marketing department may relinquish this entirely to the sales organization. Even in those high-touch scenarios, marketing may still provide tools or materials or training to help sales close business.

Again, this sales model is simplistic. It does not go into “follow on sales” with the same customer. It also isn’t considering brand management and some of the higher-level strategic-marketing functions. It is a basic, straightforward model that focuses on the core sales process. But as mentioned previously, to successfully market during a recession, one has to ensure one’s marketing foundation is in order. In describing the 6½ basic principles of marketing during a recession, this sales model will be helpful, not because it is all-encompassing (which it is not), but because it is brutally simplistic and focused.

## How Fundamentals Affect the Sales Life Cycle

Improving your marketing basics can have a much greater and more rapid impact on your business during a recession than just about anything else you could do. Why? Let’s use an example. Let’s say you have identified one hundred potential customers who might be interested in your products. Now, let’s take those one hundred prospects through the five distinct sales stages. You create interest with prospects from your target audience, you present your product/solution to them, you prove you are the right company for them to purchase this product/solution from, and you close a certain number of deals. If each of these stages is able to move 50% of the prospects to the next stage through the entire pipeline, you will have the first set of results results shown on the next page.

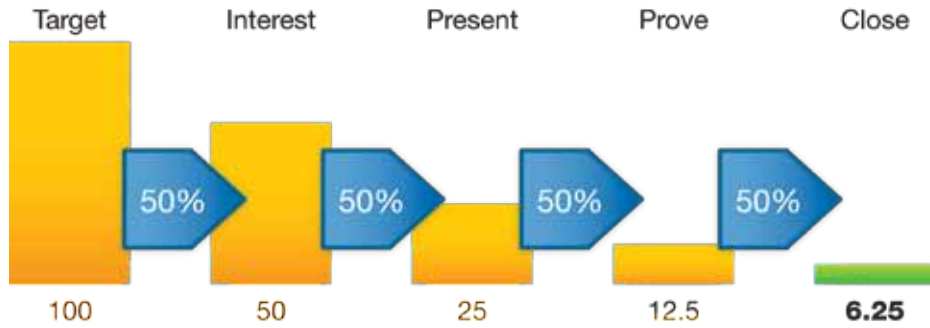
In the first scenario, you end up closing 6.25 deals for each one hundred prospects you target and put through your marketing process. Now, let’s see what happens if we can improve each of the stages by just 5%.

As you can see from the second diagram, if we improve the results by 5% at each stage, we increase the number of closed customers from 6.25 to 9.15, an almost 50% increase in closed customers.

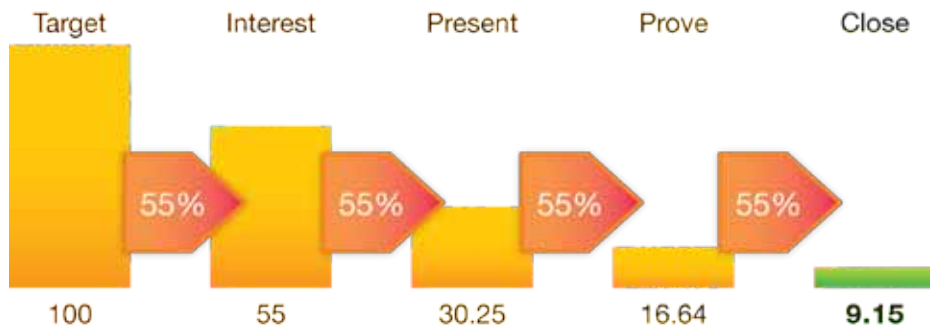
However, it may be unrealistic to improve all four of the transitions between the five stages. Let’s make a different assumption for the third diagram and improve only the stages between target and interest along with interest and present (two areas on which marketing tends to have more impact in many sales cycles). Let’s improve these two phases by 10% for a total of 60% effectiveness.

The net result is we close 9 deals, again almost a 50% increase in close rate from our original example.

### Sales Process Example



### Sales Process 5% Improvement in Each Phase



### Sales Process 10% Improvement in Interest and Present Phases

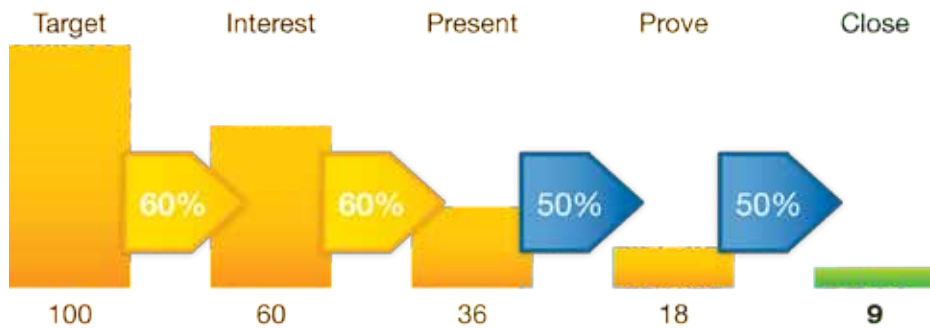


Figure A-3.1-4

Thus, if you improve your existing marketing processes, there is a great deal of potential upside to closing more business.

### **The Unexamined Marketing Group**

As mentioned previously, if you step back and objectively look at your own marketing tactics, you may find you can improve the effectiveness within your own organization of one or two of the marketing rules covered here. If that is the case, the exercise of evaluating the quality of your marketing tactics proposed in this book will have been valuable and hopefully your organization will have a better chance of thriving in a recession.

Socrates said the unexamined life is not worth living. Indeed, the unexamined marketing fundamentals may have the same result for your company: a business that doesn't reflect on what it is doing may cease to be of worth—and may cease *being* all together. May some very worthwhile self-examination of your marketing efforts enable your business to prosper in spite of challenging economic times!

# 1

## FUNDAMENTAL 1: Does Your Sales Pipeline Need Roto-Rooter?

### Working on the Phase of the Sales Cycle That Needs the Most Help

#### Fundamental 1: Concept

The first fundamental a marketing team should examine is where the sales cycle may be broken or, to express this more positively, what part of the sales cycle could be improved the most for the least amount of time and money investment.

There are usually two goals for any marketing team: to put more prospects into the sales process and increase the percentage of prospects who actually purchase (the close rate). Many times companies focus on the wrong part of the sales cycle and pile attention on a part of the sales cycle that just isn't broken. For your sales cycle to flow smoothly, each part of the sales process has to be functioning effectively. You must target the right audiences with the right messages. Once they enter your sales process, they must be taken through each of the steps previously mentioned in an effective fashion until they finally purchase and you close business with them. Of course, there will not be a one-to-one ratio between the number of prospects entering the sales process at the beginning of the sales cycle and the number who actually make a purchase. Some prospects naturally drop out of the sales cycle for a variety of reasons: they aren't really interested, the product isn't what they were actually looking for, the product doesn't fit their needs, they go with a competitive product, etc. However, the higher the ratio of customers who purchase compared to those who enter the sales cycle, the better off you are. That's a no-brainer.

The challenge is that often marketing teams will give attention to fixing the wrong part of the sales cycle. They will apply focus, time, and resources to improving a particular stage in the sales cycle, when a completely different phase is actually causing the most problems in closing business with prospects.

One of the most common examples of focusing on the wrong part of the sales cycle is a sales organization demanding that marketing find more and more leads regardless of how effectively those leads are being processed. When more leads are generated, often with a substantial increase in cost per lead acquired, problems still remain. And the cry again goes out from sales to marketing for “more leads!”

Using the previously described basic sales model, we would most likely assume a request for more leads means there is less activity in the sales pipeline and there is not enough interest in the product. But is this true? Often the request for more leads is a knee-jerk response from sales if they are having challenges of any sort. It behooves the marketing team to dig deeper and understand what is actually happening to customer inquiries or leads that are being generated. It could be that sales does indeed need more leads, but that might not be the case. The true problem could be anywhere along the sales continuum.

### **Common Issues Moving from Target Phase to Interest Phase**

If not enough people are showing interest in your products, a variety of issues could be the cause. You may be targeting the wrong audience or using the wrong message for that audience, or you may not be engaging prospects in the right way, and hence results are poor. One of the big challenges during the target phase is often not knowing there is an issue with this phase until other phases of the sales cycle start showing poor results.

### **Common Issues with the Present Phase**

Issues with the present phases can be varied. Interested prospects may not understand the value proposition of your company as it is being presented to them, or they may just not find the value proposition interesting.

### **Common Issues with the Prove Phase**

Prospects may not understand why they should buy from your company. If you have issues with this phase, you may not have differentiated yourself effectively from competitors, or the differentiation you have communicated may not be compelling.

### **Common Issues with the Close Phase**

The prospects’ experience may not be compelling enough for them to actually purchase. They might find value in your product offering but not feel a sense of urgency that requires them to take action immediately.

The key with evaluating this fundamental is to look at the sales process objectively and understand where the issues really lie. All phases will have an effect on the amount of revenue being generated, but any of the phases could be causing an issue.

## **Fundamental 1: Examples**

### **Focusing on the Wrong Part of the Sales Cycle: High-Tech Example**

The vice president of sales at a software maker that sells to large companies went to the marketing team and told them the sales department needed more leads because the sales pipeline was down from the previous year. In a knee-jerk reaction to the request, the marketing team scrambled rapidly to find budget and implemented two new campaigns on top of existing campaigns that were already underway. Three months after the campaigns had been rolled-out, there had been little effect on the sales pipeline and its steady decrease in growth.

Analysis showed that generally the number of inquiries coming in from prospects had substantially increased over the previous year even before the new campaigns had been implemented. The issue was that during the presentation phase, these prospects were dropping out of the sales cycle and going away. After several calls to prospects to find out why they had not continued with the process, the marketing team learned they were just confused by the company's messaging after they came to the Web site and the overall value the company could provide. The marketing team had been focusing on the interest phases of the sales cycle when the issues really lay with the presentation phase.

### **Focusing on Branding Instead of the Sales Cycle: Education Example**

A very well-known educational institution was looking to increase the enrollment in its continuing adult education program. The brand and overall impression of this establishment were impeccable, not only locally but worldwide. In order to attempt to increase interest in various classes being offered during the upcoming semester, the marketing team placed ads on the sides of buses in the city where the school was located. These advertisements showed only the name of the school and the image of a happy adult student. There were no specific references to the programs and classes being offered, no well-defined message, no call to action. The institution representatives were very disappointed in the results of these advertisements because they did not increase interest in their classes.

The issue was they were trying to bolster the number of people interested in their specific classes by using a marketing program targeted at driving general awareness of the institution. Certainly, one could make the argument that just making people aware of the school might drive people to think about taking a class, but more effective marketing would include a clear, inviting message about specific programs that would lead to course enrollment, the goal of the educational institution. The

advertisements would have been much more effective if they had provided course information or piqued interest in checking out the course catalog (Learn a new skill! Improve your job performance! Get that promotion!)—and asked outright for the sale (Register now! Call 800-555-5555!). They were focusing on the branding of the institution, whereas they should have focused on the sales cycle—promoting their products (classes) and helping close sales (increase enrollment).

### **Focusing on the Wrong Part of the Sales Cycle: Medical Device Example**

Even though the marketing organization at a particular medical device company could show that their efforts were bringing in leads, the vice president of sales disagreed. He claimed that he and his team members were not seeing marketing campaigns in the market and that as a result, sales pipeline activity was dropping. The marketing team showed report after report that indicated their efforts were resulting in increased interest in the company's products; yet the sales team still felt the cause of the slowdown in the sales pipeline was insufficient "air-cover," meaning that general awareness in the marketplace was insufficient.

In response to the sales department's feelings, the marketing team chose to create a large banner with the company's logo and current tagline. They bought expensive, prominent space to hang the banner in the local airport of the headquarters where most of the sales people were based. Ultimately this had very little effect on the actual pipeline, but the sales team was placated to some degree as they now saw awareness they had not seen before.

It is difficult to know exactly where in the sales process the problem issue lay. Marketing felt it was driving adequate interest in the company's products, but no analysis was done to pinpoint why the pipeline was shrinking. In this instance, marketing chose not to address the problem with the sales pipeline but instead to placate the sales team's concerns. Rather than solving the problem beyond the interest stage of the sales cycle, they focused on driving general awareness. Whether awareness was created outside the company's sales force is even questionable. This may have been a politically correct solution, but it was not a solution to the true problem and to the need to increase the pipeline of potential deals.

### **Executive Anecdote**

I once spoke to a sales executive at a very large business-to-business Fortune 500 company who made a very telling comment about how his marketing organization was functioning. Over an eight-week period, significant resources went into producing a new piece of collateral. A large number of e-mails were exchanged debating how the document should be positioned and how the piece should be properly worded. Finally, after gathering feedback from more than a dozen people and obtaining approval of the piece from half a dozen more, the piece of collateral

was completed. Upon receiving the final version, which was created for this particular executive's sales team, he made the comment, "I wish they would just spend one-quarter of the time they do creating collateral on actually making sure prospects see it."

Although this is just an anecdote, it is obvious that the sales executive had the perception that too much time was being spent creating content and not enough on driving interest with prospects to read the collateral being created. This is a great example of too many resources being applied to the wrong challenge in the sales cycle.

## **Fundamental 1: Application**

### **Objectively Look at Your Process**

To evaluate fundamental #1, you should be able to gauge two things: where your resources (time and money) are going, and what part of your sales cycle has the most challenges.

To evaluate where your resources are going, make a list of all the sales tools, collateral, and materials you have created in the last six months (don't go back farther, because you want to see what you have been focusing on recently). In addition to that list, add all the campaigns, events, and programs your marketing team has worked on in the last six months.

Now objectively categorize all of the items listed. Place an A next to items designed to help refine your targeting of your customer. These can be things such as studies to find new markets or new potential buyers among your existing customers. Also, any project designed to refine your products' messaging would fall into this category. Place a B next to items designed to create interest in prospects in specific products. Place a C next to items mainly focused on presenting the value proposition of your products. A letter D should go next to pieces specifically geared toward differentiating your company from competitors or other potential solutions. A competitive analysis and/or competitive brief for sales people would be examples of things falling into this category.

An E should be placed next to items designed to help close business (these should be tools that focus on helping sales close business). Note that the key to an item helping close business is that it must help create a true sense of urgency in the customer and help them justify making a purchase (for example, an ROI calculator might fall into this category). It is very hard to create materials that actually focus on helping close deals. Much of the responsibility of the close phase falls on sales.

If an item straddles two areas, it should be put in both areas. Do not place items in three areas. Of course, there are marketing items designed to fall into three areas, such as creating interest, presenting the value proposition of your products and proving your products are the right solution. However, force yourself to choose

which one or two buckets a tool/campaign/collateral/event piece should go into. For instance, if you purchased a booth at a conference to perform all functions of the sales cycle, then you need to determine if generating interest, presenting your solution, differentiating yourself from competitors or closing business was the main reason for attending the event.

Now tabulate the number of items in each of the respective categories. How many A items do you have, how many B items, and so forth.

The second part of the application section is to find out where you are most challenged. The best way to do this is to talk to and/or take a poll of all or some of your sales team or whoever is responsible for ensuring bookings/revenue is coming in to your organization. Explain to these people the general five-step sales process described above and ask them where they think they have the most difficulty and the area that comes as the second-most challenging. Attribute a 3 to the most challenging area and a 1 to the second-most challenging area; then tabulate your findings for each of the respective stages.

For example, Sally tells you she is having difficulty closing business and second, she needs more leads. This would mean category E gets 3 points and category B gets 1 point. Peter, on the other hand, tells you he's finding it hard to justify why your products are better than your competitors' and that is his only issue. In this case, just give category D 3 points. Harry comes back and says the leads he gets are for the wrong types of companies and that he also has a tough time closing deals. In this situation, give 3 points to category A and 1 point to category E.

### **Creating the Six-Column Resource Graph**

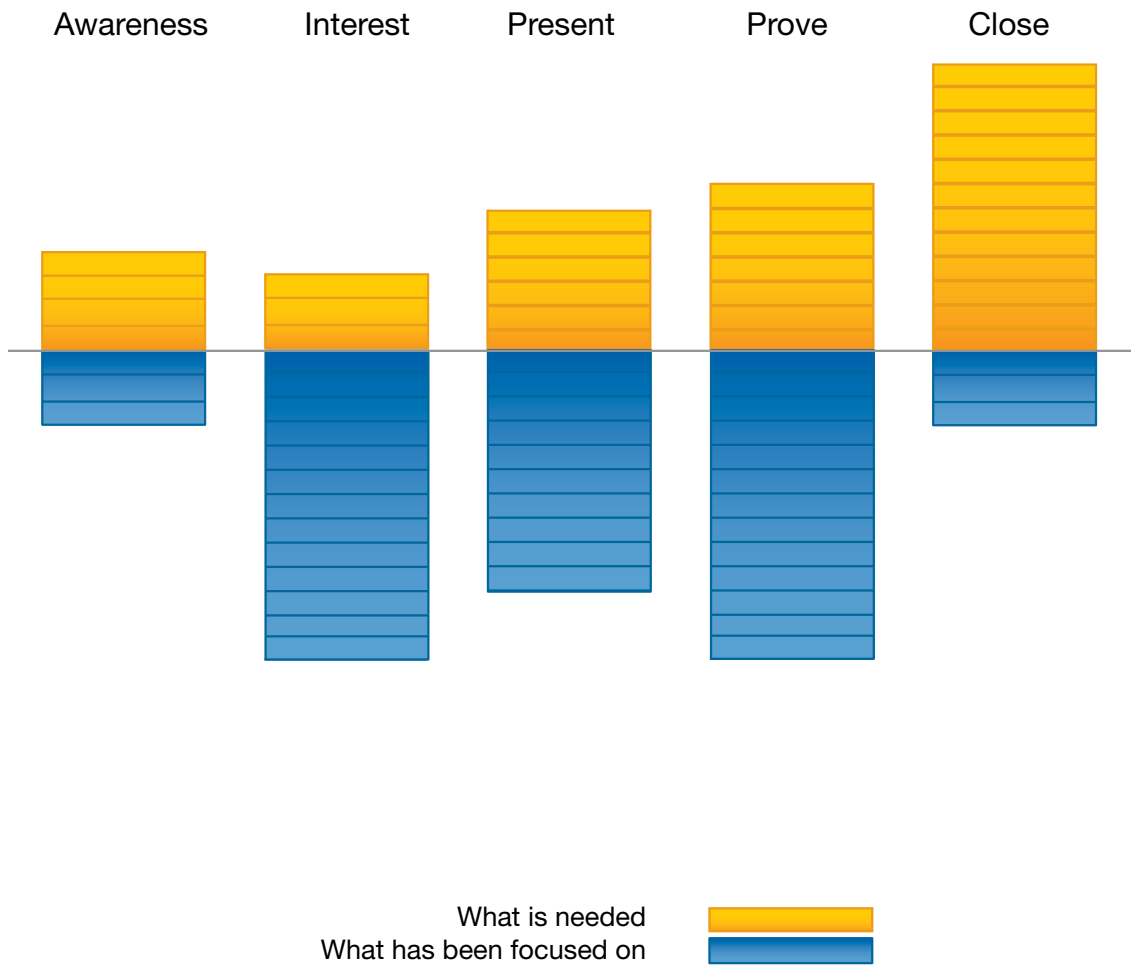
Now create six columns on a sheet of paper and draw a line splitting the six columns in half (See graphic on next page). Now, above the line put the total number of resources you have been working on for each respective area. Then below the line put the number for each respective area that is currently having challenges.

If the majority of resources are being applied to the area(s) most challenging for the organization, you have a good marketing balance. At this point, you may want to just discuss how you take the most challenging phase in the sales process reported by the sales people and make the existing tools, campaigns, and collateral even more effective.

If you have a discrepancy between where you are applying resources and where the sales process is most challenged, you may wish to determine how your marketing team can assist sales in that specific area. Perhaps more resources can be shifted in that direction or existing resources can be refined based on sales personnel and market feedback.

In the graphic example depicted, one can see that those responsible for sales are feeling that the organization needs more help toward the end of the sales cycle. This could be because a large number of resources have been applied to helping

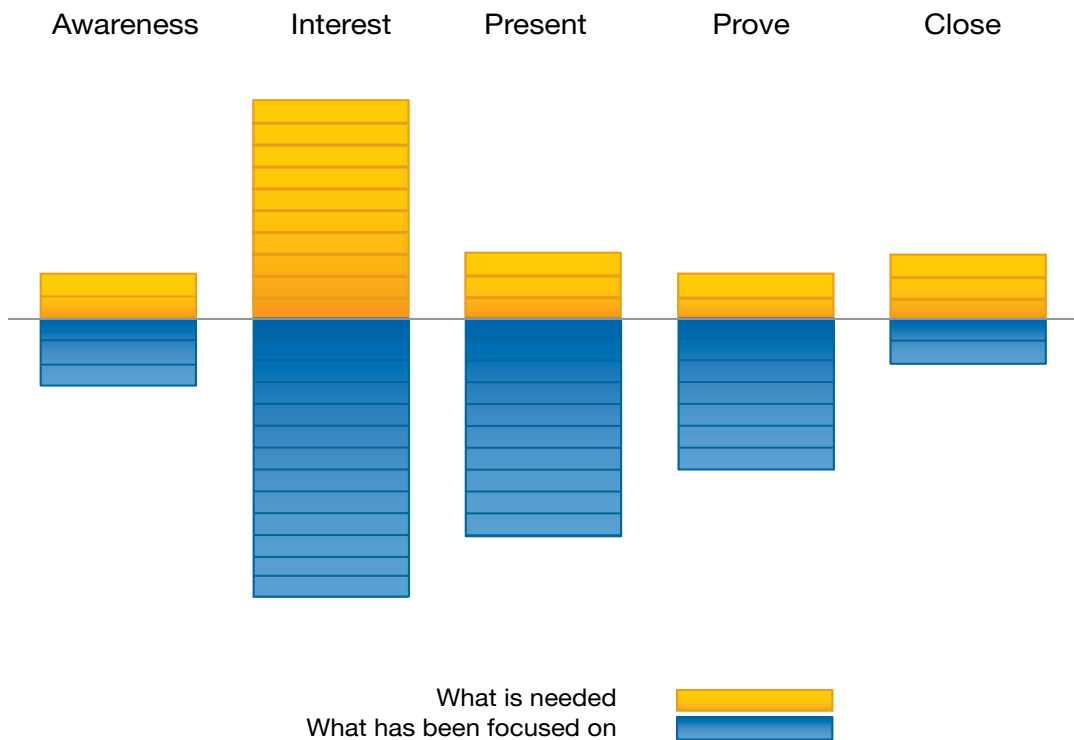
## What Has Been Focused On Out of Balance with Need



*The Five-Column Resource Need & Allocation Graph*

the beginning of the cycle and, because the sales people see the results of those resources at that point, they are not concerned about that stage of the process. Either way, it gives a marketing organization good insight into the area(s) where they may wish or need to invest more resources.

### What Has Been Focused On In Balance with Current Need



The graphic depicted above shows that sales is more concerned with driving more interest in the company’s products. This is exactly where most resources are going at this time. The other areas of the sales cycle have some amount of need, but the resources being applied seem to be taking care of the needs in each respective area. In this scenario, the marketing team may want to discuss how to make the resources they are currently applying to driving interest more effective. This will be discussed in upcoming chapters.

The most important thing to ensure is that you are applying your resources to the area in the sales cycle where there truly are issues needing attention. Once you evaluate where you are applying marketing resources and efforts, you may find that you are not focusing on the right issue(s) in the sales cycle.

# 2

## FUNDAMENTAL 2: VALUE TALKS; BULLSHIT WALKS

### Offering Value Throughout the Marketing Life Cycle

#### Fundamental 2: The Concept

Customers are interested in value. They are interested in providing value to their own customers, but more relevant to a marketing person, they are interested in receiving value from the vendors with whom they conduct business. When a company or consumer buys anything, they are looking to benefit from that purchase, whether the benefit is real or perceived. They part with their money because they believe they will be better off or, expressed another way, that they will receive *value*.

Thus, if we assume customers of any kind are looking to obtain value, it would follow that a marketing organization should also be interested in providing value to potential customers, even before customers actually purchase. Yet many marketing organizations do not provide value before a sale occurs. What they actually offer is the “promise” of value to their prospective customers in the form of claims about their products or services, making statements that if the customer buys the products/services, they will receive some amount of benefit from the item being purchased.

In today’s dynamic, high-paced market, the world is cluttered with companies making promises about their products and performing marketing campaigns/advertising. As a result, it is very challenging to get traction in the minds of prospective customers. This situation is exacerbated during a recession because, in a contracting market, most customers are not interested in making any sort of expenditure. They are not interested in hearing promises of what value they might receive from a given product. Understandably, they are far more interested in

holding on to their money.

It is during these challenging economic times, more than ever, that marketing teams must earn the right to sell their products to customers before the customers actually buy. A company earns that right by providing value during the sales cycle prior to the customer buying anything. Before the customer has even spent a dime, the company vying for that customer's business must give them value in some shape or form, thus earning the right to be considered.

This can be done in a variety of ways. Some companies offer a free trial of their product(s) for a limited amount of time. Other companies offer a "freemium" approach, whereby they offer free use of a limited version of their product and the customer must purchase to get the "premium" version of the product that provides additional value. Still other companies offer free samples.

Even companies without such options available can offer information, one of the most valuable things to prospects. This can take the form of white papers or tutorials or objective market research that helps give a prospect insight into their own business or, in the case of a consumer, into their own life.

Perhaps it helps them understand why they would consider making changes in their business processes.

Maybe it gives them insight into what other companies in their industry are doing.

Maybe the information provides them with an approach or best practices on how to go about making changes to their business.

The information might objectively explain what a prospect should consider before actually purchasing a particular product.

In offering this type of information, your company is giving the customer something of value that they did not already have. And not only have you provided value to a prospect, but you are also helping set yourself up as a trusted advisor and/or vendor to the customer. Once you have earned some level of trust with your customers, you can then begin to market to them further and potentially sell them one of your products. Providing value "opens the door" with your customer.

This information must be objective, useful and respond to the kinds of questions or concerns a customer has, and truly provide value without compensation.

By providing this kind of value, a marketing organization earns the right to engage in a sales cycle with the prospect or customer. Rather than coming empty-handed to the customer with advertising, datasheets, brochures and sales pitches, your organization is now offering a benefit without compensation. There is a fine line between making a sales pitch with collateral/content and truly providing information to educate a customer about their business or life. It's a very subjective thing. Often you know when materials *are* selling a customer and you know when they are *not*. However, there is a great deal of gray area, too, where it's difficult to distinguish between value and sales pitch.

The bottom line is one should attempt to provide value throughout all stages of

the sales cycle, but especially during the early stages, to gain greater access to the customer and earn the right to market further to the prospect. As mentioned earlier, you can deliver this value through free samples, limited use of your products, information the customer will find helpful or by any means that the customer will appreciate and see as a benefit.

Often, marketing organizations fail with this fundamental rule. They send information to prospects, telling them why their products are so wonderful and why they should consider buying those products. There is no doubt that this model can work, but in today's world where customers are barraged with marketing materials online, in their physical mailboxes, e-mail and on the phone, they are more likely than not to ignore blatant pitching and selling. There may actually be benefits to the customer in using your products, but they may not ever truly hear about them if you haven't established a relationship. And during a tough economic cycle, this becomes much more challenging because customers often automatically deflect any direct attempts to sell them on a product, no matter how compelling.

At some point during the sales cycle, your marketing will most likely shift from simply providing more general value to discussing how your products can bring specific value to the customer—this makes sense. It is best to start your initial interactions with a prospect by offering value, not a sales pitch, because the prospect will be more interested in pursuing your product and more likely to request more information.

Free sample → They can ask how to get more.

Limited version → They can ask how to upgrade.

Case study → They can ask how your products helped the customer.

If you start your interactions with a potential customer by pitching your “wares,” you have a chance of creating a negative impression or pushing them away. The far more productive approach is to offer value to your prospect from the outset to pique their interest and encourage them to request more information about a product or service that will be of benefit to them—and thereby start building a relationship that will be of benefit to you both.

## **Fundamental 2: Examples:**

### **Bad Example: We're Great—Buy Us**

The most common error you will see organizations make with this particular fundamental is providing no value. They reach out to potential customers with their own special offers or with claims and promises. We've all received marketing from companies who tell us how great their products are or the awards they have won for this or that. This truly provides no value to the person receiving this kind of empty,

annoying marketing. It does not educate them or give them anything of value to use in their lives or jobs. It's empty, pointless—and it will not result in a sale.

Even if your organization is great and has won some amazing award(s) or praise, you should attempt to provide more value to the customer along every stage of the sales cycle—especially when you are first establishing a relationship with them. It may be true that the award you won captures people's attention, but 1) it may not be as interesting to them as you think it is and 2) saying something compelling alongside your claim will go a long way toward developing a closer relationship with the customer.

### **Good Example: Knowledge About the Industry**

Some companies are very adept at providing value in the form of knowledge or understanding about their given market. Many companies offer industry reports that they or third parties have created so that potential customers can gain a better understanding of their own business. The fact that some item of value, in this case a report, is being offered is often enough to open the door with prospects and help slowly win their trust.

### **Good Example: Things to Consider**

Rather than actually promoting a specific product, many companies will talk about what to consider when buying a particular product like theirs. If a company were to market insurance using a document talking about the five things to consider when buying life insurance, it would be helpful if the concepts were simply stated, easy to grasp, and objective. The more they resemble a sales pitch, the less value they will provide. Other examples might be the “five myths about home security systems” or the results of a survey about companies implementing green technology.

### **Good Example: Case Studies**

Examples or case studies or testimonials of how people/companies are using your product can be a very compelling way to provide value. Such specific information helps educate potential customers, especially if the subjects of the case studies closely resemble your prospects. The more the focus is on the benefit the customer received from your product than on hype about the product itself, the more likely it is that the information will be received well by potential customers.

### **Good Example: ROI or Financial Calculator**

If one of the benefits of your company's product is cost savings or increased revenue, an ROI or financial calculator may be beneficial to your prospects. Both consumer products and business-to-business companies offer these tools. In essence, they allow an individual to enter the specific parameters that apply to a customer's given

situation and the calculator will determine what type of cost savings and/or revenue generation will come as a result of using the product. These specific tools can be useful during many stages of the sales cycle but especially useful during the prove and close phases. The key is that they provide value to the prospect, albeit a value provided to serve the goals of your company, but a value that is perhaps essential to closing the sale and gaining a loyal customer.

### Good Example—Expertise

Recently there has been a large surge of company-offered podcasts and blogs. The most successful ones capture deep domain expertise or knowledge the company has, then record and offer it to their market of potential customers. If the information rings true and sincere and offers insight or knowledge, it can be a very powerful tool during the awareness or interest phases of the sales cycle. If the information is relevant enough, it may bring people back again and again, thus providing an overall buzz for the company that helps prospects throughout all phases of the sales cycle and even beyond.

### Good Example: Free Sample and Free Use

One of the best ways to provide potential customers value is to let them use your product or a sample of the product before they buy. This is harder to do in certain industries but it can be a very compelling way to provide value to prospects before they purchase.

## Fundamental 2: Application

How do you evaluate if you are providing value and how can you provide more value before your customer buys?

### Evaluating Your Marketing Value

To evaluate your own marketing and see how well you adhere to fundamental 2, list the last ten customer-facing programs, campaigns or content you created. For each marketing piece, apply the following:

- If the piece focused on your products, give yourself zero points for that piece.
- If the program or piece focused on what you have done for a customer (case study, testimonial, etc.), give yourself one point.
- If the piece did not mention your products but instead gave potential customers value in the form of insight into the market or things to consider when implementing and/or purchasing your products, give the item two points.
- If it allowed your customer to use the product in some fashion, give yourself 2 points.
- Now total up all the points for all ten marketing programs/pieces.

If you scored below 10, it means you could probably stand to have some more value put into your marketing with customers. If your total is between 10-15, you may be able to infuse more value into your marketing. If you scored above 15, you are doing great in this area and should applaud yourself—and continue to follow this approach.

Marketing Activity	Rating
Website Update	0
Customer Case Study	1
Product Webinar	1
Customer Newsletter	1
Banner Ad	1
New Product Brochure	0
Email Campaign	1
Best Practices Datasheet	2
Industry Survey	2
Product 90-Day Test Drive	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

## Infusing More Marketing Value

The key to adhering to fundamental 2 is to find more ways to provide value during the sales life cycle. Are you capturing all the expertise your organization has about the market and customer needs and sharing it with the world? Are you offering prospects value either in the form of information or tools that will help them with their business? There are many ways to do this, and the key to this exercise and the application of rule 2 is to brainstorm on more ways you could be providing more benefit to your target audience during the sales cycle. Here are some examples you can evaluate for your own use:

### Free Stuff

**Free trial:** Allow your customer to actually use your products for a limited time or for a maximum amount of use.

**Freemium offering:** You offer the customer a limited version of your product and then if they want to upgrade to the full version, they can do so for a cost.

**Free samples:** Offer your customer free samples.

### Remove Headaches

Perform some or all of the tasks/procedures your customer has to accomplish to use your product: For example, if your customer needs to buy samples from you and have them shipped to many of their division locations, help the customer perform this task so they don't have to do it themselves.

Create the internal justification for purchasing your product: Beyond just giving a customer a response to an RFP or RFI, offer to give a customer a document that gives a financial justification for purchasing your product. This can be in the form of an automated tool or maybe a service you offer at no charge. If you sell to consumers, enable them to calculate how much money they will save or how much money they will make or how much more green they will be by using your product.

**Unique financing:** Offer a prospect special financing or payment terms that enable them to more easily acquire your product.

**Insight and Information:** There are many types of information you can offer prospects to help them do their jobs or understand their market better or improve their lives. By providing this value, you not only make their jobs or lives easier, but you also help bolster your relationship with them, which will inevitably lead to a greater chance of doing more business with them. Kinds of information you can gather and give them:

- Issues companies/people like them are facing and dealing with today
- Insight into their market

- Case studies of customers just like them
- Things to consider if they want to use a product like yours. Here you might even convey the challenges of using your product but also present ways to mitigate these challenges so that your product stands out as the best choice.
- Objective research in the market pertaining to the area associated with the product.
- Instructions on how to perform an ROI analysis to determine the value they might gain from your product.
- An actual ROI calculator that lets them determine what value they might derive from using your product.

The key in this exercise is to put yourself in the minds of your potential customers. What are they thinking about? What are their concerns? How can you truly help them and provide more value? Once you do this, you can then explore what you have to offer (products) and what expertise you have (information/insight) and how you can get this into the hands of your prospects to establish/improve their lives and your relationship with them.

# 3

## Fundamental 3: Why aren't prospects listening? Hint: It's not their fault

### Keep the Message Simple, Sincere and Relevant

#### Fundamental 3: Description

**M**arketing activities will fail if the information you are providing your prospects is unclear and/or irrelevant to their needs. As discussed earlier, it's important to provide value to potential customers if you are going to gain and build their trust during the sales cycle. It is also important to know where your prospects go to find information or research products in your industry (we will talk about this with fundamental 6).

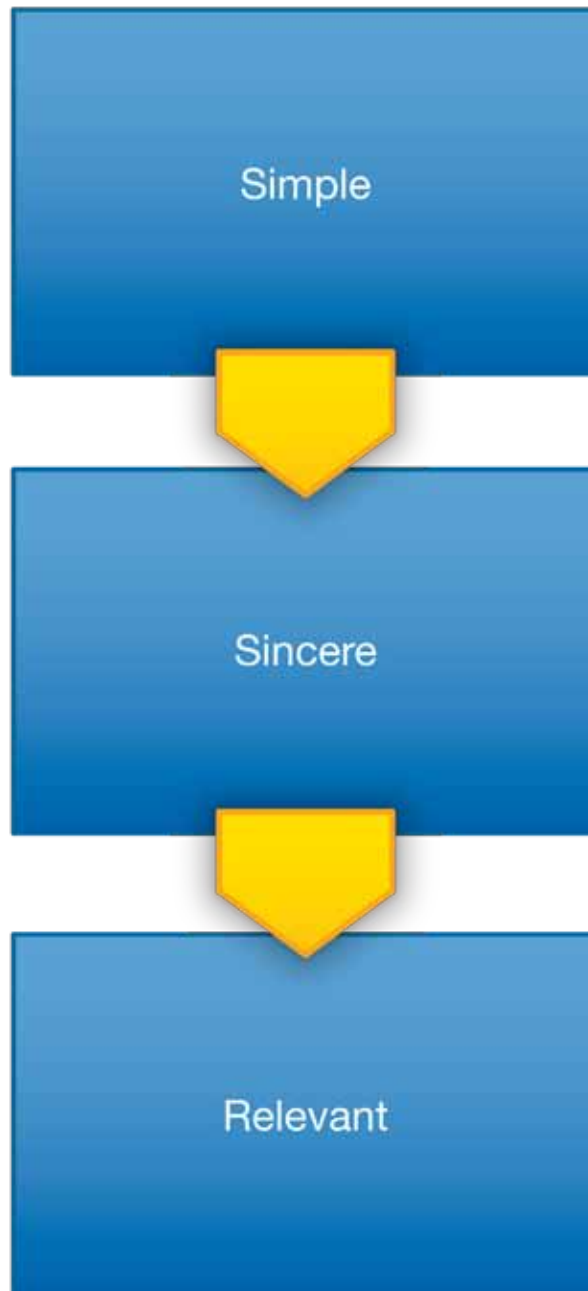
The concept of messaging incorporates two components: what you wish to convey to potential customers and how you communicate that information. The ideas and thoughts you wish to convey to individuals interacting with your marketing materials and how effective your messaging is, will determine to a large extent whether prospective customers will be sufficiently interested in your products. Thus, once you have an idea of what you want to say to clients and of the value you wish to offer them, you must ensure that what you tell them is simple, sincerely stated, and relevant.

#### Simple

In marketing, "simple" does not mean using small words or talking down to prospects. It means conveying a message in a straightforward fashion so the person reading or listening can easily grasp what is being conveyed.

One of the fundamental mistakes marketing teams make is attempting to say

## Effective Messaging



### *3.1 - Effective Messaging*

too much or making their messages too complex for prospects to understand immediately. The key word here is “immediately.” Someone reading or hearing your message should right away “get” what you are trying to convey. If they do not understand the message the first time they read or hear it, you are risking that they will immediately give up and move on to something else. It is better to err on the side of stating the obvious than to run the risk of puzzling your prospect—and losing them.

Just think of your own world. Are you busy? Are you constantly barraged with telemarketing calls, brochures and other marketing materials stuffing your mailbox full, spam e-mails with various offers and obnoxious advertising? Just like you, your prospects don’t have time to waste figuring out what you are telling them and more significantly, they aren’t interested in what you have to say. That’s why you have to make it easy for your prospects by using a simple message that allows them to quickly decide if they want to hear more. If they understand the message and aren’t interested, you probably shouldn’t be marketing to them in the first place. Making the message more complex, involved and difficult to understand isn’t going to change that.

The key to creating a simple message is starting off with a basic concept a prospect understands and is likely to agree with. Optimally, you want to make sure the message’s idea appeals. For example, few customers would object to a message that begins, “Your organization wants to save money.” Certainly, the prospect might think, “Well that is obvious,” but more likely they will continue further into the marketing process to learn more. However, if you start your message with something like, “Your organization wants to distribute costs in a manner that will increase efficiency and have a direct, positive effect on the bottom line,” the person hearing this message may scratch their head in puzzlement and ignore your message—even if the underlying message is something they would actually like to hear.

As potential customers move through your marketing process, your messaging should be uncomplicated and jargon free so that prospects can easily understand what you need them to comprehend. If industry-specific terms must be used, spell them out unless you can be absolutely certain the target audience will understand those terms. The messaging process should not make assumptions but instead should be explicit about what it is trying to convey.

Companies often try to be too creative or try to finesse a message so much that it loses its meaning or becomes unclear. Being direct and saying things in the most simplistic, straightforward way possible is often the most compelling method to communicate your message. A traditional way to reach this goal is to come up with an “elevator pitch,” meaning a statement of what you are trying to convey about your product that could be used effectively during a short elevator ride: succinct and pithy. And the best way to do this is to say aloud what it is you are trying to convey. Marketing messages are usually printed, but to simplify a message, saying it aloud

often helps. When it makes sense spoken aloud, it usually makes sense written.

For example, “We provide state-of-the-art security systems that provide greater assurance that the place you live won’t experience one of a number of violent crimes” may not be as engaging as simply saying, “We help prevent a violent crime in your home.”

This doesn’t mean one should make messaging so simple that it no longer has meaning. “We make your life better” or “Your company will be more profitable” may not provide enough substance to make sense or be compelling. Ultimately, you have to decide what the right level of a message should be for potential customers to understand. The key is to make messaging simple, direct and balanced—not too detailed and yet not so brief that the message loses its meaning.

Also important to keeping messaging simple is to refrain from trying to convey too much information.

The military has a unique term called a blivet, an expression used when someone attempts to put too much of anything into too small an area or container. The actual definition means to put ten pounds of manure in a five-pound bag. Thus, if your marketing team is going to keep messaging simple, they must ensure they don’t create a messaging blivet by putting ten pounds of messaging into a five-pound marketing piece.

You should make sure your messaging does not get bogged down trying to convey too much information. Most people can digest and understand only a few concepts at a time. If you attempt to convey four or five or six elements where there is room for only one or two, you will most likely confuse your prospects and lose their interest. If you don’t know which of a set of ideas will be most compelling to your target audience, blasting them with a shotgun full of messages is not the solution. Don’t create word blivets—your prospects won’t be happy and you definitely won’t be happy with the results either.

### Sincere

Keep in mind that providing a simple message is not the only component of good messaging. To create compelling messaging that customers care about and listen to, the message must also be perceived as being sincere. Too often companies attempt to make unrealistic or disingenuous claims. Ironically, they often make these claims in an attempt to appeal more to their prospects, but their efforts have the opposite effect. Messages that are sincere have two main qualities: they make realistic claims and are honest.

**Realistic Claims:** For messaging to be heard and sincere, it must be realistic. We live in a world where politicians make unrealistic claims all the time and many companies do so too. We also receive tons of spam with offers ranging from improvements in our sex life to outright scams from people saying they have money we can claim if we just pay their attorney fees in Nigeria. As a result, most people

are jaded by claims that simply don't pass a basic common-sense test. You see these types of messages in the market all the time.

- We can cut your company's expenses by 50%!
- You can lose 100 pounds in a week!
- We can make your sales force five times more effective!

You should always use realistic claims in your messaging. Even if a bold claim is in the realm of possibility for a customer to experience in some extremely unique situation, if such an outcome is not realistic or probable for your typical customer, it should not be highlighted in your message. Instead of making sensational claims, take a more pragmatic, down-to-earth approach. In the examples above, most customers would probably take more interest if the claims were more realistic:

- We can save your company 7% off your business expenses!
- You can lose 14 pounds in 30 days!
- We can make your sales force 10% more effective!

All of these claims now sound more feasible and paradoxically will appeal to a larger set of customers because they pass the sincerity test.

If you have a customer willing to make a very strong claim and back it up with a true story or testimonial or with an independent research report, it might make sense to have a very bold message. However, be careful: even if the claim is true, it still might repulse potential customers because it just seems unrealistic. They may question the authenticity of your testimonial provider and/or research report, thereby indirectly questioning your credibility. You want your prospects to trust you and believe in what you can do for them; don't give them any reason to doubt you and your products.

**Honest Claims:** In order for a marketing message to be sincere, it also has to be honest. The message has to come from the heart and truly reflect what your company is capable of delivering to the customer. It must reflect what your company does and is concerned with. Keep messaging honest by sticking to the truth; don't say things that are untrue. If your company is focused on making a profit, don't say your sole focus is to make customers happy. Instead you can say, "We stay in business by keeping our customers satisfied." It may not be saying the same thing as the first statement, but it is accurate and honest and as a result will be seen by the customers as more sincere—and your prospects may decide to join the ranks of your satisfied customers.

## Relevant

Assuming you have messaging that is both simple and sincere, the next step to

creating a compelling story for your potential customers is to make your messaging relevant. This is accomplished by being as empathetic toward your customers' needs as possible. You need to understand their concerns, what they think about and why they would genuinely be interested in hearing from your company about your product(s). Once you can put yourself in your customer's shoes, you can take your simple, sincere message and put it in terms your customers understand and care about.

Let's go back to our earlier message related to the security system company. What if we took that message, "We help prevent a violent crime in your home" and added something specific to the customer. Assuming the customer lived in Maple County, we could change the message to, "In Maple County, violent crimes in homes have risen 15% this year. We can help protect your family from experiencing a violent crime." Yes, the message here is bold, but it is also simple, sincere and relevant—and would most likely catch the attention of our potential Maple County customer.

In a bad economy you may wish to acknowledge that reality in your messaging. One example might be, "In today's challenging economy, you are no doubt being put under more pressure to keep sales up. There are lots of companies trying to sell you solutions to help your sales, but our solution is unique and different."

The key to being relevant is truly practicing the Golden Rule. Put yourself in your prospects' shoes and understand what they are thinking about and going through. Then understand how your company can truly help them. If you can't help them, then you should not be messaging and marketing to this particular set of prospects. If you aren't sure what you should say but you think a segment of the market might be interested in your products, then talk to some of those customers and get some feedback before you craft the messaging for this market segment.

### **Fundamental 3: Examples**

#### **Bad Example: Just Too Complicated**

Below is an excerpt captured from a Web site during the late 1990s. This was how one software company described the issue they addressed.

"Every organization would like to possess all the information resources they need to satisfy and exceed shareholder/stakeholder goals. To date, large capital investments have been made in the ERP and best of breed systems, Intranet, e-mail systems, information repositories. Yet organizations are still challenged to reach and exceed their goals.

Capitalizing organizational excellence, by performing information integration, means scrutinizing business processes and competitive imperatives from a corporate-wide point of view. Competitive organizations must understand their entire business processes, which

business unit is responsible for what, and how it affects the auxiliary business processes. But more importantly, organizations must alternate selective push and process-initiated pull. The required information must be available just in time to complete business processes in a dynamic network of people inside and outside of the organization.

Today, systems are being developed to simplify retrieval and assist humans in making informed strategic business decisions through a single point of access for each user (or user category). More commonly known as portals providing easy access to pertinent information at the right time.”

Some people might read this and make sense of it, but I would guess that most people, even those to whom this message was targeted, would not understand what is being conveyed—or even bother to read the whole thing. The message is just too convoluted and confusing.

#### **Bad Example: Insincere**

In today’s world, with the increasing challenges of climate change and general environmental angst, many companies are jumping on the “green” bandwagon. You actually see some of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, often in the energy industry, claiming how green and concerned they are with the environment. Yet they are obviously not sincere. The actual business of many of these companies, whose operations release carbon emissions, indirectly destroys the environment. Claiming they are green may make them feel better, but their message is not honest and their marketing efforts are therefore just a waste of time and money. They may think public opinion considers them more green thanks to their marketing dollars, but the public knows better and will not be duped.

#### **Good Example: Case Studies**

People love to listen to stories. Case studies are a great way to get your marketing message and value across to prospects. Written properly, a case study can convey in a simple way what a company or product has done for a customer. From the first caveman who told his buddy, “Don’t eat that mushroom; it will make you sick,” people have appreciated case studies. The key to choosing good case studies is ensuring they convey a crisp and believable story—simple and sincere. Whom your marketing organization motivates to read these case studies will determine whether they are relevant. If someone reads the case study and relates to the story, then it will be relevant. The more they feel the story applies to their specific situation, the more relevant the case study—and the better the end result will be in potentially winning a customer.

### Bad Example: Self-Absorbed Product Web Site

One of the common examples of poor messaging is a company focusing their entire Web site on their products rather than on their customers' needs. There is a fine line here as most organizations want to convey something about their products. It's when the sole focus of the Web site describes how the products work and why they are so much better than the competition's products that the site loses its relevance. A Web site can have product messaging that is very simple and sincere, but if it lacks the relevance or reference point for the customer to understand how the products can be used, it will not resonate with the audience. It is far more effective to talk about how products solve problems, address issues and provide value than to just talk about the specific products' features and functions. In order to be relevant, a Web site or any marketing information must talk to the customer not just about products but about the customer's world and needs.

### **Fundamental 3: Application**

If you decide to create new messaging for a new product or reposition your company, you may consider taking your team off-site to do some focused messaging—a messaging retreat where you will brainstorm and create a draft. It's best to do this away from the office where you can focus on the issue without interruption, as messaging is important and should be given proper attention.

#### Simple, Sincere and Relevant

Creating great messaging doesn't have to be hard but it often is simply because it requires objectivity about your company and products. To evaluate your current messaging and/or to create new messaging, you must put yourself in the minds of your prospects and customers in order to understand what they are thinking. Being objective about your own company and products is very difficult because you are so close to them on a daily basis. Yet there are ways to be more objective about your messaging.

If you are not interested in creating new messaging but wish instead to evaluate your existing messaging, see if the following concepts apply to your current messaging. Surprisingly, the process of evaluating existing messaging may take as much time as creating new messaging.

#### Define the Messaging's Use

Before you begin to craft your messaging, you should define for everyone working on the task what its use will be. Will it be messaging for a specific product or for the company? Will the messaging be used on the Web site or in collateral? Will the messaging be embedded into advertising? How will it be used? If it is generic and

will be used in various marketing activities, it is best to define that right up front. Knowing how the messaging will be used will help you to define more easily what it should be.

### Know Your Target Audience

Before you start creating your messaging, define aloud for everyone creating the messaging exactly who the target audience is. You can even create a fictitious person with a name and background to represent the average person in that target audience. For example:

Your target prospect's name might be Tina, an IT professional. She is in middle management and has worked at a Fortune 1000 company for eight years. She is married and has one small child who goes to day care. Tina's main focus in the company is limiting risk while enabling projects to be implemented on time and on budget.

Of course, this fictitious person won't represent all customers, but the exercise gives everyone working on the messaging a good focal point for remembering who exactly their audience is and the kind of people with whom they are trying to build a relationship.

### The Value

Once you have the goal(s) for your messaging and you know the target audience, it's then critical to determine the value you want to offer your customers. Why should they listen? What's in it for them? What resonates with them? This is going to vary wildly depending on the kind of product and customers and how the messaging is going to be used. However, this is one of the most important parts of your messaging exercise, as everything revolves around the value you believe you provide to customers. If you are correct, it will make the messaging powerful and effective. If the value you state you provide is expressed vaguely or inaccurately, the messaging will be compromised enormously and your efforts foiled.

### Say It Aloud

As mentioned previously, one of the best ways to objectively evaluate your messaging is to say it aloud. Often when we read things, they tend to make sense; yet when we say them aloud they may not sound as crisp and succinct as we thought they were on the printed page. Thus, as a practice one should always try reading aloud any messaging you and/or your team creates.

### Ways to Test Simplicity, Sincerity and Relevance

To determine if your messaging is simple, sincere and relevant, whether the messaging is about your company or about a product, you may want to use the "mother test": would your mother understand the message? The idea here is that

if the messaging is simple enough to be understood by your mother, a member of the general public, then anyone should understand it. Of course, mothers can be amazingly sharp, and I don't mean to offend, but I think you get the idea. If no mothers are available to test your messaging, seek the help of an executive assistant. Such an employee may be more objective than you and be able to offer very pragmatic, objective perspectives on your messaging. Someone unrelated to your products and services may be equally as helpful in providing messaging feedback.

This layman approach to messaging may not be realistic for certain kinds of products that are technical or complex or require a certain expertise to understand. In such cases ask a typical customer for messaging feedback. Once you have this feedback, make adjustments to the messaging and test it again with a different set of customers. As you try your messaging on more people, you will be able to refine the messaging to a point where it is compelling and resonates with your target audience.

### **Revisiting Messaging**

When creating new messaging, be sure to put ideas aside for a day or two and then come back to them. With a fresh new perspective, you may want to make some minor changes or start the process over again.

# 4

## Fundamental 4: Nobody Cares What Your Company Is Doing

### Driving Awareness by Leveraging the Power of Brands, Trends, Fads, and Initiatives

#### Fundamental 4: Description

Most of us do not represent corporate giants with major name recognition that the public can't wait to hear about. Most businesses operate in markets where they are not the dominant player. Everyone in their industry doesn't wait to hear what they have to say and the market doesn't pause to listen when they make a comment. Most organizations are trying to generate more awareness with their potential customers in a crowded market. Even if they actually are a large or dominant company in their market, there are no doubt new markets they are attempting to penetrate where they are not so well-known or don't have dominant market position. In a recession, this challenge becomes even more acute, as your customers attempt to focus on their core business rather than on buying new products.

Yet so many companies drive awareness using the assumption that others are interested in what they have to say, that what they say is critical in the industry and when they add a new product, everyone is going to be interested. And so they perform their marketing tasks, telling prospects how great they are or how amazing their products are or announcing the great awards they have won. What they are really doing is leading the marketing/sales cycle by putting themselves first, focusing on who *they* are, what *their* products do.

This approach can work, but it is a hard up-hill battle. Why? Because fundamentally

customers and most people are mainly interested in themselves. The customer is focused on their own business and their own needs. They aren't focused on your product or your business; nor should they be. In a tough economy, people and organizations are entirely concerned with keeping their jobs and keeping their companies afloat. As a result, they are even more absorbed with their own world. Rather than try to fight this reality, leverage it.

When a marketing organization leads with their own company or their own products first, they are counting on the customer connecting that product message to what the customer is actually thinking about, that being their own business. In normal economic times, this approach is going to be hard, but during the extreme constraints of a recession it's going to be painfully difficult (i.e., expensive). People don't want to hear about others, and during a recession they are also probably blocking out any thoughts related to spending money.

A better approach to driving awareness in the market is to leverage the strength of things outside your company and products. Such things can be the brands of your existing customers or trends happening in the market or initiatives that prospects are talking about. In other words, if you weave your company's messaging and value propositions into these larger concepts, people will take notice. If you do this now when your message says, "Look at me; give me your attention," it will be perceived as sitting on the shoulder of a giant. People will take notice of the giant and hopefully they will also take notice of your message (this being another reason why your messaging needs to be simple and rapidly understood).

When you leverage brands, concepts and initiatives larger than your organization prospects can now associate your marketing message with something familiar to them. Perhaps they know the brand of one of your customers and are interested in what they are doing. Or maybe they have heard about a trend in the market that they want to learn more about it and your messaging is associated with that trend. Or maybe there are key industry initiatives that they have been personally told to look into and find out more about. These amplifiers of your message exist in abundance throughout the market. You just need to find them and find a way to leverage them in your marketing. These things become force multipliers for your marketing message in the market.

What you really are doing in these cases is leveraging the "noise" or notoriety of things greater than you, such as hot topics, brands, or fads, and by taking their power to draw attention in the market, making it part of your marketing "buzz." Your company may not have the power of a big brand, but by leveraging these items, by associating yourself with things larger or with more attention-drawing qualities in the market than yourself, you acquire some of their marketing muscle. This association strategy enables your brand and awareness to grow faster than by trying to do it on your own.

Most marketing organizations know this, at least in concept. Yet they will still

often focus a majority of their marketing awareness on their own products and the company's name or brand. Look sometime at the materials you find on the average company's Web site. You will find a majority of press releases and product information focused on new-product releases or how their products have won this or that award rather than talking about the initiatives, customers, and issues in the market the products are related to. It's all a mind-set. Once your marketing group decides things outside the organization are important, they will find ways to leverage customers and market trend/initiatives more in their activities.

## **Fundamental 4: Examples**

### **Leverage Brands**

One of the most common ways to leverage something with more notoriety than your organization is to use a case study or testimonial from a renown brand. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of recognized brands in this world. When you create a case study/testimonial with a renown company or individual, you gain much more attention for your products because you instantly have the attention of prospects who are interested in that brand. These brands range from Coca-Cola to Tiger Woods to Apple to Brad Pitt to Boeing to Jimmy Carter. Obviously the larger and more widespread the brand recognition the better, but even if a company you use for a case study is not as well-known as some of the icons mentioned above, odds are someone in the same industry is interested in what they are doing with your products.

### **Leveraging Focused Initiatives**

At any given time there are dozens of initiatives going on in the United States and around the world. These initiatives can be programs such as government policies, Sarbanes Oxley, HIPAA, and FISMA, for example. Initiatives can be more macro such as the U.S. war on terror. Initiatives can also form outside of governments, as with the push for green technology, or the payment card initiative (PCI) and the fight against climate change. Some initiatives last longer such as the move toward greater physical fitness in the first world over the last thirty years; some are temporary fads such as many of the diets that come and go. Any of these can give your company greater recognition in the market if you can somehow tie your products to them. The key is to have a valid story about how your products are associated with the key initiative. It will hurt your validity in the market if you attempt to say you do something that you actually do not.

### **Leveraging Traditional Business Themes**

Even if your organization lacks the ability to tie products to a specific initiative

occurring in the market, certain traditional business themes are always interesting to your target customer. Generating more revenue and saving money are examples of things always in vogue. In a down economy, you can achieve traction by tying your product to these two benefits, but prospects are likely to be more cynical about generating increased revenue. However, both are themes in business, and for consumers, both are always in vogue. Rather than leading your marketing messaging and programs with your own products, you may lead with one of these tried-and-true themes or others, such as customer retention or business-process efficiency. The key is leveraging something outside the product and validly applying your product's use to it.

### Leverage Fads

At any given time there are fads in the market of which one can take advantage: diets or prominent entertainers or strange trends that come into the public zeitgeist for a limited time. If your marketing team can validly associate your products with these kinds of themes occurring in the market, you can drive rapid awareness for your organization. You just need to realize that fads usually come to a swift end and you may not want to have your brand or particular products completely tied to any particular fad unless you think you can jump on the next one with little damage to your marketing efforts. Many consumer-packaged goods use this technique by leveraging the latest diet for instance and then moving on to the next one when interest wanes in customers' minds.

## **Fundamental 4: Application**

### Quick Evaluation of Your Organization

Perform the following exercise in order to evaluate both your success at leveraging existing trends or initiatives. List the last twenty customer-facing activities/efforts your organization has worked on. These can be pieces of collateral, specific lead-generation programs, a branding campaign, a major revision to your Web site, online banner advertisements, direct marketing pieces, or any other output that has come from the marketing organization.

- Now, for each item listed make the following evaluation:
- If the item mentions a customer *by name*, give it one point
- If the item mentions an initiative going on in the market, give it one point
- If the item mentions a best practice, such as cost reduction, give it one point

**Example:** If a piece of collateral mentions a customer using your product who is reducing costs within a green initiative, that would be three points (one for customer, one for the green initiative, one for reducing costs).

**Another example:** If you made a major revision to the Web site and specifically chose to include more customer case studies on the site, you would give this one point (not one point for each customer).

If certain initiatives are more critical to your organization's sales and marketing strategy than others, you can choose to give two points if a marketing activity is directly tied to that initiative versus a less important one.

Now total up all the points. Results will certainly vary depending on the industry you are in and the kinds of products you offer. A score above 40 is a good sign that you are leveraging things outside your products and company. A score below 20 means in general leveraging is not something you do. Whether that is a good or bad thing is up to you to determine. The goal of the exercise is to get you thinking about how you can potentially infuse more energy from things outside your organization into your marketing.

### How to Infuse More Brands, Trends, and Initiatives

Now that you have evaluated your own marketing organization, you may wish to find a way to leverage your customers and outside initiatives into your marketing messaging and programs. Accomplishing this requires hard work.

### Your Customers

You should start with your existing customers, as they usually represent the shortest path to winning more recognition and awareness in the market. Whether you sell your products to consumers or other businesses, three steps are involved in getting more impact from customers.

First, generate a list of all of your customers.

Second, find a way to prioritize the list of customers. This could be by the industry they are in or the kind of product they use or in general how well their brand is known. If your customers are consumers, then you may prioritize by how much they have spent with you or by a particular geographic region or other metric.

Third, determine how you can engage the customer to see if they will allow you to use them as a reference or in a case study. This may require you to work directly with customers or to work with your sales people or with a sales channel such as distributors/resellers.

Often you will hear sales people claim that their customers do not wish to talk about products they use (endorse), which is no doubt true for some of them. However, it is very likely that every sales person has a customer who would be willing to speak positively about the company's product if they were asked in a compelling way with the right value proposition.

Another way to find potential customers to use in your marketing is to talk to your customer support organization. They have some of the most interactions

with customers and often can point you in the direction of customers who are very excited about your products.

This may also require you to engage directly with customers via surveys or other mechanisms, but the key is you have to engage with the customers and ask them.

Motivation: You need to find a way to either directly motivate your customers to participate in your marketing activities and/or you need to motivate your sales channel (sales people, distributors, resellers, agents, etc.) to help you get customers participating. This may require using financial incentives to motivate your sales people. It may also require giving away free services or products to customers to help them see the value. Remember, there is a huge value in having customers participate in your marketing, so you should be willing to spend some amount of your marketing budget to secure the use of these companies or people as part of your marketing initiatives.

Note that sometimes it is not the motivation that is a challenge for a customer but what you are asking them to do. They may be willing to do a private referral for you but not a public case study. Or it could be the reverse: They are willing to do something publicly, such as a press release or case study, provided it is not seen as an endorsement. An example would be, “We use product A for purpose X” without any kind of value judgment being stated.

Fourth, once you have this list and have a way to engage with customers, begin to track your progress in getting them to participate in your marketing programs. How can they participate in your marketing? There are many potential ways to leverage customers:

- Case studies, videos, webcasts, panelists at events and seminars, etc
- Quotes
- Logos
- Referrals
- Private references
- Public references
- Use of their photos on your Web site

### **Beyond Customers: Leverage Trends, Fads, and Initiatives in the Market**

Your organization probably already leverages customers in its marketing campaigns and programs. You may even have a dedicated organization whose single purpose is to infuse more customer success stories into your marketing programs. This is great. However, you will also want to leverage trends, fads, and initiatives that are occurring in the market. The challenge with these initiatives is not finding them, as there are large numbers of them occurring at any given time; it's finding initiatives that your customers are sincerely using your product to address. The other possibility is that there are existing initiatives that you *could* be addressing but need to message your product toward.

To determine if there are initiatives you could be leveraging today that you are not, start making a list. Brainstorm as a team and help create a macro list of all initiatives going on in the market, whether or not your company is currently addressing them. This list would include things such as green initiatives, carbon emissions, national security initiatives, diet fads, or anything that can be seen as a big trend or topic of conversation for some part of your market. In addition, recurring events, such as tax time, holidays, and anniversaries of major or local historical events, are other examples of items that can be leveraged. All these fads, trends, and initiatives can be country-specific or they can be worldwide occurrences. It doesn't matter. List them all.

Now take that list and start deciding if there are existing customers who use your products in relation to those initiatives. If not, do you think they could use your products for those initiatives? Again, you must be willing to objectively look at your products and decide if they could genuinely help with any given initiative.

If a customer is already using you for a particular initiative, put them on a list. If you think customers could be using you for a particular initiative, put them on the same list. Now once you have a final list, you can discard all the initiatives that don't apply to your company at this time. Take the remaining list and prioritize the opportunities to create marketing programs and campaigns around those initiatives.

# 5

## Fundamental 5: That's a Nice Package You Have

### Your Customer's Experience Is Just As Important As the Message Itself

#### Fundamental 5: Description

For any marketing organization, creating interest or desire in potential customers consumes a large amount of effort and significant resources. In fact, in many organizations the efforts of marketing are synonymous with driving interest; often called generating leads or creating demand. The success of many companies correlates directly with how effective marketing is at creating interest in people who may potentially buy the company's products. Often a lion's share of the marketing budget is spent to execute specific marketing campaigns and activities to drive interest with potential customers.

One of the most overlooked but important elements in lead-generation activities is the "packaging" of those activities. Packaging often determines whether demand-creation efforts are actually noticed by prospects. To understand what is meant by packaging, we must first understand the basic elements that are part of a campaign to help increase leads for a company. To effectively run campaigns or activities that create interest in prospects, a marketing organization will decide on three key elements: the target audience, the messaging for that activity, and the communication medium(s) they will use to reach prospects.

#### Target

The first thing a marketing team will do when creating a marketing campaign is to determine the people—the prospective customers—they wish to reach. In

other words, they will take a certain amount of time identifying and analyzing their target audience, the object of their marketing efforts. They consider who may be interested in the message; who the buyer of the product is going to be; who the given product's user is going to be; which industries the prospects may be in. If the audience comprises consumers, the marketing team will consider what household role the individual consumer plays and, if the person is part of a company, what his title most likely is. Once they have compiled this information, they can then decide what the profile of the target audience is for this given campaign or marketing activity (see previous chapter on determining your target audience).

For this example, a marketing group at a medical device company may target their lead-generation campaign at Bob. Bob is a buyer of medical supplies at a large hospital. He is thirty-five years old, married with one child, and has pressure from the hospital administration to reduce costs in the organization. He's not a big risk taker, but he is open to new ideas that will help save the hospital money. He is very much a pragmatic, no-nonsense guy. In a recession, Bob is very concerned about losing his job.

Once the target audience has been determined, the type of messaging that will be used and the mediums the marketing team will use to reach that audience can then be determined.

## Messaging

If the marketing team knows who the target audience is for their campaign, they can then determine the message they want to use to generate interest with that group (the Bobs of the world in our example above). Marketing will now create a message or customize the existing product message to address the issues or desires of the target audience, thereby resonating with that audience.

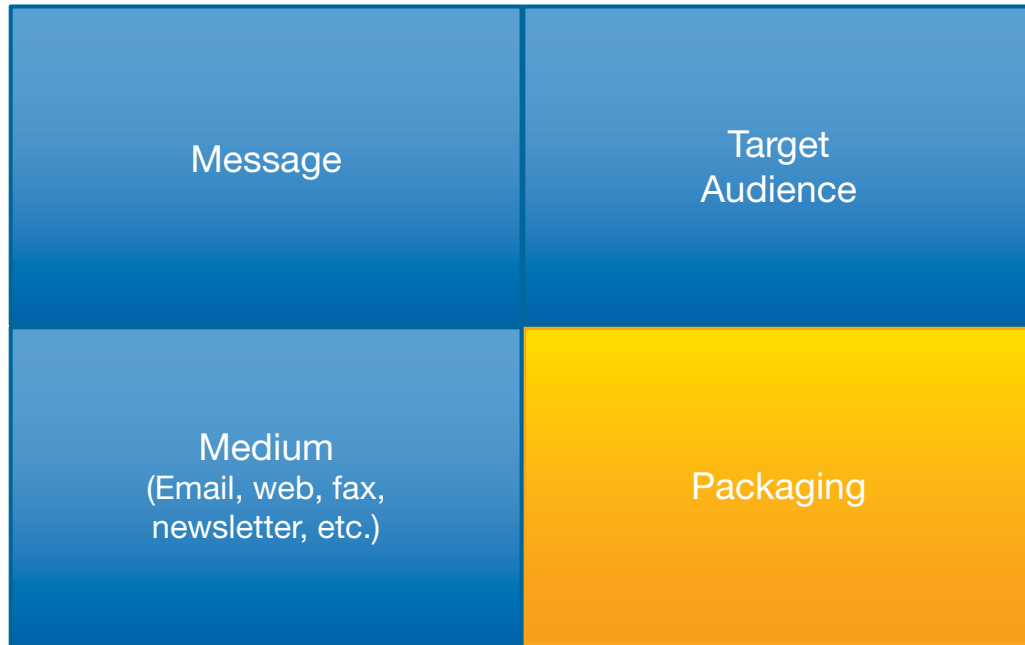
Wording for the message will be scrutinized, so it is phrased in a way that the potential customers understand and find compelling. Depending on the type of campaign being created, marketing will consider a variety of messaging elements, such as the value proposition, the wording, and the call-to-action.

## Medium

Once they have selected a particular target audience and have crafted customized messaging, the marketing team then needs to determine how to reach that group of people. A marketing organization can use a wide variety of mediums to deliver their message, e-mail, radio, television, phone, Web advertising, and fax being some of the more common choices.

Often several mediums are used to increase the impact and/or likelihood that the message will be heard by the intended audience. Using many of these mediums can be costly in terms of the time and money required for effective execution.

### Marketing Activity



5.1- Graphic

As a result, marketing teams often have very thorough discussions of the pros and cons of using given mediums to get their messages across in campaigns and marketing activities.

### **What About the Packaging?**

Thus, in the creation of a lead-generation campaign, a significant amount of effort is spent on identifying the target audience, creating customized messaging, and determining the mediums to use for that campaign. Yet when it comes to the “packaging,” or how the message will be delivered across a given medium to a specific target audience, many marketing groups will often stick to doing the same old thing. They spend days, if not weeks, determining what the various elements of a campaign will be, yet the actual packaging of that information is usually not seriously scrutinized, debated, or discussed. Often they take the approach of “doing it the same way we have done it before.”

“Packaging” refers to the structure and form, the “look and feel” that contain the message. Packaging is neither the medium used to deliver the message nor the message itself. Instead, packaging relates to how the content of the message is organized and presented to the target audience. If you think about any marketing materials you have created or seen, they have a certain format and/or style to them. This packaging can vary widely, from engaging to boring, from sensationalistic to expected, from captivating to drab, and from complex to simplistic. This format—the style, the feeling it captures—is the packaging of the message communicated through a particular medium.

One area where marketing teams will often spend a great deal of time thinking about the packaging of their campaigns is with advertising. The more expensive the placement of the advertising, the more time they usually take discussing what the packaging of that advertising will look like. With advertising, a marketing group usually spends an enormous amount of time on how that piece of advertising looks, working with designers and other creative personnel on how it will be presented and how to make sure it gets noticed once it makes it through its selected medium to the eyes and/or ears of the target audience. When organizations are placing an advertisement such as a TV or radio ad, an advertisement in print media, or a banner ad, they think about creative ways for these ads to stand out and be noticed. This is a great example of where marketing teams spend time thinking about the packaging and how they will get their messaging noticed across whatever mediums they have selected for a campaign.

Yet when it comes to the majority of communications and campaigns that many marketing teams perform, they often don’t consider the packaging for that particular target group and that particular message. People will often refer to the same old template or the preexisting format for a given medium. If it’s an e-mail, they will say, “Just send it out with the standard HTML format”. Or if it’s an offer placed

on their Web site, they will use the format that has been used before. Or maybe it's the customer newsletter that they put into the already-existing generic customer newsletter format they have had for months or even years. Often it's expedient to leverage what an organization has used before, but it may not be the most compelling approach for the target audience.

Many times this simplifying of deciding how a campaign will be packaged is done in the name of "consistent branding." It is decided that a standard format and structure must be used in order to preserve "the company brand." This approach can often be erroneous and undermines the effectiveness of the marketing campaign or program. An organization can maintain its brand while adapting that brand to the given needs of a campaign or program. However, what is required is more than just saying, "We'll use the same old template" or "We aren't allowed to make changes to the structure." Thought must be given to how the brand can be maintained while still providing packaging that is compelling to the prospect seeing or hearing it.

Sometimes the same old packaging will be used in the name of expediency. Why re-create the wheel when you already have a previously used template? And your marketing team may indeed want to use the same template if it is fresh and has shown recent success in getting prospects' attention. However, if it hasn't been updated recently and is not driving good results, perhaps the packaging needs to be freshened up or completely changed to make it stand out.

The packaging is critical, as media advertisers know, because it is the experience a person receives from the advertisement that will determine whether a marketing piece is noticed. The message cannot be heard if the medium that delivers it goes unnoticed. If an executive targeted by an e-mail campaign does not take notice of the e-mail received, the message in that communication has failed. If a potential customer comes to your company's Web site but does not take notice of a key promotion, then that promotion's message is lost. The packaging's job is to ensure the message gets noticed. Once noticed, it's the message's job to create interest in the target audience.

### **Key Elements to Great Packaging**

If the messages in your marketing campaigns are going to be noticed during a recession, you must have great packaging. There are just too many competing companies and marketing messages trying to get the attention of the limited set of buyers in the market. Certain qualities make up great packaging for delivering your message through any medium.

#### **Crisp Packaging**

First, the packaging must be crisp. There is something very powerful about packaging that is "crisp." What is crisp? Crisp packaging will convey the messaging to the

target audience in a succinct, clear way. The person viewing the packaging and the messaging within will find it very easy to understand. One key message, or if more than one, then only a few, will be delivered. There will be no competing messages. And there will be only limited information, consisely and clearly presented, so the person seeing or reading it will not have to think too hard or too long to figure out the message. The design of the packaging will make the message easy to grasp quickly and simple to understand.

### Engaging Packaging

Second, good packaging must be engaging. The packaging should ensure it gets noticed and then captures the attention of the intended audience. This can be done in a variety of ways. An organization can make the packaging comical or dramatic; they can leverage well-known logos (brands) of their own customers; they can highlight elements in the message that the target audience should be interested in. It really doesn't matter what the packaging is as long as it does not detract from the company's image and as long as it gets prospective customers to notice the message. Good packaging pulls the reader/viewer/prospective customer in.

### Guiding the Prospect

Third, great packaging will guide the customer to what you want them to see. It is said that great paintings are designed so that a viewer will start by looking at a particular spot in the painting, and then their eye will move across the painting in a way that the artist has actually planned. In a similar way, good packaging is designed so that it first captures the attention of the viewer and then guides them to the key points you want them to take away from the messaging. If items are thrown randomly into a medium, such as an e-mail or Web site, or if there are too many items, it makes it hard for the viewer to "get into" the marketing piece, and as a result the message may be lost on them. In addition, you should also avoid drawing the attention of the recipient away from the location of the key message you are trying to deliver. Your packaging may be in an e-mail or newsletter that captures the eye of your prospect with a particular image or statistic or logo, but you as the marketer should also make it very easy for the prospect's eye to move from that point in the packaging to see a button that says, "Learn more."

### Call to Action

Lastly, if a campaign is designed to drive interest in a prospect, the packaging should have a "call-to-action." If you are able to actually get the attention and create interest with a prospect, you should make it very simple within your packaging for them to move to the next step in your sales process, whatever that may be. Whether that next step is to fill in a Web form or call your company or download a piece of

content, the packaging should provide a way for them to take some kind of action if they are interested in what you are telling them.

In summary, if the packaging has done its job successfully, it will have interacted with the prospect in a way that gets their attention, delivers the key message(s), and gives them a way to take a next step (the call to action).

Is there a fine line between messaging and packaging? Sometimes it's hard to say where good messaging ends and good packaging begins. However, both elements should work together to provide an engaging experience that will interest the target audience. A message designed to tell the customer how they can save money is one thing. How you convey that message in a compelling way is the packaging's job, a separate thing altogether that needs to be considered and executed properly.

### **Fundamental 5: Examples**

There are many examples of packaging all around us. Just look all around you at the kinds of materials you are receiving or being exposed to in your day-to-day work and personal life. In this modern world, we are bombarded almost constantly with advertising, mailers, e-mails, and other forms of campaigns.

#### **Newsletters**

Odds are that you already get monthly newsletters today as a business person or a consumer. Next time you receive one, take a moment to look at it objectively. What is the key message the newsletter or e-mail blast is trying to convey? How hard was it to find that message? How engaging was the packaging? How compelling was the piece? No doubt you have received some that were crisp, compelling, and engaging and others that were not. Ask yourself why they were not. Were they boring or had too much information, or did they seem to lack a simple, easy-to-grasp message?

- Here is a newsletter that is too wordy

# THE *Vin*NOTE

A Monthly Wine Lifestyle e-Newsletter

HOME
THE POUR
TASTING ROOM
VINE LIFE
WINE CLUB
LATE HARVEST

Message from your  
Wine Consultant



for the Taste Today for the Life of Wine

Lorem Ipsum,  
 Dlor sit amet, consectetur  
 adipiscing elit. Fusce et velit orci,  
 a bibendum lacus. Pellentesque  
 posuere ultrices mi. Curabitur  
 ultrices porta justo, in dictum  
 neque scelerisque vel. Praesent  
 tempus, diam id rutrum lacinia,  
 odio ligula hendrerit urna, eget  
 interdum dui felis ac erat.  
 Pellentesque accumsan faucibus  
 dictum. Mauris a congue eros.  
 Etiam eget est purus, sit amet  
 porttitor nisl. Integer a nibh ut  
 lectus imperdiet lacinia et vel  
 metus. Sed dignissim blandit  
 neque, quis fermentum justo  
 faucibus.

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 easier! We are making it even easier yet with great prices on  
 fabulous exclusive wines. Whether you are making sangria or  
 savoring summer with bold reds and chilly whites, we've got



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JOIN MY TEAM

- Here is a newsletter with fewer words

# THE *Vin*NOTE

A Monthly Wine Lifestyle e-Newsletter

HOME THE POUR TASTING ROOM VINE LIFE WINE CLUB LATE HARVEST

## A Message From Your Consultant



for the Taste ready for the Life

Lorem Ipsum,  
Dlor sit amet, consectetur  
adipiscing elit. Fusce et velit orci,  
a bibendum lacus. Pellentesque  
posuere ultrices mi. Curabitur  
ultrices porta justo, in dictum  
neque scelerisque vel. Praesent  
tempus, diam id rutrum lacinia,  
odio ligula hendrerit urna, eget  
interdum dui felis ac erat.

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add us to your contact list by clicking the "Add" button above.**

Hi

As part of an insane marketing test, I'm giving away my in-depth Internet "Business-In-A-Box". I should be selling this for \$497, but...I'm flat out giving it away. Your cost is zero...zip...zilch!

You probably think I've lost his mind—and maybe I have as part of the Christmas season. But just visit this site right now and—in 5 minutes—you'll have this awesome \$497 Internet business training kit as my gift to you.

No kidding!

Grab it quick—right now—before I change my mind...

[Visit here.](#)

Shawn Casey

P.S. You should do this right away because I don't plan to keep giving all this away for too long.

[Visit here.](#)

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This is an advertisement. See site for details.  
To stop receiving messages, please visit here:

- Here is an e-mail that captures your attention

The image is a screenshot of an e-mail advertisement for Wine Enthusiast. At the top left is the Wine Enthusiast logo, featuring a stylized figure holding a wine glass, with the text "WINE ENTHUSIAST CATALOG" below it. To the right of the logo is the phone number "Call Our Experts: 800.356.8466". Below the logo and phone number is a navigation bar with four links: "Home", "Gifts", "Sale", and "Wine Ratings". The main content area has a brown header with "Spotlight Item" in yellow text. On the left side of this header is a silver oval badge that says "Customer Favorite". To the right of the header, the product name "Wine Cork Trivet Kit" is displayed in a bold, black font, with the text "Ships FREE when you buy 2 or more\*" below it. The central part of the advertisement features a photograph of the product: a wooden trivet filled with wine corks, with a silver saucepan containing a white sauce and a green garnish resting on it. To the left of the trivet is a smaller wooden tray containing several loose wine corks. To the right of the photograph is a paragraph of text: "Preserve your wine memories with a Wine Cork Trivet Kit. For a limited time we're offering **FREE shipping** when you buy 2 or more of this long-time customer favorite. So, why not buy a few for your dinner table and a few for some friends to take advantage of this limited-time FREE shipping offer?". Below this text is a prominent yellow button with the text "ORDER NOW" in bold, black letters. At the bottom right of the advertisement, the product name "Wine Cork Trivet Kit" is repeated, followed by the price and shipping information: "Only \$19.95 + Ships FREE when you buy 2 or more".

WINE ENTHUSIAST  
CATALOG

Call Our Experts: 800.356.8466

Home | Gifts | Sale | Wine Ratings

Customer Favorite

Spotlight Item

Wine Cork Trivet Kit  
Ships FREE when you buy 2 or more\*

Preserve your wine memories with a Wine Cork Trivet Kit. For a limited time we're offering **FREE shipping** when you buy 2 or more of this long-time customer favorite. So, why not buy a few for your dinner table and a few for some friends to take advantage of this limited-time FREE shipping offer?

**ORDER NOW**

Wine Cork Trivet Kit  
Only \$19.95 + Ships FREE  
when you buy 2 or more

- Here is a cluttered example

Enjoy a unique professional development experience! **Sqool @ the Beach!**

[Easy Access for Students](#) | [Bookmark This Site](#) | [Make Your Homepage](#) | [Guide to Gamequarium](#) | [Terms of Use and Internet Safety](#)  
[Link](#) | [Philosophy and Mission](#) | [What do teachers think?](#) | [Gamequarium Blog](#) | [Free Teacher Resources](#)

**Gamequarium.com**  
*The site that swims with learning fun!*

Google  Search  
 Safe Search  Web  Gamequarium.com  
**Searchquarium: Custom Search Engines**

**Video Index**

2X+2=8  
What is X?  
**X=3**

**Search Educational Videos**  
  
 Video Search

Problems Viewing Videos?  
**SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK**  
 Videos and Lyrics  
 NEW Comprehensive Lesson Plan Search

**1000+ Reading Games**  
  
 Search Readquarium

Gamequarium (Grades 3-6)		Readquarium (PreK-6)		Gamequarium Junior (PreK-2)	
→ Christmas	→ Winter Games	→ Phonics	→ Rhymes	→ Little Bear	→ Berenstain Bears
→ Language Arts	→ Charlotte's Web	→ Phonemes	→ Chunks	→ 123s	→ Coloring Sheets
→ Math	→ 100th Day	→ Sight Words	→ Homophones	→ Money	→ Dora Games
→ Science	→ Valentine's Day	→ Vocabulary	→ Synonyms	→ Colors	→ Diego Games
→ Social Studies	→ Dr. Seuss	→ Comprehension	→ Antonyms	→ Shapes	→ Blue Clues
→ Brain Builders	→ St. Patrick's Day	→ Fluency	→ Categorizing	→ Time	→ Little Bill

- Here is a well-designed example



- Banner-ad that leads to miscellaneous product page

The banner features the Verizon Wireless logo at the top. Below it, the text reads: "Hot Online Exclusives!" in large red font, followed by "Buy one LG Chocolate® 3 and get a second Free!" in black and red. A smaller line of text states: "WITH NEW 2YR ACTIVATION PER PHONE." Below the text are two black LG Chocolate 3 phones, one in front of the other, showing their screens with various app icons and the "MY MUSIC" label. At the bottom, the text says: "Free Activation Fri - Mon Free Overnight Shipping & Instant Discounts with online orders". A red button with the text "Learn More" is positioned at the very bottom.

verizon wireless

**Hot Online Exclusives!**

Buy one **LG Chocolate® 3** and get a second **Free!**

WITH NEW 2YR ACTIVATION PER PHONE.

Free Activation Fri - Mon  
Free Overnight Shipping  
& Instant Discounts  
with online orders

[Learn More](#)

- Banner ad that leads to specific call to action

**Backstage  
Beauty Secrets**

*"I'm 53 years young.  
Tripeptinon™ is how  
I'm able to look this  
good!" Nancy Lee Grahn*

**Get it Free\***

\*terms apply

**TRIPEPTINON**  
Face E-RT 10 & Capsules

**NANCY LEE GRAHN**  
*of General Hospital*

## Fundamental 5: Application

As previously mentioned, if your organization is placing media advertisements on radio, magazine, or television, a great deal of thought most likely goes into how these pieces are packaged. It is the other kinds of marketing pieces, such as e-mail blasts, new placements on the company’s home page, landing pages for collateral on the Web site and customer newsletters (whether manual or electronic), that often get overlooked.

To evaluate your own marketing, you can perform the following exercise:

List in a column the last seven to ten things your marketing team created to drive interest with potential customers and whether they were newsletters, faxes, e-mails, promotions on the Web site, or even advertisements (radio, TV, banner ads). Now create four additional columns next to the items list. Using the four categories Crisp, Attention, Design, and Call to Action, put one category at each of the four columns. Now, using 3 as “excellent execution” and 1 as “poorly executed,” place a number between 1 and 3 in each column for each marketing piece. Call to action will either be 3 or 1; 2 does not exist for this item. When you add up the results of a given column and average it, what number do you come up with? If you score below 2 in any area, you may want to consider how to improve in that area.

### Campaign Packaging Analysis

Name	Crisp	Attention	Design	Call to Action
1 Monthly newsletter	2	1	1	1
2 Excess Inventory Promotion Email	2	3	1	3
o				
o				
10 Web site Banner Promotion	3	2	2	3
Total	22	16	15	26
Average	2.2	1.6	1.5	2.6

## Improving Your Packaging

Improving the packaging of your marketing activities requires that first you be aware of it and second, that you be creative in how you approach these activities. Can you improve your online communications? E-mail? Web site? Even if you are sending non-HTML e-mails that are text only, can you change the formatting so they are different from the typical text e-mail message? If you were unconstrained and absolutely had to stick out and be noticed at all cost, what would you do?

What is the one word you would put on a marketing piece if you wanted to convey the main message? Could you put just that one word on your next campaign? That and nothing else?

Comical and cute: Is there something humorous or cute you can incorporate into your next campaign? Maybe put a person's face with a funny smile or a quirky attitude?

How about an unusual photo? Something different?

Maybe a single number with someone pointing at that number? Maybe that number has relevance to what you saved a particular customer?

There are so many ways to ensure your packaging gets noticed. It does take some creativity, but most of all it takes a good measure of attention. You have to say to yourself that you want to improve the overall packaging of your marketing activities. It will take a little more time, but the investment will be well worth it if your marketing team does a good job.

### **Access to a Designer**

If you have access to a designer who can help you with your packaging in a timely fashion, you should attempt to use their services. If your organization has in-house designers or a budget for outside designers, use them; their expertise helps enormously. Most people don't really have a great eye for designing the packaging of marketing materials; they think they do, but they don't. Given this harsh reality, if you can get a real designer to help with your marketing packaging, do so! Having them design your materials will be invaluable. If you don't have access to a designer, it's still useful to be cognitive of how your materials look and how they will be viewed by your target audience. Even using the basic guidelines presented in this chapter will be better than not thinking about them at all.

If you are fortunate enough to have a designer, do not attempt to design the packaging for them. Convey to them the goals of your packaging—and let them do their job of designing! They will use their “magic” to implement into the packaging what you want to exist in that packaging. Communicate your goals and let the designer do the rest. You might say, “We want this e-mail piece to be noticed by prospects and for them to see the key message. Once they see that message, we want them to easily find and click on a button that brings them back to our Web site.” If you attempt to tell the designer explicitly what to do, you will be compromising the results by your limited ability as a designer. However, if you tell them only your goals and allow them the job of creative, you will most likely be happier with the results, as the designer may introduce packaging concepts you would never have come up with on your own. Let the designer create packaging magic for you!

# 6

## Fundamental 6: Slaying the “Spraying and Praying”

### The Power of Indirect Marketing

#### Fundamental 6: Description

**M**ore than ever, when an economy is contracting, a marketing organization has limited resources to execute programs and activities to drive awareness/leads. It becomes essential that marketing be more focused and effective with the limited funds they have. As mentioned earlier, it is more challenging to find the reduced number of sales opportunities that exist in the market simply because there are fewer of them. Common sense would then dictate that the limited resources a marketing team has at its disposal to find potential customers should be concentrated in areas where those customers are more likely to be.

Most marketing organizations execute some amount of direct marketing with very limited positive results. This method involves marketing directly to a large set of potential prospects with an offering or value proposition through mediums such as postal mail, e-mail, or the phone. There are two main challenges with this model in a recession or any other time for that matter. First, inevitably a great deal of resources (time and money) are spent attempting to contact a large number of potential prospects who simply are not at all interested in the product or value proposition being marketed to them. A marketing team just doesn't know what the mental state is of the large set of people they are contacting. Are they open to buying something or even hearing about products? With direct marketing, it's impossible to know. Second, in today's very fluid job market, people change jobs and companies frequently, as well as consumers, often physically move, so it's difficult to keep track of where people are. With direct marketing, there is a large burden on the

marketing organization to find these prospects and current contact information, whether they compile this list themselves or they hire an outside organization to do it for them. As a result of these two factors, most direct marketing campaigns are fortunate to generate a 1% response rate from the people they are targeting—hardly stunning results.

It is possible that this kind of approach will work for an organization, but it is very challenging and usually very inefficient. Even e-mail, while relatively inexpensive, often has very low response rates as many marketing e-mail messages do not actually reach their intended audience, getting caught in spam filters or easily deleted by potential customers who never really look at them. Even if you do reach someone in your target audience, you never know whether the prospect is even in a mood to entertain buying a product or not. It's worse than looking for a needle in a haystack. The needle is at least in the haystack, somewhere; potential customers, however, may not be among any of the contacts targeted by a direct marketing campaign. Often this method is referred to as a "spray and pray" approach. You are spraying your message into the market, hoping and praying that someone from the list of names you have targeted will be interested. It can be effective, but certainly a model that is "hoping" for *only* a 99% failure rate can't be seen as the most effective approach to finding leads.

I am not proposing that an organization stop performing direct marketing during a recession—not at all. Direct marketing can be very effective; especially with prospects who have already shown some amount of interest in your products in the past and for whom you have current contact information. However, even in good economic times, direct marketing is mediocre at creating initial interest with prospects; during a recession it can be absolutely ineffectual. Why? In a recession and/or in a challenging economic environment, competition is more intense for the limited set of opportunities/customers in the market. This means that the number of products being sold has remained constant, but there are far fewer prospects in the market who actually might be willing to purchase. This results in the remaining prospects being bombarded by more sales people, marketing campaigns, telemarketers, and advertising. With prospects being assaulted by so many marketing campaigns/messages, it becomes that much more challenging to find prospects who are interested in your products *and* then to capture their attention with your marketing message. The needle in the haystack becomes an even-harder-to-find splinter in the haystack. If you keep everything constant in your direct marketing efforts (the money you spend, the number of people you market to, the message you use), the number of leads is certain to go down and the cost of finding leads is going to rise due to the challenging economic environment.

### **Creating Awareness and Interest Indirectly**

With today's pervasive use of the Internet by your potential customers, it makes

sense to spend more of your time and effort on more indirect marketing methods versus direct marketing approaches. Rather than trying to directly find the specific individuals who might be interested in your product, you should attempt to find where your prospects are looking on the Web or elsewhere and start placing your marketing messages there to reach them indirectly. If you can find where your prospects go for information, you can then market to the prospects at those locations. There are thousands of Web sites and other places, like trade shows or blogs, where potential customers do research, find out about their industry, read business news, and generally engage with the outside world. During a recession, for creating new customers, it makes sense for an organization to focus more of its efforts at marketing in these specific information sources. In this way, the marketing team can indirectly get to those who may be interested rather than trying to find them directly themselves. In fact on some sites, for a given fee, an organization can actually be guaranteed a certain number of leads from their respective target audience. Making use of more indirect methods to reach your prospects can bring powerful results.

Indirect marketing to reach your target audience differs from direct marketing in two ways. First, when using indirect marketing to reach potential prospects, you need to focus on sources of information (on the Internet or in the real world) where your prospects do research or hear about products. Instead of compiling lists of actual contacts of people you would normally target in your direct marketing activities, you now need to perform market research to determine where your potential customers are going to find information or perform research, such as Web sites, events, blogs, seminars, search engines, etc. The key to this approach may not be finding the largest sources but finding those most relevant to your target audience. Some sources of information may allow you to put your marketing messages there free of charge. Other sources, such as many Web properties, are going to charge you for placing your message there.

Once you know where your audience is going to find information, the second element that is different from using direct marketing methods is the need to place your content/messaging into those sources. This is similar to direct marketing, in that you need to have compelling content/message for prospects, but in an indirect situation most often you don't have complete control of when and how the content is being presented. With direct marketing, you craft your message according to the medium and control exactly how it is presented. When using indirect means of getting your message across to potential customers, you are placing some type of messaging/content into the environment where your prospects could potentially see/read it. Often you may even have to compete with other companies to get your message noticed. Thus, the information you put into these sources, whether you are trying to get noticed at a trade show or on a Web site or to have your entries read on a blog, have to be very compelling; otherwise they run the risk of getting lost with all the other content at that source.

### **Fine Line with Advertising**

How effective your indirect marketing is going to be is directly related to how successful you are at determining where your customers find information or do research and how compelling the message you place in those locations is to your target audience. A fine line exists between performing indirect marketing and just executing advertising campaigns. The more control you have over the message, how it is presented, how many times it is presented, and whom it is presented to, the more likely it is that you are moving toward advertising.

The other big difference is that with advertising, the message is being thrust on the prospects. With indirect marketing, you are attempting to place your messaging in the areas where prospects are looking and attempting to provide valuable content for them to view. For example, if you try to place an advertisement on most blogs, you will be badly received. However, if you provide valuable insight on a blog, people may decide to come to your company for advice or products. Indirect marketing will be successful only if you identify the right sources where prospects find information and you put something of value into those sources.

### **Fundamental 6: Examples**

#### **Good Example**

A \$50M security software company wanted to increase the number of leads in its sales pipeline. In the past, the organization had focused on capturing and buying names of personnel in security roles at Fortune 2000 companies. They would then perform marketing campaigns directly to those individuals in the form of e-mails and inside calling campaigns. This had generated mixed results. In order to better reach the organizations they were looking to sell to, they moved their marketing to specific security initiatives in the market. So rather than performing direct marketing to people with titles related to IT security, they chose to market indirectly through websites where specific security initiatives were being discussed on the Web and prospects would come to perform research on those initiatives. These initiatives involved regulatory policies such as SOX, HIPPA, PCI, FISMA, etc.

The number of leads increased significantly, and the cost per lead acquisition went down drastically. Although the organization continued to collect names of security personnel in the industry and market directly to them, they moved a greater percentage of their marketing efforts to placing collateral, whitepapers, and case studies onto Web sites where these initiatives were being discussed. In addition, the organization monitored more closely any new initiatives appearing on the market, because these represented new market opportunities of which they could take advantage.

## Blogs

Many organizations are implementing blogs on their own company Web sites in order to directly reach communities of people interested in topic areas related to their business. However, these companies and other organizations are also participating on third party blog sites related to their products. They often use these blogs as a means to indirectly reach prospects and convey their knowledge of the market. The effectiveness of this approach varies widely depending on how valuable the information being provided is and how compelling this information is to prospects. On these third party sites, the more that information is seen as a blatant product “pitch”, the more likely it will be rejected by the community and potentially the company representatives will be ejected from the blog.

## Facebook

A myriad of companies have started creating their own profiles on Facebook and connecting to their prospects that way. Not only is this an exceptional way to get closer to existing customers, but it’s a great way to reach potential new customers. Ultimately when you connect to individuals on Facebook as “friends,” information or content gets shared with their friends, thus extending your potential reach. There’s a good chance if you are connected to a customer on Facebook that their friends could be customers too, depending on your products.

A young Californian winery in the Alexander Valley called Hawkes decided to create a profile on Facebook. Many of the fans of this winery and the exceptional wines it produced added them as “friends” on the Facebook site. From a marketing perspective, not only did this give Hawkes a great way to reach out directly to customers, but it also became a way for “friends of friends” to become aware of the winery. The result is that Hawkes is gaining more prospects they can market to on Facebook and also increasing the number of people physically coming to the winery.

## Fundamental 6: Application

### Evaluating Your Indirect Marketing Efforts

The easiest way to determine if you leverage indirect marketing is to take the last ten activities or campaigns your marketing group is/was recently working on. If you manage by objectives (MBO) or set goals of some sort for your marketing team, write down those goals. List those items that are designed to reach out to customers to drive interest (create leads/demand). Assign a marketing activity zero points if it is a direct marketing method where you market directly to the customer. Assign an item one point if you market indirectly to customers but pay for that access, such as advertising or syndicating your content at Web sites. Give two points to those

indirect methods where you don't pay, such as participating in a blog or providing editorial content to a magazine. Now add up the points together and you have your "indirect marketing number."

This will give you an idea of how much direct versus indirect marketing you do. The mix you should use is going to vary depending on what industry you are in, how hard it is to reach your customers, and how effective direct marketing is. Only you can decide what is the right mix of direct versus indirect marketing.

### **Executing More Indirect Marketing**

As mentioned earlier, in order to more effectively reach customers who may be interested in purchasing your products, you need to determine two things. First, find out where your customers are going to do research or learn about their business or products. Second, you have to determine how to insert your marketing message into those areas where your customers look for information.

The easiest and most accurate way to determine where your customers gather information is simply to ask them directly. This can be done in a variety of ways. Have sales people ask as they go about their normal interactions with customers. Implement a dedicated campaign to reach out to customers on the phone. Use any of the many free/inexpensive online survey methods (surveymonkey.com, surveygizmo.com, questionpro.com, etc.). There are many ways to reach out to existing customers. The method that makes the most strategic sense for you will depend on the kind of customer and the kind of products you market.

Many questions can be asked to help find out where your target audience researches and/or learns about things that are affecting their business or lives. Here are some examples:

- What trade shows or conferences do you attend?
- What industry people or sites do you go to for advice or expertise?
- Whom do you trust?
- What are the top three initiatives you are working on?
- What is your main focus for the next ninety days?
- What keeps you up at night?
- Does your company have certain initiatives it is working on?
- Where and how do you research the products you buy?
- What magazines do you read?
- Do you have trusted advisors you use for advice?
- Are there industry analysts you use?
- Are there writers or publications you follow?
- Are you a member of certain industry groups?
- Do you read any particular blogs or Web sites frequently?

Once you know where your customers and potential customers go for information, you then need to find a way to get your company a presence on those sites. The locations where people go for information vary widely. Some require you to pay to place marketing content in them or to have a company/product presence (at trade shows, conferences, in magazines, etc.). Other locations can be inexpensive, even free, and often require you to provide content that is objective, enriches the community, and that uses that content repository. Blogs can be a great example of this. The key is to find out where your prospects go to do research and to learn what you need to do to start providing information in those locations. Inevitably, you must respect and follow the decorum and rules of the source you are using—if you aren't allowed to do a sales pitch on a given blog, then you should not attempt to do so.

Once you have compiled a list of locations of where your prospects find information, you will need to determine which of these sources make sense for you to market into. The information sources you decide to use are going to greatly affect the structure and format by which you get your message across. You may need to keep your content/message very short. Other times you may find the source doesn't allow product information or blatant sales pitches. This is true of most blogs. In these situations, you may be required to just participate and provide value in the conversations, indirectly marketing your company by showing customers if they want an expert or products for a given area, your company would be an excellent resource or solution. The key is to determine which of the sources makes sense for you based on the type of content, collateral, sales tools, and expertise of your organization.

If customers read a particular online magazine, you can find out if that publication allows you to submit whitepapers or case studies (at no charge or for a fee).

If your customers are interested in particular initiatives, you should find out where people learn about those initiatives and then provide targeted information about how your product addresses those initiatives.

If your customers go to physical webinars for advice, you may want to explore ways to sponsor those events.

This may all sound basic, but it is important to do your research and then creatively think how you can provide marketing content and information that is valuable in these respective locations where your customers gather. Reaching prospects where they update or educate themselves is essential for marketing indirectly to them.

# 6½

## Fundamental 6½ : What the Heck Is a Half Rule?

### Standing out in the Crowd

#### Fundamental 6½: Description

Two of the main functions of marketing are to facilitate the two “Rs”: to reach and resonate with your potential customers, meaning your marketing organization needs to find ways to reach your target audience and then present a message or value proposition that is compelling to them.

Much of the focus of this book has been related to these two concepts. How do you *reach* your target audience and then once you have reached them through some kind of medium (e-mail, phone, blogs, Web marketing, fax, advertising, etc.), how do you get your message to *resonate* with them. One of the ways that you can improve your efforts in both these areas is by assuring your marketing stands out with your prospects.

Marketing must find a way to be noticed by customers. The challenge today is there are so many companies in the market vying for the attention of the same potential customers. As we have mentioned several times, a recession makes the competition for the limited set of customers you have even more ferocious than when marketing conditions are more typical. It is very challenging for prospects to take notice and hear your message, because so many other products and marketing programs are also simultaneously trying to capture their attention. Thus, in order to be noticed by your target market, you must stand out in a favorable, distinguishing way that makes customers aware of your company and products. You must find a way to be different and appear unique when compared to your competition or other companies in general. It’s about what Seth Godin would say in his book of the same

name about being a “purple cow”: being different, being unique, standing out from what others are doing. As Seth said, “Being remarkable.” In this way you can hope to be noticed by customers.

The tricky part about trying to stand out in a crowded market is to do bold things that make you stick out and differentiate your marketing efforts from your competition’s *without* being detrimental to your brand. There are many ways to do this, from the superficial to the more intrusive. You can do something quirky on your Web site or you can include something humorous in your advertising. You could also have a famous spokesperson no one else has or uses. Depending on your method of making yourself stand out, your unique differentiation will last a few moments or some number of years, but ultimately it will last a limited time. This is because what you are doing will become familiar to your customers and will cease to have the same impact. In addition, your competition eventually will start imitating what you are doing, so you will lose your unique positioning and will have to find another way to make yourself stand out from your competition. Successful marketing is an ongoing process and challenge .

The use of 6 ½ fundamentals in this book is itself an example of standing out; sort of a self-referencing concept. I could have titled this book *The Seven Marketing Fundamentals for Thriving in a Toxic Economy*, but you most likely would not have cared. It would have been categorized by your brain as another book with seven rules (just like Stephen Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, or *The Seven Deadly Sins*). As it is, I chose to use the subtitle *the 6½ Fundamentals*. Why? So it would stand out in the market.

When you heard that this book had 6½ fundamentals, were you curious even for a moment? Did you wonder why one of the fundamentals was only a half? Of course, now you are most likely bored with the concept. However, the point was to market the book in a way that was different. No one from the Book Numbering Institute is coming to punish me or sue me or throw me in the Crazy Author Asylum (at least not yet). I just chose to do something different in order to stand out from the crowd. Did it detract from the credibility of the book? I don’t think so. Did it pique an interest in someone who might read this—or who otherwise might not have even picked it up from the bookstore shelf? Very possibly. The key is, it helped make something that would ordinarily blend in with all the other books on marketing stick out in some fashion—for some limited amount of time (although I’m hoping the time-limit rule somehow won’t apply just this once!).

Why do you want to stick out from the crowd? It’s almost as basic a question as why do marketing? The answer is that ultimately you want your products purchased. And in order for people to purchase your products, they need to hear about them and understand their value. Customers can’t buy what they don’t know about. Thus, when you try to stick out from the crowd of other products that are also attempting to get the attention of your customers, hopefully your message will be heard and

you will be able to sell more. You can be certain if your customers don't hear about your products, they won't be buying them.

Enabling your products or company to stand out in the market doesn't require you to do something at a company-wide level. You can try doing something new and unique in an e-mail campaign or with just a small part of your Web site or in a single advertisement. If you have an idea for standing out, trying something "low-key" and limited is a good way to test and see if it is something that resonates with your target audience. Of course, the greater the degree to which you take a risk, the greater the potential reward. If you do something that enables you to stand out in a very slight way, it can have only a limited impact. No risk, no reward.

There are many ways to make your marketing efforts stand out. Your marketing materials and activities can be funny, quirky, intense, amazing, remarkable, or just about anything that is distinctly different from most of what you see in the market. Sometimes it's the lack of something that may make a marketing activity stand out. Imagine an e-mail campaign where the e-mail being sent to customers has people's faces whited out. Is that a good idea? Maybe, maybe not. However, it will probably stand out. The key is to do something different, unique, or interesting that doesn't detract from what your organization stands for.

Don't forget, however, that you must provide value to your prospects. If you use a method to stand out in the market and capture your prospects' attention, then be prepared to educate them or provide some other kind of value. Just capturing their attention is not the goal. You need to be ready to deliver value in some shape or form once you have managed to stand out from the crowd. Standing out is a tool to getting attention, but once you have your prospects' attention, you need to tell them something that resonates with them—something they are interested in hearing about.

### **Fundamental 6½: Examples:**

#### **Standing out in the Market: Successful Example**

Juniper Networks is a competitor of Cisco Systems. However, Cisco is a larger organization and has a much larger marketing budget. In order to stand out and be noticed, Juniper Networks used a unique campaign where they embedded their marketing messages into funny Far Side–like cartoons. These cartoons were highly successful at getting Juniper noticed, and more important, getting the message about their products across to their target audience.

On a related note, I heard a marketing executive from Juniper speak at a conference about these cartoons. They indicated that there was a large amount of "push-back" from the executive team on this idea before it was implemented. Many of the execs were not in favor of this program because it was not viewed as "professional" and was somewhat "risky." Ultimately, when finally implemented, the campaign was

extremely successful and created significant interest in Juniper's products. This just shows that often when you want to do something different and stand out in your marketing activities, you may receive significant push-back from others around you. Sometimes making the bold move that enables your organization to stick out in a crowd of competitors means taking a large risk.



Artist: Kevin Pope [www.kevinpope.com](http://www.kevinpope.com)

## **Standing out: Successful? Not Successful?**

### **Crossworlds**

Approximately ten years ago, a female CEO at a company called Crossworlds placed a photo of herself in a slinky black evening dress in a company advertisement. This did a very good job of getting attention and standing out, but the move—strategic or otherwise—caused a great deal of controversy in the high-tech community. Ultimately the CEO did resign from the company, though this may not have had anything to do with the advertisements.

It is debatable whether this approach was a failure or not. Arguments can be made on either side of whether this method of sticking out was a good one, but it definitely was a way to stand out. Did it detriment their brand? Did it give them traction in the market they would not have had otherwise? The answers to these questions are subjective, but there is very little debate that the ad made the company stand out in the market.

### **Apple**

If you want to see the master-at-standing-out marketing organization, look at Apple. They are exceptionally talented at standing out with very simple images and messages. They are not only experts on how to stand out but also how to keep their message simple and appealing, and make their products and company approachable, welcoming, and not at all intimidating.

### **Dove—Campaign for Real Beauty**

In 2004 Dove Health and Beauty products came up with a new campaign to target “real beauty.” This campaign was designed to instill realism into the images of women they were using in their marketing advertising. Rather than using typical borderline anorexic models with airbrushed photos, as many companies do in the cosmetics industry to convey unrealistic portrayals of beauty, Dove took a very different approach. They chose to use women of typical and more “average” physical proportions in their advertising. This enabled Dove to stand out in the market while also conveying more realistic values and concepts of beauty to modern-day women. Not just standing out visually but also taking a values-oriented stand was a powerful, bold strategy for setting themselves apart and heightening the company’s visibility in the market—and one so successful that Dove still uses it today.

### **Splunk—Quirky Humor**

A software company called Splunk that creates solutions for IT personnel uses a quirky sense of humor to not only stand out in the market but to create a distinctive brand. Throughout their marketing they will use funny little quotes that are not

only humorous but convey the value the company provides. Here are just a few examples (it's mostly tech humor):

- Splunk: Finding your faults, just like your mom.
- Splunk: All batbelt. No tights.
- Splunk: Take the Sh out of IT.
- Splunk: Log is my co-pilot.

How effective is this? All I can say is that in a sea of software companies that sell to IT personnel, they are one company I remember and it's mainly because of their cute, quirky marketing. Of course, they must also provide value to their customers, but this quirky humor is a great way to stand out in the market.

### **Fundamental 6½: Application**

Depending on your perspective, standing out is either the easiest thing in the world to do or one of the hardest. Often the challenge with trying to stand out is that most organizations don't have the courage to truly be different. And yet the few that do sometimes overshoot the mark and do something that degrades them in the eyes of their prospects and customers.

In addition, if you do something bold to stand out and be remarkable in the market, you will always, *always*, have someone in your organization who says it is a bad idea. They may do so because they lack courage or because they are naysayers or because they are conservative—or they may just simply be right. However, if you are truly standing out, then you should expect someone to say it is a bad idea. In fact, if you don't hear someone objecting, you may not be standing out enough.

#### **What If You Don't Stand Out??**

If you decide to go through an exercise on how to stand out more in the market, the first thing you should do is discuss what the negative ramifications are if you don't achieve being noticed. If none of your prospects takes notice of what you are trying to tell them, whether it concerns a product or your company, what will happen? What is the risk if you do something and no one notices? This is a good way to start your exercise on standing out in the market. If you don't stand out and go unnoticed, what is the potential risk for your organization? Will you have wasted valuable money? Resources? Will sales be at risk for the quarter? It's best to understand the risk of not standing out before deciding what you are willing to do to stand out. If your company's continued existence depends on sticking out, it may make you much more bold and/or get your creative juices flowing.

Now once you know the risks of not standing out, you should think about the existing marketing activities you perform. You don't have to go get additional

budget or do things that are unnatural or unplanned in your organization. Often how you stand out is about putting a twist on your company “norm” and simply executing what you already do in a different way, for example, taking that e-mail campaign and making it look different or taking that photo of a customer and instead of doing the typical shot, have them do something fun and different, perhaps with their own product. If they are an exec from a paint company, show them pouring paint on the floor or throwing it against a canvas. It’s about doing something to be different, even if for just one marketing campaign. If it seems to work, you can always expand the use of the idea.

### **Brainstorm**

List all the programs and things you are doing today. Now go through each of them and discuss how you might make them stick out visually. At minimum, it might be the font or colors you use—yet you must ask if this truly is enough. It might be the amount of text you choose to use. Could you send an e-mail with only three words on it? It might be the kinds of graphics you use. The key is to brainstorm about ways you could stand out and not to limit the concepts coming from your team. Just start tossing out ideas.

### **Examples**

Another good way to brainstorm is to bring marketing examples from other companies. Ask each member of your marketing team before the off-site to find three things they thought were different and unique that other companies had created. Why reinvent the wheel when often you can leverage something similar to what others have done in your industry or in other industries?

Another way to get your creative juices flowing and come up with unique ideas is to expose yourself to very creative types of people. Pick up creative magazines like *Communication Arts* and look at what other marketing teams are doing. There will likely be things in these sources that are far too wild and crazy for your organization or just won’t be applicable to your business, but no doubt there will be things that can help give you ideas. And that’s what it is all about—getting ideas, discussing them and trying a few.

What’s going to work? That’s always hard to say. In the end you will need to discuss as a team what you think your organization is willing to try and then see how the ideas and concepts fare in the market. If you come up with some ideas and they seem to work, you can expend more effort expanding their use in your marketing activities.

# Summary: Do You Really Know Your Customer?

A fundamental challenge in marketing is that everyone else in your company thinks they can do your group's job. No other department has people tell them how to do their job, at least not as much as marketing. No one goes to accounting and tells them how to reconcile or balance the books. No one tells engineering how to actually design and make products. Yet everyone in your organization thinks they know what marketing is and how it should properly be executed. They will tell you that you should be advertising or that the Web site is horrible or that you aren't getting enough press. This is always good feedback to listen to, but ultimately your marketing team—no one else—is responsible for driving the demand for your products.

During a recession, many people inside and outside your organization will tell you what you should do. They will claim you should try a variety of new techniques and/or methods to acquire new customers and sell more products. You can certainly evaluate the validity of these ideas. However, the greatest marketing opportunity for you to rapidly grow your business is to make your current efforts and activities more effective. By allocating time and evaluating the fundamentals that underpin all your marketing efforts, you can increase your awareness and sales with both existing and new customers.

Focusing on the 6½ fundamentals presented in this book, you can increase the

value gained and revenue generated from the time/money you spend on marketing. Most likely you are already effectively executing some of these fundamentals; yet you may be able to significantly improve your execution of one or more of these fundamentals if you evaluate them objectively and make adjustments. Just taking a small amount of additional time to evaluate them will help ensure your marketing efforts are as effective as possible.

- Are you focusing on the right part of the sales cycle?
- Are you providing your customers value within your marketing activities?
- Is your messaging effective?
- Are you leveraging the power of brands, initiatives, and things outside your company?
- Is the packaging of your marketing activities compelling?
- Are you reaching out to potential customers through indirect methods, as well as direct?
- Are you finding ways to stand out so you get noticed in the market in a positive way?

Marketing is about people. If you evaluate the marketing fundamentals presented in this book, you will find you will understand your customers better and will consequently forge a stronger bond with them. After all, marketing and sales are all about understanding your customers and their needs.

My friend's wife bought garbage bags at Costco. She told him they had had a tremendous promotion on the bags. When he looked at the the garbage bag box, he saw she had bought 2500 bags. He told her that, as a couple, they only used one bag a week and that they now had enough bags for approximately the next fifty years. At that point she sheepishly told him that because Costco had offered such a great deal, she had decided to buy two boxes of them, thus giving them enough garbage bags for almost a century.

As marketing people, we should all strive to create such great marketing that we have customers for a hundred years...or at least that our products are used that long. Does the story relate closely to the 6½ fundamentals? Probably not. But I wanted to end the book making you chuckle. Did I accomplish that goal? I hope so!

Good prospecting.

—Mark

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## **A Note About the Author**



Mark Gaydos has more than 20 years of marketing and product management experience. He has held a variety of marketing roles at companies, such as Oracle and SAP. Mark also is an instructor at UC Berkeley Extension where he has been teaching for over a decade - a marketing course he founded on software product management and product marketing. Gaydos has an M.B.A. in management science from San Diego State University and a B.A. in economics from the University of California, Santa Barbara.