Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?
Persuading Customers When They Ignore Marketing

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A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK
CHAPTER TWO
Experiencing the Brand

Mass marketing may be going the way of the dinosaur, but we would never suggest the principle of branding is on its deathbed. The need to establish and sustain name recognition and associative benefits will always be a part of the competent marketer’s stock in trade. However, the complex and interconnected relationships between emerging media and the information they now make available mean that name recognition and associations alone are insufficient. Increasingly, customers are associating brand not with a message but with their entire experiences surrounding the product or service.

In other words, branding is now more about what you do than what you say.

Because people have complex motivations, marketers have worked to establish meaningful connections between their products or services and the customers’ felt needs. Very often, these branding efforts have drawn on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

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Mass marketing may be going the way of the dinosaur, but we would never suggest the principle of branding is on its deathbed. The need to establish and sustain name recognition and associative benefits will always be a part of the competent marketer's stock in trade. However, the complex and interconnected relationships between emerging media and the information they now make available mean that name recognition and associations alone are insufficient. Increasingly, customers are associating brand not with a message but with their entire experiences surrounding the product or service. In other words, branding is now more about what you do than what you say.

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Abraham Maslow and his hierarchy

All of us prioritize our needs in a predictable manner, starting with "deficit" needs—those most basic to survival. In 1943, psychologist Abraham Maslow represented these ascending levels of human needs in the form of a pyramid, with deficit needs represented at its base. Higher levels represented more complicated "being" (or growth) needs. As a person adequately meets the needs of one level, she is able to move progressively higher on the pyramid, to meet the needs of the next level.

For example, in the wake of a catastrophe, as otherwise law-abiding citizens often discover, the search for food and other basic necessities overrides every other consideration. There's little time for the luxury of esteem needs when your survival is at stake. Once you're full, hunger ceases to be such a powerful motivator ... for most of us anyway. Once food needs have been satisfied, they cease to motivate behavior. You start thinking about other things.

Maslow identified self-actualization—the desire to become everything you are capable of becoming—as the overarching human need. This is not a deficit need; it's a growth need, and fulfilling it is generally a lifelong process. Maslow acknowledged that even when our deficit needs are met, the need to be true to our own definition of ourselves influences our attempts to satisfy every category of need on the pyramid.
In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was not a nice guy. He was a murderer and a liar and betrayed the secrets of the gods. After Sisyphus chained Thanatos, god of death, so dead folks could no longer get to the underworld, the irate Hades punished Sisyphus by consigning him to an eternity of fruitless toil (nothing to do with spreadsheets): Sisyphus was forced to roll a heavy block of stone up a steep hill, only to have it tumble to the bottom when he reached the top.

Remove the grim parts of this story and imagine your buying customer in Sisyphus's place. This basic model is helpful to keep in mind as we take a closer look at the customer's buying process and the categories of information you need to consider.

Whenever a customer makes a decision to buy, the final decision reflects the fruits of the decision-making process. The process may take place almost instantaneously or stretch out over a long period of time—but it's a process, not an event.

No matter how long it takes, the buying decision process always begins when you become aware of a need. Once you have identified the problem you wish to solve, you begin to search for possible solutions.

While gathering information, you refine and evaluate all the criteria that will affect your decision to buy. You narrow the field of choice to the best few alternatives. You make your choice, then you take action by buying—it's important to understand that deciding to buy and actually buying are not the same. In the final step of the process, you reevaluate your decision based on the results.

Branding and the buying process

The goal of branding is to plant your solution in the customer's brain, so that when the problem arises, the customer recalls your brand as the solution. Today, the effects of branding often are diluted. The search for and evaluation of information is no longer confined to family, best friends, business associates, neighbors, or even guides such as the Yellow Pages.

Most sales processes tend to neglect the earlier phases of the buying process. A pressing marketing challenge is to focus our attention on the problem-recognition phase. By focusing on customers while they are framing their problems, we can create the right content and branding messages so we can present the right information for the customers' angles of approach.

In these early stages, many customers may not yet fully understand the dimensions of their problems (especially when it comes to complex, unusual, or undefined issues). This is where we have considerable influence. If we meet the customers' needs through their angle of approach, we are better able to guide the course of their decision-making processes—just like a pool shark hits the cue ball to shape where it goes and what it hits.
First, you have to grab Attention—you can’t get anyone interested unless you catch his or her attention. Then you have to strengthen Interest, stimulate Desire, and motivate that person to take Action. We have always added an “S” to this acronym: Satisfaction. Especially in a Web-centric, personal-experience world, the ability to satisfy customers beyond the action itself is essential. Satisfaction is the piece that makes the process come full circle and establishes the potential for future exchanges. Satisfaction is the reward. Without satisfaction, the ultimate goal of loyalty is difficult to attain.

AIDAS certainly provides a big-picture view of what needs to take place as selling and buying work in tandem. But the buying decision process is very often iterative. In more complex sales, it’s rarely as easy as “I’m thirsty, so I’ll buy a bottle of water.” As customers navigate through their problem recognition, search, evaluation, and decision phases, there are often different pieces of information they need to know in order to proceed.

Micro- and Macro-Actions

Our work with business Web sites quickly clarified for us that we were not simply trying to motivate one action. The buying process is made up of many actions. It’s easy to understand this if you imagine a customer’s progress through a Web site. The ultimate conversion goal of your persuasive system might be to generate a lead, get someone to register or subscribe or enter a contest or make a purchase. But every little step—each click—on the path to the goal is also a point of conversion. You always have to persuade at the level of “micro-actions” as well as “macro-actions.”

The essence of the Internet experience is how visitors click from one hyperlink to the next. How they feel about that experience is determined by whether each click fulfills their expectations and needs. Satisfaction with each click (a micro-action) increases their confidence they’ll get what they came for (the goal or macro-action).

Every click represents a question your customer is asking. It represents your customer’s willingness to stay engaged with you. It represents a unique point of conversion. It represents continued persuasive momentum. If your customers don’t click, communication ceases and persuasive momentum evaporates. If you can’t help people get to the information they require to satisfy their questions, why should they bother doing business with you?

Online it’s clicks. But every persuasion entity has its click equivalent. When we fail to articulate needs and wants and problems and solutions from the customers’ point of view, when we fail to sustain their attention and interest in us, we contribute to an often fatal breakdown in persuasive momentum. Sisyphus’s rock tumbles right back down.
CHAPTER NINE

Marketing and Sales Collide

While marketers frequently develop material for sales people, sales people usually complain it misses the mark. The best sales people know that a sale is an interactive undertaking. It doesn’t lend itself to a static presentation.

Recall that we use “sales” broadly. Whenever there is an exchange of value, wherever you are trying to get your customers to take an action—any action—you are engaged in selling. And you are asking the other person to engage in the process of buying. Sales can be many things:

- The exchange of currency for products or services
- The exchange of personal information for entry into a sweepstakes
- Subscribing to a newsletter
- Opting in to an e-mail list
- Registering yourself

Marketing and Sales Collide

Traditionally, marketing and sales have been separate and often adversarial activities. Marketing grabs attention, stimulates desire, makes the introductions, and then passes the baton to sales. It’s up to sales to carry through.

But the truth is, buying takes place when the efforts of marketing and sales overlap, when both consistently are tuned to and reinforce each other.

This simple Venn diagram describes our point: one circle is marketing; the other is sales. When the two barely overlap at all, very little buying can take place—the message and experience are disconnected. When businesses are able to increase the overlap between those two circles, they increase the likelihood that the message and the experience will act in concert.

We mentioned in the last chapter that, as the stages for commercial activity multiply, the distinctions between marketing and sales are blurring.
A Web of Interactivity

Influences on Buying
“Which of the following most influenced your decision to purchase this product/service?”

* "Website" includes both official company website and third-party websites
** "Online Marketing" includes web advertisements and email programs
Source: DoubleClick Touchpoints III, 2005
In 2002, a study by J.D. Power and Associates indicated that for every one hundred new-vehicle buyers, sixty turned to the Internet for product research and began the process almost two months before they actually made a purchase. Eighty-eight percent of those sixty went online for product research. They visited an average of seven Web sites in the course of their research. They were in control and demanding transparency. The days are over when a customer does or does not know.

Many businesses understandably feel uncomfortable—painfully so—accepting that customers today can get information about products from all sorts of sources. Businesses no longer control what the customer knows or what the customer discovers about the business. And what is marketing if not self-disclosure about our key benefits?

The Johari Window, as defined by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1960s, describes the dynamic communications model developed by them. The Johari Window divides the combinations of these levels of awareness into four types: open, blind, hidden, and unknown. As mutual familiarity increases, the lines dividing the four panes move to reflect the changes in the relationship. 

The open quadrant represents information you and your customers know about each other. The blind quadrant represents information you do not know about your customers and what they think about you. The hidden quadrant represents information that neither you nor the customers know about the relationship. The unknown quadrant represents information that neither the business nor its customers know about the relationship.

The relationships are quite simple. There is what is known, or not known, and to whom. And what is marketing if not self-disclosure about our key benefits?

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The Topology of a Sale

Sales situations readily lend themselves to topological discussions and categorization. Sales are often described using the words business-to-consumer, business-to-business, simple sales, complex sales, peer-to-peer sales, and many other variations. To our way of thinking, though, none of these labels really describes what is important about the sale.

As we were growing our business, we tried responding to these predefined categories of sales. Many of our readers and clients presented us with questions like these: “You use lots of retail examples, but you almost never talk about what I’m interested in, which is business-to-business. What should I be doing differently?” We often framed our language in terms of “considered sales,” but, of course, this suggests there are unconsidered sales. Yet even a customer’s most impulsive purchase incorporates a buying decision process that involves some level of consideration. Ever try to get a handle on what exactly constitutes a considered purchase or complex sale? We have. We’ve searched on the various sales topology terms and discovered the following: A considered purchase or complex sale is one where the buyer spends time and effort to make an informed decision. We use a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) to help us plot dimensions of complexity on a visual representation we call a Complexogram. We’ll be the first to tell you this is a subjective process. But it offers us a reference and direction that we continue to investigate as we dig deeper into our understanding of the business and designing personas.

Four types of buyers

Whatever sort of traffic you get—store, Web site, catalog—a potential customer has crossed your path. There are four different kinds of customers.

Accidentals. Some find you accidentally and are not in the market for your goods or services, certainly not now and maybe not ever. We think, for purposes of our discussion at least, you can ignore these people. However, if you have more of them than you think you should, it may be because you are not providing the right products or services.

[Diagram of a Complexogram with dimensions Need, Risk, Knowledge, and Consensus, each ranging from 1 to 5.]

Because the resulting information will be critical to persona and scenario design, uncovery examines and analyzes these dimensions in detail.

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The Human Operating System

### The Sixteen Types

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<th>ISTJ</th>
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### Dichotomies

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<th>Extroversion</th>
<th>Introversion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sensing</td>
<td>Intuition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judging</td>
<td>Perceiving</td>
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### Temperament

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>(SJ, SP, NF, NT)</th>
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<tr>
<td>iStJ</td>
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1. Sensing/Judging (SJ)
2. Sensing/Perceiving (SP)
3. Intuitive/Feeling (NF)
4. Intuitive/Thinking (NT)
1. Methodical (SJ)
2. Spontaneous (SP)
3. Humanistic (NF)
4. Competitive (NT)

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<tr>
<th>Logic</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fast</td>
<td>Competitive (What)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Methodical (How)</td>
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- **Competitive**: (What) - Fast
- **Spontaneous**: (Why) - Fast
- **Methodical**: (How) - Slow
- **Humanistic**: (Who) - Slow

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**Temperament**

- **Sensing**: (SJ, SP, NF, NT)
- **Intuitive**: (IS, IP, FN, FT)
- **Judging**: (SJ, SP, NF, NT)
- **Perceiving**: (IS, IP, FN, FT)

**Logistic**

- **Fast**: Competitive (What)
- **Slow**: Methodical (How)

**Emotional**

- **Spontaneous**: (Why)
- **Humanistic**: (Who)

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**The Sixteen Types**

- **ESTP**
- **ESFP**
- **ENFP**
- **ENTP**
- **ESTJ**
- **ESFJ**
- **ENFJ**
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- **INFP**
- **INTP**
- **ISTJ**
- **ISFJ**
- **INFJ**
- **INTJ**

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**The Human Operating System**

- **Competitive (SJ)**: Methodical (How)
- **Spontaneous (SP)**: Spontaneous (Why)
- **Humanistic (NF)**: Humanistic (Who)
- **Competitive (NT)**: Competitive (What)

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**The Universe of Buyers Revisited**

- **Just Browsing**: Competitive (What)
- **KNOWS APPROXIMATELY**: Spontaneous (Why)
- **KNOWS EXACTLY**: Methodical (How)
- **KNOWS APPROXIMATELY**: Humanistic (Who)