

8 Ad Agency Founders Tell It Like It Is

A GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE

SEISMIC SHIFT

IN MARKETING

An inside look at how marketing
paradigms need to change.

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FOREWORD

IT'S NO SECRET that marketing has undergone dramatic changes over the last 20 years.

And virtually all experts agree that this change will continue and probably accelerate.

To survive, let alone be successful, while adjusting to the new paradigms, marketers must be in constant learning mode. Which is why lots of books are written on the subject.

Seismic Shift is not just another one of those books. It offers something different. And better.

Most books have one author. One point of view.

Seismic Shift has the benefit of eight authors. Eight marketing experts. Eight sets of ideas.

These experts cover a wide range of marketing disciplines including research, positioning, packaging, retail and guerrilla.

For each area they focus on basic marketing principles, and how they function in an ever-changing digital world.

P R E F A C E

NO MATTER WHICH business category you're in or the size of your marketing budget, you're feeling the shockwaves of the pronounced changes in advertising and marketing. Failing to adjust to the seismic shifts in how companies reach and connect with customers is leading even the strongest players to disaster. The decline and death of nationally recognized retail stores paints the picture in bold strokes.

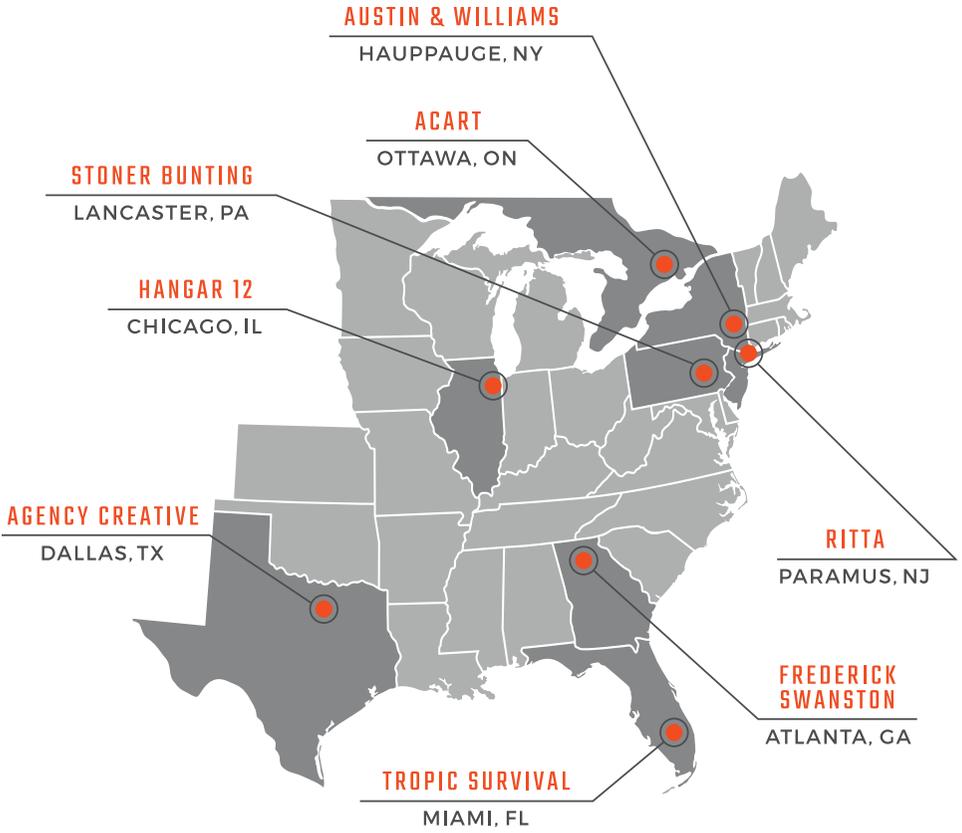
If you market to other businesses, you may feel somewhat immune. But don't be complacent. Morphing distribution channels and new competitors affect manufacturers and service companies too. Your customers are learning, changing and demanding more. You have no alternative but to evolve with—or even ahead of—them.

The dazzle of the new and the predominance of hype have made it even harder to know what works and what doesn't. Charting a path to success through shifting options is a shaky proposition. Truth and trust are harder to find.

A Guide To Surviving the Seismic Shift In Marketing gives you a compass you can count on.

Unlike marketing guides from gurus and theorists, this book grows out of the real-world experience of eight highly successful advertising and marketing agency principals. They work in the trenches every day—understanding, illuminating and mastering the challenges and opportunities of the new marketing. In each chapter, an agency pro gives you a hard-hitting, reality-based look at a key seismic shift. You'll be challenged to make changes—but depend on it, they're changes that work.

If you're a C-level executive looking for answers, you're about to meet your own personal marketing brain trust.



ABOUT NAMA

FOUNDED IN 2010, the North American Marketing Alliance (northama.com) is a cooperative network of eight independent advertising agencies in Canada and across the United States. To enhance their service to clients, members meet monthly to address industry trends, share knowledge and raise the bar for marketing excellence. They also come together for an annual conference.

By leveraging their broad coverage, unique skill sets and local strength, NAMA members accelerate multimarket rollouts and improve results. They offer synergistic solutions and regional expertise in a wide range of areas, including communications strategy; media planning; traditional and digital advertising; experiential and point-of-purchase marketing; social media marketing; event planning; social issues marketing, customer relationship management solutions; and television and video production.

Through NAMA, eight outstanding agencies deliver the benefits of global strategic thinking and nimble, local response. Members includes Acart Communications in Ottawa, Canada; Agency Creative in Dallas; Austin & Williams in Hauppauge, N.Y.; Frederick Swanston in Atlanta; Hangar12 in Chicago; RITTA in Paramus, N.J.; Stoner Bunting in Lancaster, Pa.; and Tropic Survival Advertising and Marketing in Miami.

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Change Marketing: Creating Brand Champions with Behavioural Strategies

by Al Albania

PRESIDENT & CEO, ACART COMMUNICATIONS

WHETHER YOUR OBJECTIVE is to inspire people to change the world, or to change their brand of laundry detergent, marketing is all about influencing behaviour.

For 40 years, I've been working with both kinds of clients. Our public, not-for-profit, and professional association clients have always trusted us to help them “change attitudes, provoke action, and improve lives” through proven social marketing techniques. But now, in today's socially-wired world, private-sector brands are increasingly interested in more emotive and immersive strategies as they seek to foster deeper and more personal connections with their customers.

It is no longer enough for a product to look or taste good; using it needs to *feel* good. Traditionally, brands tried to associate themselves with status, a sense of belonging to a group, or even childhood nostalgia (McDonald's and Coca-Cola are particularly good at the latter). Now, however, consumers also want to know what a brand *stands* for: Is your coffee fair trade? Is this shirt sweatshop-free? Was this makeup tested on animals? Is this gasoline giving back to the environment? Does buying this also support a charity?

In this context corporate social responsibility, or CSR, has grown out of its niche to influence all aspects of brands and their marketing. Suddenly, major retailers like JC Penney and Target are taking stands on social justice issues. McDonald's is having to explain the sustainability of its supply chain. And simply eating a chicken sandwich at one restaurant, rather than another, is a partisan political expression on the hottest issues of the day.

All marketers are social marketers

Welcome to the late Twenty-Teens. In this environment, all marketers are social marketers, and have to be aware of the social reputation of their brand. Many see this as a risky time for traditional brands, especially when they are open to very public criticism on blogs or social media. To me, however, this is an era of great opportunity IF you are prepared for it.

By the end of this chapter, you will be too.

Our approach to marketing and brand development, in all sectors, is to look for the social issue (or issues) being fulfilled by the offering. Sometimes, it's obvious.

Creating brand fans for life

For example, our long relationship with the Ottawa Senators Hockey Club has taught us that we know we are not just selling tickets to a hockey game. What is really at stake is membership in a community passionate about sport and their home team. To fans, the Sens are an essential aspect of their identity; they wear the jerseys on game day, decorate their cars with team flags, and fill their social media feeds with team talk. When the team is in the playoffs, they decorate their homes and workplaces with memorabilia, and throng the streets to celebrate wins.

While this may seem typical of fans of any big-league sports franchise, consider the fact that Ottawa has only had a modern-era NHL team since 1992. (The original Ottawa Senators were a founding member of the NHL, but left our nation's capital in 1934 to become the St. Louis Eagles for a season, before disbanding.) This community has had to be built up, stealing lifelong fans from two of the league's most established and iconic brands the Montreal Canadiens and the Toronto Maple Leafs — who had dominated the region for decades.

If you know Canadians, you know that hockey loyalties are often lifelong commitments. To build a new community in a generation, the Ottawa Senators had to appeal to local pride, and deliver on a promise that belonging to this new community would bring status and happiness. In the 10+ years we have been working with the brand, this has required a broad, fan-centric, outreach, which has included charity work, crowdsourcing authentic fan content, breaking down barriers between players and fans,



and reshaping the brand to reflect a maturing team with a shot at the Stanley Cup. It hasn't just been about winning games, in other words, as much as winning hearts.

One of our biggest challenges was keeping up fan momentum during, and following, the 2004–05 NHL lockout. In a season without hockey, we had to keep the relationship with the fans strong. This involved extensive community and charity outreach, tightening the ties between the team and its fans.

However, the real test came post-lockout in the summer before the new season began, with fans having watched other sports, and found new passions, to keep them busy. The return of NHL hockey was a big deal, but the hand couldn't be overplayed, since some fans were disenchanted with the big business and salary issues that had taken their sport away. To reintroduce the players as heroes wasn't the right approach. Fans needed to reconnect in a more personal way with their love of their team.

The basis of any fandom is that the team is part of each fan's personal identity. When they wear their jersey, or drink coffee from their Sens mug, they're not just declaring a preference for a team; they are building an identity for themselves that is as essential as their ethnicity, religion, fashion, or political stances.

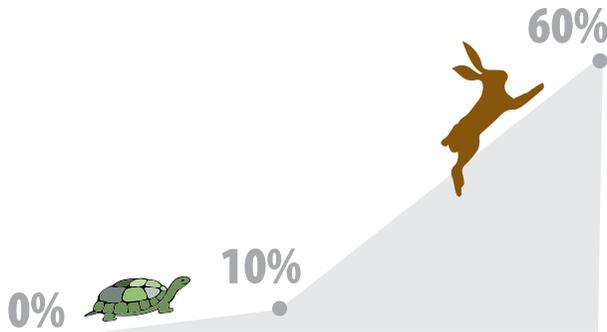
Our "welcome back" campaign for the Sens, therefore, celebrated fans as the real heroes of the NHL. We crowdsourced real fan stories through the team's e-newsletter (this was pre-social media!) and selected the most

interesting entries. These fans were captured on video, unscripted, declaring their love for the team and what their favourite players meant to their lives. The theme was “This is MY team,” and the reality of the approach brought back memories of past playoff games and other cherished fan moments. The result? Fans came back in droves for the 2005–06 season, and loyalty to the team continued to grow.

This sociological approach to marketing can be transposed to almost any marketplace, because all consumers are people just like you and me, with a human need to feel they are doing the right thing for themselves, their families, and their peer groups. Achieve that, and you can create authentic brand champions who will give you massive returns in earned social media, goodwill, and loyalty.

Creating champions

Hockey fans are relatively easy to inspire, compared with making consumers fans of less all-consuming brands. But the good news is, you only have to engage a few truly committed brand champions to build a movement.



This insight, like many others presented here, comes from research done on the social marketing side. A study from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute describes the science behind the “Tipping Point” theory of social change (“Social consensus through the influence of committed minorities,” *Physical Review*, July 22, 2011). That is, how many supporters a cause needs within a population before it suddenly becomes a mainstream belief. But while Malcolm Gladwell (Canadian author of *The Tipping Point*) described it as an “80/20” phenomenon, where 20% of the population are the movers, Rensselaer calculated that number as being as few as 10%!

What the Rensselaer study implies is what we have been telling clients for years: Create champions, and the rest will follow, pulled forward by the tide of change.

An important aspect of the finding is that the percentage of committed opinion holders required to shift majority opinion does not change significantly, regardless of the type of network in which the opinion holders are working. In other words, the percentage of committed opinion holders required to influence a society remains at approximately 10%, regardless of how or where that opinion starts and spreads.

This has huge implications for messaging and media strategy. By understanding who your potential 10% are, what they do, and what they believe, you can target them more personally and effectively. The timing could not be better, with digital and social media channels allowing more precise and efficient customization than ever before.

The CHAMP methodology

Every marketer has a preferred methodology for creating these brand champions. Ours, developed over four decades with an eye always cast towards emerging trends, is called CHAMP.



CHAMP — “CHAnge Marketing Plan” — outlines the stages of behaviour change that create brand champions, starting with getting attention, communicating basic information, and moving the target through stages of interest and activation to the coveted “Champion” position.

The process begins by defining the target audience and mapping their engagement with the brand, and what it stands for, on the continuum. It helps to determine the appropriate communication strategy to transition the audience to the next level.

Uninformed

This is the default state for any new cause, product category, or brand. The target audience is completely unaware of the subject matter, and is not seeking information about it.

In many ways, this is the most exciting challenge for marketers. With no “baggage” of preconceptions, the communication environment is a blank slate. However, in today’s media-saturated environment, it also represents a massive challenge: How will you get noticed?

The objective of any campaign is, above all, to get noticed. It often calls for tactical blunt instruments such as guerrilla marketing, street-level experiential events, shock, and scandal. The key is to surprise the audience with something unexpected but relevant, and immerse them in the brand.

However, there is a caution here as well, if your long-term objective is to build a lasting and positive brand experience. On the cause marketing side, for example, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have permanently associated themselves with shocking, gory, and sexually explicit campaigns to the detriment of more moderate potential supporters.

One of the most successful awareness campaigns of the past few years is genuinely grassroots: #icebucketchallenge. The Ice Bucket Challenge was the right meme, at the right time. It combines the pure silliness of things like #planking or “Gangnam Style” dancing with more committed fundraising ideas like Movember or Run For The Cure. It’s incredibly easy to take video of yourself getting soaked, compared to growing a moustache, or gathering pledges for an event. And unlike pure awareness campaigns, such as women sharing their bra colour on Facebook, this one asked for a financial commitment: \$10 to do it, or \$100 to not. It also had a handy self-replicating component built in, as each participant is supposed to challenge three other people to do the same. This winning formula seems so contrived and obvious, it’s shocking that a marketer didn’t do it first. Instead, most sources credit former college baseball player Pete Frates with getting it going.

Overall, as a fundraising campaign, the Ice Bucket Challenge had a low rate of return, considering the engagement rate: Fewer than one in ten participants actually donated to ALS research. More importantly, however, the campaign made ALS, and its sufferers, the top-of-mind cause for 2014.

In the aftermath, private-sector brands want to create “grassroots” movements as powerful as #icebucketchallenge. Many will fail.

A better model for brands to follow (and, if possible, improve on) is what Canadian undergarment company Stanfield’s did with “Guy at Home in His Underwear.” They sponsored a man who was a testicular cancer survivor to spend an entire month in a home that was wired with web cameras, turning his life into an online reality show to raise funds for the Canadian Cancer Society. The brand was always in the forefront, with the man’s daily choice of underwear featured on the campaign site and offered at a discount through Stanfield’s online store. In the end, the campaign won uncountable earned media, and easily reached its fundraising goal with days to spare.

The key to an awareness breakthrough lies in surprising originality, not copying a proven trend. The real secret will be for consumer brands to ally themselves with a cause and a great story that people want to share.

Aware

An “aware” audience means the subject is known, but not on what we call the “consideration list.” Any marketer will tell you that simple awareness is not bankable. To survive, a brand must inspire action. This cannot be achieved instantly, however, as the audience first has to be motivated by concrete and compelling reasons that will remain top-of-mind when the time for action arrives.

This is a challenge we have often faced in public transit marketing for smaller municipalities, where car culture reigns. Everyone is aware of the buses they see on the roads every day, but few wish to ride them unless there is no other option.

The strategy, in these cases, is to change the conversation and redefine the cause, product, or brand, to make it more immediately relevant to the audience. When we were contracted by the Regional Municipality of Halifax to boost ridership following a transit strike, we called upon more than a decade of transit experience to determine what had been missing in their

marketing. Our insight was that the rider experience could be better, in specific ways, than that of a car driver. With enforcement of distracted driving in the news, transit offers a commute in which texting, visiting social media, reading, catching up on work — or even sleep — are all perfectly acceptable activities. If you're going to be stuck in traffic anyway, the logic goes, you might as well be able to use the time in a way that you enjoy.

Cheekily named “Do it on the Bus,” the campaign showed all these activities in context of what the car driver could NOT do: Read a newspaper, work on a laptop, or take a nap. The emotive motivator of avoiding stress was followed up, on a campaign microsite, by more practical product benefits such as efficiency, economy, and eco-friendliness.



The campaign also benefitted from newsworthy controversy, as the hashtag #doitonthebus trended in the region and people made jokes about perceived sexual innuendo. This resulted in thousands of dollars' value in earned media, which meant the campaign (and its real message) became a topic of conversation all over the region. Motivation quickly transformed to action, as ridership numbers spiked above campaign objectives.

Cheeky hashtag campaigns can be dangerous, however. It's important to ensure that your brand has the goodwill of your “aware” audience, and that it's a message they will want to share. (One famous example of a “hashtag fail” was when McDonald's attempted to engage fans by asking for

their #McDstories, only to find the campaign hijacked by critics of the massive brand.)

Keep in mind that for a challenger brand, an awareness campaign doesn't need to be clever, just relevant and useful. For instance, in March 2015, weather app startup Poncho marketed to attendees of the South by Southwest Interactive Conference in Austin, Texas, by partnering with another startup, energy drink maker Resqwater, to provide sun and rain gear, refreshments, and free rides to anyone who posted the hashtag #askponcho on their social media.

Motivated

A “motivated” audience is one that should be committing to your cause, product, or brand, but isn't. It's one of the biggest frustrations facing marketers, but fortunately one that can be remedied.

There's a catch, though: It's a lot of work. Specifically, market research work. What you need to ferret out, from your target audiences, is the barriers to not fulfilling a behaviour they are already predisposed to. The key objective is to find a motivation that has greater force than the barrier can resist.

An excellent example is the “Embrace Life” campaign launched by Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSR) in 2010. The issue was seatbelt use among young, married, men, who knew perfectly well that seatbelts save lives but were not using them. Research determined that while they weren't that concerned with taking risks for themselves, when reminded what their death would mean to their partners and dependent children, they took the issue much more seriously. The protector instinct won out.

In the ad, which went on to be named YouTube's PSA of the year, a father is at home, seated, and is miming driving a car. Suddenly, he mimes a collision. Before he can be thrown from his seat, his wife and daughter leap up and form a protective seatbelt around him with their arms. The message: “Embrace life. Wear a seatbelt.” Watch the ad at [youtube/h-8PBx7isoM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-8PBx7isoM). It's been viewed almost 20 million times.

Brands are watching the success of viral PSA campaigns closely, and are emulating their emotive and issue-driven public interest. For example, Tylenol recently released a minute-long film on YouTube that celebrates marriage and family, including single-parent and two same-sex

parent households. It had nothing to do with the pain reliever, except that it was branded at the end along with a hashtag, #howwefamily. Welcome to the world of branded social content.

Active

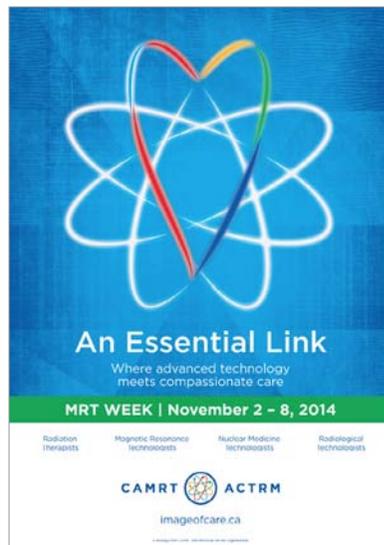
So, you've made the sale. Secured the membership. Captured the follower. Aced the engagement. What now?

Looking after an engaged target audience is the most critical part of any long-term marketing campaign, since it's well-known that it costs more to replace a customer than to keep one. That doesn't mean it's easy!

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is its own discipline, and deserves a chapter on its own. However, keeping active audiences engaged has become a multi-platform exercise, which includes direct communications, loyalty programs, and social media.

There is still a place for traditional marketing to promote loyalty and stay top-of-mind. This is especially important for front-runners, like McDonald's or Coca-Cola, who have much to lose if even a small percentage of customer interest wanes. It is also vital for membership organizations, whether professional, interest-based, or not-for-profit.

National professional associations have been a particular focus for us, especially in the healthcare and professional services fields. These organizations are often non-regulatory and voluntary in many of their jurisdictions, so they have to earn and keep their memberships through constant marketing reports. For example, we developed a multi-prong, multi-media approach for an association of medical radiation technologists (e.g., x-ray technicians) that brands the profession's pride to both internal and external audiences. As this group tended to be overlooked among doctors, nurses, and other members of healthcare teams, we developed a multi-year strategy to



define the techs as “the image of care” and provide them with language and techniques to ensure patients understand their identity and essential role in care. This strategy included a campaign microsite, digital advertising, direct marketing, events, and video content sharable through social media. Efforts that not only help retain membership and sell services, but also help the client recruit brand champions who will influence peers by taking on the brand message as their own.

The strategy is similar when it comes to creating a community around loyal consumers of a challenger brand. For instance, regional fast food chain Carl’s Jr., #37 in the list of top food service chains in the United States in 2012, has slowly worked its way up (as well as merging with its sister brand, Hardee’s.) through a combination of outrageous and sexually-suggestive advertising and social media marketing that sets it apart from McDonald’s, Burger King, and Wendy’s.

What Carl’s Jr. can do, that the bigger chains cannot, is focus their marketing efforts on a small, but hungry, segment: Young, single, men. Their product ads, all sharable on social media, resemble *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* videos rather than food promotions, conflating the young men’s appetites for food and sex. Carl’s Jr.’s social media presence, meanwhile, is highly engaging, celebrating customers who declare their pleasure in Carl’s Jr.’s large and calorie-dense burgers, sides, and desserts. In a social media era where “food porn” is a popular topic, they even recruited the viral YouTube video stars of *Epic Meal Time* to star in an online ad. The result is a dedicated fan base who see themselves in the brand, and bring their loyalty (and disposable income) to the drive-through window.

Whether you’re promoting health care or the opposite of health food, it’s all about celebrating your biggest fans.

Champion

Brand champions are the Holy Grail of marketing. In their 1999 book, *Radical Marketing*, Sam Hill and Glenn Rifkin give examples of customers who go so far as to tattoo their favourite brand’s logo on their skin — literally branding themselves for life.

While not everyone will go this far, even a “slacktivist” champion, who heralds the cause or brand to their large social media following, is a valuable asset to be recognized and rewarded.

The first step to developing a champions marketing program is to identify them. We use social media monitoring tools to track down influential proponents of our clients' brands or their causes. Many of these people are also actively interacting with the brand's social media, which is why it is important to train community managers to identify and nurture those connections.

We recently had the opportunity to engage some of the most notorious brand champions in the world: Trekkies ("Trekkers" is the preferred nomenclature now).

Canada Aviation and Space Museum was selected for the world premiere of *Star Trek™: The Starfleet Academy Experience* for Star Trek's 50th anniversary. While a hard core of fans is guaranteed to attend,



we whipped up the passion of casual fans through a fully-immersive campaign. A “UFO” hoax video we produced went viral after appearing on Reddit and the local TV news, followed by an experiential installation of a crashed Star Trek shuttle in high-traffic urban areas and a teaser poster campaign. (We also took over *Metro* with an all-Klingon front page!)



This was followed by a full-blown street-level and digital ad campaign, and a touring “Captain’s Chair” from the Enterprise that allowed the public to put on a Star Trek shirt, look into a Twitter-connected camera, speak real lines from Captain Kirk, and have it Tweeted out to the world. This latter tactic was a huge hit at Ottawa Comiccon. This campaign led to a sold-out opening gala, brisk ticket sales, and thousands upon thousands in local and international earned media.

Conclusion: Don’t just market to consumers, talk to what they believe in

You can’t be in advertising and marketing for four decades without developing a perspective on long-term consumer trends. In the 21st century, consumers are demanding more from their brands than a low-priced, reliable product; they insist on a brand that supports their sense of personal identity, their community and online reputation, and most of all their deeply-held beliefs (or passions).

This trend has been emerging since the 1980s, and will only continue for the foreseeable future. While economic downturns tend to make consumers more pragmatic, for a time, they always return to a desire to contribute to some sort of greater good, not only through personal charity and activism, but also through the choices they make when purchasing just about anything.

The 30-second TV ad is turning into a one-minute-plus sponsored cause marketing film, or an online reality show that lasts for weeks. The unforgettable radio jingle has transformed into hashtags and other memes

that go viral on social media. Press releases have evolved into experiential events that draw bystanders and press alike into shared moments of full brand immersion.

It's a strange new world for some traditional marketers. But if you've been keeping up to date on the strategies and tactics deployed by the most successful social and cause marketers in the not-for-profit sector, you'll see they have a lot to teach the big brands.

Today, everyone is in the business of Change Marketing: Changing perceptions, attitudes, and consumer behaviours and decisions. To stay on top of this change, keep your ear to the ground and give people what they want. And that is simply to feel good about themselves.



Al Albania

Al Albania founded Acart Communications in 1976 with a vision of making a real difference in Canadian advertising and marketing. Through decades of change, he has assembled a team of highly skilled communications specialists to create award-winning and effective campaigns on the national and regional stages. His clients have ranged from the Ottawa Senators Hockey Club to the Government of Canada. As President of Acart, Al is involved in the strategic development of many client campaigns, and often acts as Account Director. Al has served on numerous not-for-profit and community-based committees.

acart.com

Inbound Marketing: Rethinking the Digital Toolbox

by Mark Wyatt

FOUNDER & CEO, AGENCY CREATIVE

FROM A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE, today's world looks very different from that of even 10 years ago. We've seen the widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets, the explosion of social media, and the shift in perspective from consumers as passive targets of marketing messages (such as advertising) to active creators of marketing messages (such as online reviews, likes, tweets and retweets). For companies who want to reach today's target audience, that means adapting to this new technologically and socially engaged world.

And this shift is only becoming more pervasive — both to older generations, who are adopting the technology, and to younger generations, who are growing up with it. In our agency's experience, we are finding that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are watching television with their smartphones or tablets (or both) in hand, multitasking their way through daily life and searching for information on the fly. Their children and grandchildren — the Millennials and Generation Z — not only multitask, but also are quick to adopt tools that deliver information in easily consumable formats. The popularity of apps such as Vine and Snapchat attest to the fact that younger generations want to see something served up as video, offered in six seconds or less, or can only be seen once.

These changes in consumer behavior are not only important to consider when creating advertising — they are also important in creating a lifecycle marketing strategy that reaches your target market across all platforms.

Inbound marketing, a phrase coined by HubSpot co-founder and CEO Brian Halligan, is a new approach to lifecycle marketing that addresses this shift in consumer behavior. It reverses the culture of sales from the

traditional outbound model (think cold calls and direct mail campaigns to purchased lists) to one where members of the target market are drawn in by relevant information. It is not disruptive marketing — that is, marketing that interrupts the reader in hopes of getting their response. Rather, inbound marketing is distributing relevant content that will draw in the reader as they search for information.

By offering relevant content (in the form of incentives such as a brochure, whitepaper or infographic) in exchange for their contact information, inbound marketing allows a company to put product or service information directly into the hands of interested target market members, rather than having to weed through hundreds or even thousands of individuals to find the one who is interested in learning more.

Bring it all together

If you think that inbound marketing doesn't affect your industry, think again. Traditional disruptive marketing has been the tried-and-true method of reaching consumers and proves to be both measurable and effective when done well. These days, though, it is getting harder to attract and keep the attention of Millennials and Generation Z, who primarily operate outside the channels of traditional marketing messages. And with traditional marketing flooding the minds of consumers — both B2B and B2C — inbound marketing is becoming more of a necessity in order to stand out from, and in some cases just to keep up with, the competition. The underlying idea behind inbound marketing is to drive your target consumer toward your brand without using the pushy traditional tactics that have alienated consumers for so many years.

Taken as a whole, inbound marketing is the cross-platform use of lifecycle marketing, search engine optimization, social media, blogging, content creation, and content distribution. In short, it unites the lead-generating functions of your marketing under a single umbrella. Inbound marketing is all about quality lead generation: the goal is to get a customer to willingly give up their information in order to be contacted by a company representative or receive further relevant information.

Practicing inbound marketing requires bringing together your outbound marketing tools in one location and combining them with

targeted landing pages and product-oriented content. Over time you will find that effective inbound marketing is more profitable and less expensive in converting target consumers into customers than the traditional marketing mix. As you read ahead you will learn some important practices to keep in mind as you consider implementing an inbound marketing strategy.

Sales funnel redux: lead generation and the customer journey

Inbound marketing is considered the latest and greatest approach for capturing leads and generating sales. Many well-known companies are utilizing inbound marketing to boost sales, including the Dollar Shave Club, American Express, and Marriott.

A big advantage of using inbound marketing to develop leads is knowing that the individual wants more information, simply because they filled out your form. By filling out the form with contact information, the individual is putting themselves at your company's doorstep, telling you they have a need to be met or interest in your product. Imagine: your team could be making sales calls to leads that actually want to hear about your product and company!

As with traditional marketing, inbound marketing begins with fully understanding and defining your target consumer. Know who you are talking to. Know what their needs are. Know what messages resonate with them. Know how to communicate effectively with them. Just as you would with traditional marketing, be sure your inbound marketing plan begins by defining your target consumer. Then, be sure you have a content strategy that delivers to them: identify what information they need and how best to deliver it.

Call it what you will: the customer journey, lifecycle marketing, or the sales funnel — the process of moving an individual from target consumer to satisfied customer has always been a building block in creating an effective marketing plan. It is no different in inbound marketing. The act of tearing down the typical consumer's buying process and determining what ways you can actively engage with them at each stage of their buying journey is fundamental.

Here at Agency Creative we have a five-stage consideration process that we use to categorize our target market:

- **Suspects**
- **Prospects**
- **Leads**
- **Customers**
- **Advocates**

We use each of these stages to determine how we should be trying to reach our target market. Let's look at the characteristics of each stage and what inbound marketing tools can be applied to move the individual to the next stage.

Suspects

A “suspect” is an individual who is by definition in your target market but who don't recognize that they have a need for your product or service. The goal for the suspect stage is to reach these individuals — through social media, SEO, blogging, word of mouth, and online display ads — with information about the problem they may be having but don't yet recognize. Once a suspect realizes they have an issue with which they need help, they move into the prospect stage.

Prospects

“Prospects” are individuals who know they have a problem and are actively researching how they can solve it. In the prospect stage we want to drive visitors to a landing page with a mix of organic SEO, website retargeting ads, search retargeting ads, and display ads. The end goal of the prospect stage is to have your prospect fill out a form with their information, ultimately leading this prospect to becoming a lead. Once your prospect fills out the form they should receive a thank-you email or confirmation that lets them know someone will be contacting them soon.

Leads

Someone has filled out a lead capture form — congratulations! You're halfway there! Depending on the structure of your company, this may be the point at which the “lead” is handed off to your qualified sales team. You still want to

be actively nurturing these leads by sending new content to them based on their wants, needs, and the pages they have been visiting on your website. Don't forget to add your new lead's information to your email manager and make sure they receive the next content applicable e-blast from your company. Once your lead requests a quote or places an order, they are converted to a customer.

Customers

Now that your target consumer has become a "customer", it's important to remember that you want them to become an advocate. Keep them engaged with your product and your company by providing valuable content.

However, nothing compares to great customer service, even if your product isn't the highest quality. If you read the customer reviews for some of the less expensive items on Amazon.com, you'll notice that the best-selling products include reviews that say "something broke" but was replaced by the seller. This gives consumers comfort they will be handled accordingly if they have a problem with a product. That's great customer treatment. This kind of customer treatment can lead to mutual benefits. For instance, if one of your products quit working and your company was proactive about getting it replaced, the customer will probably brag to a friend about how great your company has been to work with. As long as all goes well here, you can expect your customer to now become an advocate for your company.

Advocates

Once a company builds up "advocates" for its brand, they could reasonably assume they are heading in the right direction with their marketing plan. Customers who become advocates for your brand are a gold mine. When customers recommend products to their friends it does wonders for business. Don't forget to follow up with these customers — keep them on your email list and send them offers on new products or upgrades.

As an example: outdoor kitchen supplier

Imagine applying the stages of the buyer's journey to an outdoor kitchen company you own. To reach target consumers in the suspect stage, you would post blogs, share stories, and publish

recipes that point out the advantages of an outdoor kitchen, or that rate the latest and greatest products on the market. Suspects (and possibly prospects, in the next stage) may be on social media, read your article, and realize they are missing out on being able to smoke a brisket or grill for their family and friends.

Next, your suspect starts searching for solutions to the problem — namely, how to get an outdoor kitchen of their own — moving to the prospect stage in the customer journey. Custom outdoor kitchens would be a high-involvement purchase decision, so anyone considering having one built would do extensive research before making a final decision. (What are my options? Lighting? Ventilation? Building materials? Fridge/freezer, sink, disposal?) For local businesses, or those with multiple locations, having their Google+ profile tied to their business on Google Maps is important to generating in-store traffic.

The goal now is to advertise toward keywords that revolve around your product and what your prospect may be searching. In this case, “custom outdoor kitchen options” would be a good keyword combination for display ads, along with your website retargeting and search retargeting ads. Once your prospect searches that keyword, they would see and — hopefully — click on your ad that points out you have unlimited options. Your prospect comes to your custom options landing page that includes a call to action with an incentive (opt-in download) about your customization options. They click to download, giving you their email and perhaps a request for you to contact them (and their phone number). With that click, your prospect has become a lead.

Even at the lead stage it is important to still advertise on Google — especially retargeting ads, which will bring your lead back to your website. Now that you have captured their email

you can hand them over to your sales team to provide a quote or discuss options and timing for their new outdoor kitchen.

In the event that your new lead becomes a customer and builds an outdoor kitchen with your company, keep them happy! Surprise them with added value — perhaps a free recipe book — and you'll be on your way to having another advocate.

You've got them — why not use them?

Of course, we're talking about the tools of inbound marketing here. Chances are, you've got at least some of them in your marketing mix already. But integrated inbound marketing is more than just offering a free downloadable here or a free webinar there. Inbound marketing refers specifically to the organized, leveraged mix of:

- **Search engine optimization**
- **Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising**
- **Social media**
- **Landing pages**
- **Forms**
- **Calls to action**
- **Blogs**
- **Incentives**
- **Email**
- **Conversion optimization**

You probably have at least some — and perhaps all — of these elements in your marketing mix already. The real game-changer is whether or not you are leveraging each element to work to maximum benefit and *in tandem with one another*. Understanding each tool, and how to maximize its benefit, influence, and reach, will make a difference in whether you are truly engaged in effective inbound marketing. While this may seem a Herculean task for

one person — or even a group of people — there are effective automated marketing platforms available to provide strategic coordination and implementation of your inbound marketing efforts (see later in this chapter for examples).

What follows is some general guidance and best-practices-based advice on how to create and implement useful content for your inbound marketing strategy.

Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) may not seem important to your inbound marketing effort, but it is. Sometimes a source of frustration, SEO may not show immediate results for the effort, but your hard work will pay off — so be patient. Here are some ways to ensure your SEO efforts are building value toward your inbound marketing efforts.

1. Keyword. Always. And Immediately.

Whether you are a 500-employee corporation, a 10-employee private company, or an individual blogger, always perform keyword inclusion within your website content — and do it as soon as you create it. Many people don't realize the value of their online content until later. It pays off to stay ahead of the game and optimize your content each time you post, rather than backtracking through months (or years) of old posts and news stories to update each one. Too many companies write valuable content, only to end up with a little-viewed haven of self-promotional information because it has not been optimized for search engines. Always make sure your digital content manager is keeping up with your SEO as they post. (If you use WordPress to publish your website content, consider adding the Yoast SEO plugin. Yoast SEO automates the keyword process of your SEO by suggesting the best keyword options depending on the content of each webpage or blog. Not only is there a free version of Yoast SEO, but it works well for individuals at all levels of content management from beginner to expert — and provides insights that contribute to your overall knowledge and understanding of SEO).

2. Utilize Google's Customer Service.

In our agency's experience with Google and their business profile platform, we have found them to have very good customer service. There are many convenient ways to get help through their support website — but be aware

they can only help to a point. Once the assistance you seek enters the arena of how and when Google crawls websites, or the algorithms they use to determine a website's position in search results, that help will end.

3. Reviews, Reviews, Reviews!

You may be wondering, "How do user-generated reviews help my SEO?" The more legitimate reviews you have, the better a potential customer is going to understand your company value. Search engines are able to judge the value of your business relative to a searcher's query. This is especially true of reviews on Google Maps, which should be tied to your company's Google+ profile. This way, when someone searches for your company in maps they can see your reviews. To exemplify this point: go on Google's universal search and search "local restaurants." Notice any restaurants on that list that don't have reviews? Probably not.

Also, keep in mind that these days, it is a big no-no to try to suppress online reviews. While it may seem counter-intuitive, many times a bad review can be turned into a positive impression for your company. Of course, much of this opportunity lies in how your company responds to the review. Make sure to reply to bad reviews in a timely manner, apologize, and offer to rectify the situation. Offering a positive response to a negative review provides insight on your customer service capabilities. A good example of how a negative review can be turned into a positive experience can be found on Amazon, where customers who have posted a bad review will edit their comments to report on a positive response to their complaint.

4. Anchor Text to Buoy Search Results.

Part of building your reputation and developing your SEO strategy online involves making sure that news stories and blogs that mention your company are linked to your website with anchor text. These anchors tell search engines that people are talking about you and trust you. This is a great way to build both domain authority (DA) and page authority (PA). Domain authority and page authority are a way of ranking the importance of a website returned in search results on a scale from 0 to 100. For instance, Nike would have a domain authority in the 90s because they are well known and relevant. If your business has articles in reputable journals or on news websites, make sure those mentions are linking to your website. If they are not, send the editor an email asking for a link. If there are other anchor links in the text,

be sure to mention it when you make your request. Some companies may turn you down; however, don't pass up the opportunity to boost your rankings by not asking.

5. Consistency is Key.

Be sure that your business listings are consistent throughout the Internet. If you have different addresses and phone numbers displaying on different local listing websites, it sends mixed signals to search engines that are trying to gather information about your business. There are many different websites that will check your local listings for free. Depending on the amount of work it takes to make your listings consistent, it might be worth paying for the service to make them the same.

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising holds a role in inbound marketing because of the importance of reiterating your company's message to a consumer in multiple ways. Regular search ads come into play in the prospect stage because your target consumer is actively searching for the type of product you sell. Search and display retargeting ads come into play when you are trying to inform a suspect about something they would like to have but never initially considered. For small companies trying to ramp up this area of their marketing mix, the best suggestion is to read up on PPC advertising strategies and how to use Google AdWords. In addition, Google has great tutorials online including a course that you can take to become AdWords certified.

Social media

We all know that social media is important. The key to social media is putting the time into it. Larger companies that understand the importance of their social media strategy will have a dedicated social media manager. Be wary, though: there have been many circumstances in which social media was left to an inexperienced employee who ended up tweeting something personal on the company account. Take, for example, American Apparel which, on July 4, 2014, posted a picture of the Challenger space shuttle exploding. After much negative feedback, American Apparel apologized, stating that their "social media manager was born after the Challenger incident and didn't know that's what the picture actually was." Take heed

from this lesson learned the hard way: make sure to put the appropriate amount of time, resources, and attention into your social media efforts, and vet your content through the appropriate corporate/company channels.

Landing pages

Landing pages serve an all-important role in your inbound marketing efforts. A website is too distracting and overall just isn't an ideal place to send a visitor who has clicked on one of your PPC ads. The biggest advantage of a well-developed landing page is the ability to avoid navigation and eliminate other offers that may distract a visitor. Again, there are many best practices (and some templates) to be found relative to landing pages, but there are some general guidelines to consider:

- **Short landing pages are better for businesses selling low-involvement products such as headphones. Long landing pages are usually better for high-involvement products or services such as corporate software or an integrated marketing solution.**
- **Remember, Google AdWords requires that any landing page you direct traffic toward has to be on your own domain. If you are an Unbounce user, there is a way to add a domain name server (DNS) record through your host that lets the pages show up on a subdomain of your business's URL.**
- **Image captions are a big plus on landing pages. HubSpot states that image captions are read 300% more than body copy. So if captions on your photos can help convey your message — use them.**
- **Do a six-foot test: have someone who doesn't know anything about the purpose of the page stand six feet away and see if they can tell what your landing page is about. If not, consider changes that will make the purpose of — and desired response to — your landing page perfectly clear to your viewers.**

Forms

Forms are an important element of your inbound marketing strategy. Created on topic- or product-specific landing pages, getting your viewer — that is, your target customer — to complete the form is your goal. While

there is much advice out there (go ahead, Google “lead capture form best practices” to read more), there are some general rules to follow. First, always keep your form above the fold. If you have a call to action that opens a form in a second window or lightbox, be sure to keep the call to action above the fold as well. Second, ask only for the most important information. Too many form fills on your landing page will look like too much work to your target customer — and will keep them from filling out the form. Don’t lose the opportunity to convert a suspect to a prospect by asking for too much information. Finally, be sure to explain what you will do with the soon-to-be prospect’s information that they provide on the form.

Calls to action

As with forms, there are many more tactics and statistically established best practices for calls to action (CTA) than can be discussed here. So keep your call to action simple with this general rule of thumb: make sure visitors to your landing page don’t have to think about what they should do next. A good hero shot (the main image you see with a call to action that draws the visitor’s direct attention) makes the best of a landing page’s purpose — to collect contact information from your suspect. Images that establish eye contact with the viewer can be beneficial on a pay-per-click (PPC) advertisement; however, in hero shots, eye contact can be distracting. Also — don’t be afraid to make the CTA button contrast enough to really stand out. After all, your call to action is the only thing you want a visitor to your landing page (or viewer of your PPC ad) to click on, right?

Blogs

Blogging is alive and well — and an important tool in your inbound marketing mix. Blogs provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate to prospects that you are experts in your field — something that is especially important when selling a high-involvement product. They can also dramatically improve the presence of a company’s website on search engine results. There are some easy-to-follow dos and don’ts of blogging that can help:

- **Do keep recent business wins and other boasting to your news feed.**
- **Do keep your blogging language in conversation mode. Make sure your blog reads as if you are having a conversation with your reader.**

- Do consider writing about the latest and greatest innovations, products, or services in your industry. This shows your ability to keep up with the latest trends.
- Do give your readers some advice on how they can complete projects by themselves by writing “how-tos.” Consumers love reading “how-tos” and lists because they can gather information quickly, without having to read a long book or conducting their own research.
- Do format information as a list. Lists are attractive to the human brain because of the way we organize information at a subconscious level.
- Don’t forget to share your blog with leads if the topic is closely related to the landing page you captured them on.
- Don’t host your blog on a third-party domain. This will only hurt your organic SEO ranking by not reflecting new content associated with your website.
- Do build a relationship with other industry bloggers. As you build them, ask them to link to your website (and be willing to reciprocate). This will dramatically improve your SEO if the other blogger has strong domain and page authority.
- Do blog about once a week. For companies with a dedicated copywriter this may be easier; regardless, make the commitment to be a reliable source of current information for your target consumers.
- Do keyword your blogs. Optimizing your blogs with keywords will help your organic ranking in search engines, helping to buoy that content (and your company) and attract your target consumer to your site.

- **Do consider allowing comments on your blog.** While it can be frustrating because of the spam that comment/reply fields invite, it also opens up the opportunity to dialogue directly with a target consumer — and to receive insight through the comments, questions, or feedback you receive. Consider adding a CAPTCHA to your comment form to keep automated spam from posting.

Incentives

Downloadable content such as e-books, videos, and infographics are used in most inbound marketing strategies as incentives for visitors to fill out a lead capture form. Downloadable content gives you insight into the interests and needs of your prospects and leads as they access your content. Other incentives may be used here as well. For instance, many companies offer free webinars, capturing customers' information and learning more about their needs or interests.

Email

Email is an overlooked aspect of inbound marketing. We've all been overwhelmed by the sheer number of emails to fill our inbox at one time or another. However, when one of those messages contains information we can use, or helps us meet a need, it provides great value. An easy way to cut through that clutter is to ensure your email (or e-blast) doesn't raise any suspicions or appear to be spam. Also, be sure to have a database full of content to draw upon that applies to each form fill on your landing page. This way you'll be able to email content relevant to the particular need or interest of your target consumer.

Conversion Optimization

Your digital and creative teams have done the initial heavy lifting, but having a salesperson or customer service representative (CSR) attempt to close a lead with too little information can be a waste of time and effort. For companies large enough to have separate marketing and sales teams, moving a lead from the marketing team to the sales team can be somewhat of a struggle. As in traditional outbound marketing, the sales team needs to know as much as possible about the potential lead obtained through your

inbound marketing efforts, including any comments or questions the lead may have left in the form, what landing page their information came from, and what content they have requested or received.

The Mix: whether shaken or stirred, serve it up right

As with traditional outbound marketing and general-impression branding initiatives, the mix of tools used in your inbound marketing strategy must be based on your understanding of your target consumers and their needs, as well as how best to reach them and deliver your message. Serving up that combination, however, may seem a particularly complex and time-consuming proposition — and it can be. Read on for some suggestions.

1. Combine For Best Results

No one tool — whether email, blogs, or landing pages — will deliver the same level of results as a combination of them. Leverage all the tools available to you, and consider adding new ones, to provide you with the most options. It's the shotgun versus rifle effect — the more chance of hitting your target, the better.

2. Conduct A/B Testing

The best way to refine and develop high-converting landing pages and forms is to conduct A/B testing. Set up two different landing pages for the same product or service and see which performs best. Test whether sending an email with a link to a blog receives more click-throughs than a link to product or service information. Review, revise, and refine your inbound marketing strategy through these kinds of comparisons to ensure each phase is firing on all cylinders.

3. The Plus Means More

First off, if you don't have a Google+ profile for your company at the moment, get one. Although Google+ may not seem that important, when it comes down to it, combining your location, business reviews, and company profile on Google+ helps you track everything important to your business on one page. And the sooner the better: Google takes a while to crawl the information about your business; optimizing your local SEO helps

consumers find your company and its reviews, especially on Google Maps. Optimizing your company's social profile is a building block of your online reputation and SEO. You can also connect your company's YouTube page to your Google+ account so that everything you share on YouTube automatically gets posted on your Google+ profile page.

4. You're Not Alone

There are many popular, albeit expensive, options available to manage all these things at once. Our agency has experience with a few different automated marketing platforms. Most of these platforms manage all your content, keep track of leads, automate emails, and schedule social media posts. Be sure to shop for your inbound/automated marketing platform with your company's unique needs in mind.

A few new platforms to consider, with some of what we've learned along the way:

- If yours is a smaller company, Infusionsoft is a marketing automation platform that's perfect for entities with fewer than 50 employees. It's a robust, all-in-one platform that provides small businesses tight integration between modules. However, Infusionsoft is far from perfect. Downsides include a steep learning curve and its broad offering of features can prove a bit daunting.
- Oracle's Eloqua empowers companies to send relevant messaging to clients and prospects quickly and easily. Its basic package can accommodate up to 10 users; however, get ready for sticker shock. Eloqua starts at \$2,000 a month for their most basic package and can run up to \$4,000 a month for up to 50 user licenses. Its biggest drawback is its inability to integrate with Google AdWords and its cumbersome implementation.
- Pardot offers unlimited licensing for \$2,000 a month and natively integrates with Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics, NetSuite, and SugarCRM. It outsources reporting to third-party GoodData. Overall, Pardot is a good marketing automation platform, though it does a less-than-adequate job with social marketing.
- Marketo is the largest independent marketing automation provider out there. It has done a great job building a reliable

network of related software providers. Its simple-to-use interface provides new adopters an easy learning curve. Because of its steep price tag, however, it is definitely not the platform for the small-to-midsize company. To some it may be too Salesforce-centric.

- First place, in our opinion, goes to HubSpot. It's affordable. It's user-friendly. And it allows 150-plus apps. Another great feature is a 30-day free trial without asking for your credit card. HubSpot's customer base includes many big brand names that will also vouch for its performance.

And the results are in...

No marketing effort is complete without goals, measurement, and calculated return on investment (ROI). Inbound marketing is no different. While some of the costs related to establishing or improving an inbound marketing effort may already be part of your marketing budget (such as content creation, SEO, or pay-per-click ads), be sure to establish goals and measure the results.

Goals

Because lead conversion is a priority, keeping track of click-through rates and conversions is imperative. A high-performing landing page would convert 25% or more of visitors into leads. A poorly performing landing page would convert 1% or less of visitors into leads. A good rule of thumb is to aim for a 10% conversion rate.

Measurements

If you already have a way of tracking landing page conversions, such as Google Analytics, be sure to record your current conversion rates so you can compare them in the future. If you have multiple landing pages, take a look at your best-performing page and find out what may be causing the others to have lower rates. In addition to measuring conversion rates, be sure to measure the quality of your leads. If you aren't getting the quality of leads you are looking for it could mean there is a communication mismatch between PPC and your landing page concerning the quality and price of the product or service you are selling.

Return on investment

Generally speaking, inbound marketing provides a better return on investment (ROI) with a lower cost per conversion than traditional outbound marketing. Companies that have implemented an inbound marketing automation platform found on average an 80% reduction in lead acquisition costs and 72% saw an increase in sales revenue within the first year. With statistics like this, I would encourage you to take a closer look at an inbound marketing program for your company.

At the end of the day, the payoff for the amount of effort you put into your inbound marketing strategy will show as your business — and your inbound marketing's return on investment — grows.



Mark Wyatt

Mark Wyatt prides himself on getting to know his clients like the back of his hand. So from the childhood scar behind his left thumb to knowing which color will sell more specialty drinks at Friday's, Mark does more for his clients than just build their brands.

He anticipates their unmet and unforeseen needs. When Mark opened his own shop in 1994, he wanted to serve clients with more respect and better collaboration than he saw in the larger agencies. So he assembled an enthusiastic team at Agency Creative to create award-winning work as well as powerful results that connect brands with their targets. In his 30+ year career, Mark has worked with Quaker, Gatorade, Jimmy Dean, Friday's, Hilton Hotels, Renaissance Hotels, Children's Health, Baylor Medical Center, Church's Chicken and many other national and regional brands. By treating his clients as partners, Mark finds solutions, because he makes his clients' problems his priority.

agencycreative.com

The Digital Divide — Digital Guerrilla Marketing Methods

by Ken Greenberg

FOUNDER, AUSTIN & WILLIAMS

Why more of your ad dollars should be in digital...
and where to put them

The backstory

AS A YOUNG BOY GROWING UP in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, life was much simpler than it is today. We didn't have iPhones or tablets. You went outside to play until the sun went down, and then you had to be back.

Since there was no internet, we played with a ball. A piece of chalk and a sidewalk could help you pass hours — and learn balance — playing hopscotch. A Spalding ball was nirvana. It bounced really high!

As Jim Knutt points out in his chapter on the Digital Purchase Cycle, we got our news primarily from newspapers (print), TV, and radio.

TVs had channels numbered from 2 to 13, but there were no channels 3, 6, 8, 10, or 12. So we had only seven working channels. Three were the major networks, and they all broadcast in black and white. In fact, most stations went dark at 10 or 11 pm then, and broadcast an Indian Head test pattern until around 6 am. We didn't have the 24-hour stream of unlimited channels on cable or satellite that we take for granted today.

The Indian Head test pattern continued in off-broadcast hours until the early 1970s — and would likely be considered politically incorrect today.

Radio was AM, and the new-fangled FM band held the promise of less background noise.

The point is: We had few sources of news and information. People didn't have the devices we have today, and there was no internet or email. Think about that. No cell phones — let alone smartphones.

Today we live in real-time information. Virtually everybody has a cell phone. There's the Internet of Things. Facebook. Twitter. YouTube. Billions of posts. Everybody with a smartphone camera is a reporter. We're on information overload.

The point of this backstory is to help you focus on one important message as we discuss the digital divide: Some say the media is the message. It's not. There are really only three key elements to think about in marketing, everything else falls underneath:

1. **Storytelling**
2. **Emotions**
3. **Messaging**

Whatever your digital medium, and we'll discuss several, you have to be engaging. Experts say content is king. A Facebook like or Twitter follow is worthless unless those who like or follow you are sharing your content.

And, for the content to resonate with an audience, it must have the three key elements I just mentioned.

Storytelling

You may wonder why I opened with tales from my youth. Simply because it's more engaging than facts or statistics. Sure many folks say people have no time, and bullets get the job done. Yet folks like a good story, maybe because our parents read to us before bedtime.

Emotions

Sure you can show why your product is better. But, remember people make a purchase decision emotionally: Because we want it. Impulse purchases thrive on that. Even lifelong commitments like choosing a spouse are made not with logic, but based on our feelings.

So if your digital efforts are going to be successful, you have to keep in mind that age-old wisdom in marketing doesn't really change simply because the medium or delivery channel is different.

Messaging

Messaging is far more powerful than the vehicle that delivers it. Politicians are especially aware of the power of messaging. Think about the difference between these terms:

1. **Illegal alien**
2. **Undocumented worker**
3. **Immigrant**

Illegal alien sounds pretty bad, and certainly, somebody broke the law if they're doing something illegal.

Undocumented worker is almost innocuous. Maybe they left their papers in the car? Surely, that's not illegal!

I've heard Juan Williams explain, "Immigrants built this country. We need more immigrants." Lou Dobbs asked him not to conflate illegal immigration with legal immigration. A distinction rarely made until Donald Trump entered the presidential race.

Onward

Ok. Now that I've driven home the key points we should bear in mind as we approach digital marketing opportunities, let's look at the digital divide competing for your advertising dollars.

You can use all these cool techniques — but they're only techniques: you must use storytelling, emotions, and messaging effectively.

And, don't forget a good call to action. Hit the emotions. Tell your story. Engage!

Digital guerrilla marketing methods

Overview

Rather than repeat it in every section, let me say right here that all the methods we're sharing allow you to select your targets by almost any criteria you would use in a direct mail list purchase. You also get to select targets by location: Where are they right now. That's critical. The point is that you can really refine your targeting with each of these methods.

Mobile ad alerts

While there's a lot of talk about text message marketing, we find it too restrictive: There are regulations governing privacy, and you must first get someone to opt in to receive your text messages. That's a challenge.

Guess what? People who download free apps to their smartphones already opt in to mobile ad alerts. How can that be?



Almost all free apps feature advertising, and most offer mobile alerts in that long agreement nobody reads. The apps, in turn, make mobile ad alert capability available to marketers.

The good news is that mobile ad alerts look and work like text messages: They wake your phone up and appear as notifications without a prerequisite to opt in.

Combine mobile ad alerts with our next two methods to get the maximum bang for your buck.

Geofencing

Imagine a fence around your location, only it's an invisible virtual fence that may extend for a block or so in any direction. Or it may include any area you define. A building. A single floor in the building.

Perhaps you want to use geofencing at a trade show or convention center. Anybody who walks inside the perimeter of your fence becomes a target.

Use mobile ad alerts to invite the target to your trade show booth or make a cool offer when they come into your store, restaurant, or other location.

Proximity-based indoor mobile marketing

This is geofencing on steroids and even tighter. In fact, Macy's is rolling this out after successful tests in specific departments.

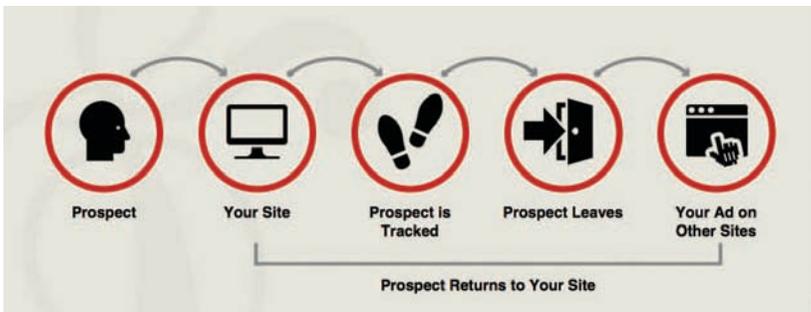
While you might think of geofencing an entire floor or large meeting room, proximity marketing gets really close and lets you use mobile ad alerts to present relevant content and offers within tightly defined spaces.



Women walking by the shoe department, and a strategically placed location beacon, could get instant notification of a special on shoes — or perhaps nearby accessories. The possibilities are limitless.

Retargeting

This technique is getting very popular. When visitors browse your site, you can drop an anonymous tracking cookie on their device. The ideal uses are for specific products.



Let's say I'm looking at a coat on the Jos. A. Bank site. I leave and visit other sites. I'll see an ad featuring the coat. It beckons me to click and return.

We learned long ago in marketing that repetition is key; retargeting allows you to repeat the image that initially held the buyer's interest.

According to a comScore study, retargeted ads led to a 1,046% increase in branded search and a 726% lift in site visitation after four weeks of retargeted ad exposure! Retargeting increased the percentage of users who returned and completed the checkout process to 26%. Sixty-seven percent of online advertisers are now using Facebook's FBX exchange for retargeting.

LiveIntent

This cool company lets your message ride along in e-newsletter subscriptions. In this example, it's an ad for MasterCard.

Let's face it: nobody wants your spam in their inbox — but they will read the things they subscribed for.

LiveIntent puts your dynamic ad into a subscriber's e-newsletter.

You can have a single ad or dominate the page. And, just in case people don't open their emails immediately — or they're out for a few days — your ads load when they open the email: so your offer is always current.

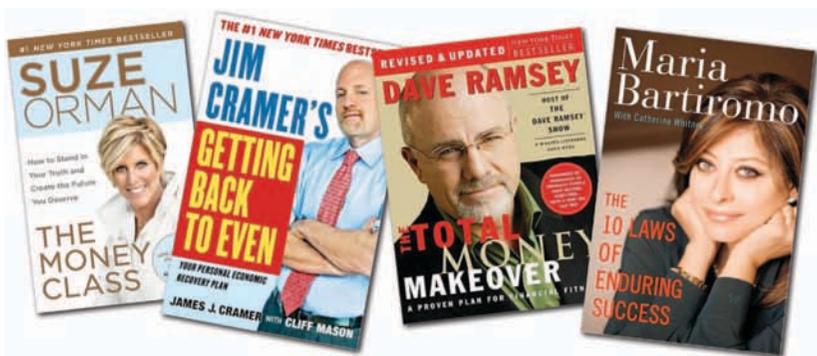
Major publications in virtually every category serve LiveIntent ads including *The Wall Street Journal*, *NY Times*, *Forbes*, and hundreds more.

This is a great way to reach large numbers of people with little effort.



Industry expert affiliation

Whether you're selling banking services, cars, or swimwear, attaching your message to well-established personalities gives you instant credibility and lets you ride along with their custom publications.



Your prospects subscribe to specialized content from their favorite personalities. Your ads and messaging are part of the subscription.

This is different from LiveIntent because the personality is the brand and the subscription is to their custom content.



Sponsored social media

How much social media influence do you have?

It's not enough to have 10,000 followers on Twitter: how many are retweeting and interacting with your Tweets?

Likes on Facebook don't matter much. How many people are actually commenting on your posts and sharing them? It's the sharing that spreads your reach.

The more people interacting with an influential person, brand, or blogger, the higher their social media influence.

You can target product, service, and category level influencers to become ambassadors of your brand or products.

KLOUT FOR BUSINESS

American Airlines

GOAL:
Create brand lift for American Airlines and drive Admirals Club® memberships.

SOLUTION:
Offer Klout influencers with scores of 55 or higher an Admirals Club One-Day Pass to access the lounges firsthand. Invite them to enjoy the lounge amenities, including: complimentary Wi-Fi, snacks and beverages, wine and spirits, charging stations and more away from the airport hustle and bustle.

Ultimately, encourage influencers to share their experience using #AdmiralsClub to create positive buzz.

INFLUENCERS:	CONTENT GENERATED:	UNIQUE REACH:	TOTAL IMPRESSIONS:
3,772	26,859	88.6MM	166MM

"Key to being a social airline is offering unique opportunities to experience American's products and services, including our Admirals Club lounges. Klout helped us reach both an influential audience and drive social engagement in one campaign." Jonathan Pierce, Director of Social Communications

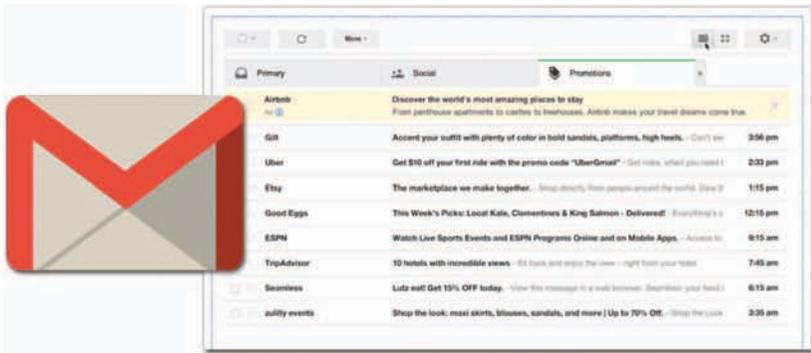
American Airlines ran a successful sponsored social media program to invite key influencers to their Admirals Clubs. The purpose was to generate brand awareness and memberships to the clubs.

Using geofencing in major airports, American invited folks with a high level of social influence to spend the day at their Admirals Club. There, the influencers experienced drinks, snacks, Wi-Fi, and amenities.

The understanding is that these influencers will let others know about their experience; they did: 3,772 influencers visited the lounges. They generated 26,859 posts. These were continually shared, ultimately reaching more than 86 million people with more than 166 million impressions. Not bad!

Gmail promotions tab

Ok. You want to do “targeted email marketing.” That’s SPAM — you just don’t want to admit it.



Gmail made it a little easier by introducing the promotions tab. This keeps SPAM out of the inbox but lets people browse the promotions they’re receiving.

It’s worth experimenting with the promotions tab in Gmail. People will see your message — so make it count. You only have a few seconds, so start your story well.

Paid social media

We could devote a whole book to social media. That’s not our purpose. And, let’s face it: effective social media is a lot of work. First, you have to win the likes, then gain the influence. It can take a long time.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE – DIGITAL GUERRILLA MARKETING METHODS

Several social media platforms now have paid advertising. In the Facebook example, the most effective ads appear right in the timeline, like this:



It's pretty hard to miss an ad that's in your timeline. People can click on the ad to visit a website or share if it appeals to them.

LinkedIn is another great platform for paid ads:



Video display ads

We've become a video nation! Ever since Google acquired YouTube, they've given higher page and search rankings to video content as opposed to the typical static ads.



As you can see in the ad above, a play button beckons you to click it... and millions do. Video is much more engaging and lets you tell a bigger story.

Enhanced email

Imagine if you could automatically make every customer service person a salesperson. It would be a dream come true, wouldn't it? You can... with enhanced email.

This is great Israeli technology: you create a library of clickable banners that link to specific pages on your website.

Let's clarify that this is not about email blasts. Instead, your employees have banners automatically appended to their everyday business emails.

What's really cool about this is employees don't have to do anything. No email templates. No effort. In fact, when they type and send an email, they have no idea the enhanced email server is appending the banners. They'll only notice if the customer replies.



How it Works

The engine has outgoing and incoming message rules, and will only enhance emails in a thread one time. Smart!

Outgoing employee emails get routed through another server. As emails pass through the enhancement mail server it checks to see which employee or employee group is sending the email.

Based on which employee is sending the email, the system appends appropriate selling, informational, or cross-selling banners to the borders of the email.

You get to create templates that may include banners along the top, bottom, left, or right sides — or have a template with a top and right side banner. Any combination will do.

There are even templates that take your social media feeds so that your latest tweet or Facebook post appends to outgoing emails.

Flexible Rules

There are three basic enhanced email rules:

1. **Sender rules:** know which banners/campaigns to append based on the sender. For example, a bank loan department could cross sell more loans or deposit products.

Perhaps your auditor doesn't get email enhancement.

2. **Recipient rules:** may append or suspend banners based on the recipient. In this case, you might want to suspend all enhanced email banners for emails going to your regulators.

3. Date rules: these are great to avoid forgetting to put up or take down a time sensitive enhancement such as a sale date or event date.

If the date hasn't arrived or passed, those banners get excluded.

If an employee wants to add a specific banner or suppress banners from a particular email, they can type a code in the subject line. The server sees the code and responds accordingly. Best of all, it then strips the code away so the recipient never sees it.

Everybody in the Organization Becomes an Automated Sales Generator

Just think about the volume of corporate communication that takes place by email every day:

Imagine a company with 200 employees, and each employee averages just 25 outgoing emails a day. In a six-day workweek that's 30,000 emails (200 x 25 x 6 = 30,000).

Remember this is not spam since employees are exchanging these emails with clients, prospects, and vendors. Now, 30,000 more selling emails occur!

High Response Rates

What results can you expect? We see between 3% and 9% response rates simply because the recipients are people you know: your employees are already communicating with them by email, and they're more likely to click on a banner, learn about or register for an event, or get more information on a product or service because they already trust you.

SEO and paid search

Search Engine Optimization

If we didn't mention this, you would wonder how much we know about digital guerrilla marketing.

The truth is we could write a book on each of these two topics alone.

Let's just say here that SEO — search engine optimization — is critical. To practice it effectively you need a very active, mobile-friendly, responsively designed website.

You should have lots of inbound links from authoritative, highly rated sites to yours.

Update your website all the time. Add videos.

Focus on content — we said up front that content is king. Your site has to be user-friendly and engaging. You don't simply want lots of visitors: you want qualified, engaged visitors who are spending time on your site — and referring their friends and colleagues.

Paid Search

The best kind of website traffic is organic: people who came to your site because your SEO worked.

After that, paid search is helpful. Studies show that supplementing organic search with paid search can increase click-through rates by 85%. Best of all, 90% of people will click an organic link, and you don't pay if they're not clicking the ad link.

Since it can take a couple of months for SEO to truly kick in, paid search is a viable option for getting an immediate boost in site traffic.

The right mix of paid search and SEO will really break you out from the competition.

Summary

Today there are many more marketing methods than even 15 years ago, and we've certainly come a long way from the Indian Head test patterns on black and white TVs of yesteryear.

So many different avenues and media are competing for your attention — and your prospects' attention. We live in a connected, Internet of Things world.

Take advantage by making sure you hit the emotions, tell a story and be mindful of your messaging.

Marketers are spending more of their ad budgets on digital and digital guerrilla campaigns simply because they are some of the most effective, targeted, and measurable ways to reach your target audience.

And, don't be afraid to test. If you haven't used enhanced email or geofencing before, start with a small test and then roll out when you have results. This testing is a great way to ratify your ideas and messaging.

Trivia bonus

Did the Indian Head test pattern on early TVs have a purpose?

Actually, it did. TV from the 50s to the 70s had tubes instead of transistors. They were subject to vertical rolling, horizontal rolling, and other problems that required frequent adjustments. The test pattern helped TV repairmen make adjustments to refine the picture.



Ken Greenberg

After a 22-year career in retail banking, Ken co-founded Austin & Williams in 1992, the leading advertising and marketing consultancy headquartered on Long Island. The agency serves three key verticals: financial services, healthcare, and higher education.

Ken has always been fascinated by technology and brought Austin & Williams into the digital age in 1995. The agency has been growing the digital business ever since.

A believer in truly big ideas, Ken launched and co-founded Patient Innovations, LLC and created OnTime Care®: cloud-based software to eliminate waiting in doctors' offices. UnitedHealthcare partnered with Patient Innovations in 2012 to fund development of OnTime Care®. UHC featured OnTime Care® at its booth at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas in January 2014 as an emerging new technology that would offer competitive advantage. Patient Innovations has nine patents pending on their innovative solutions.

Ken is a product of Brooklyn College where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics.

He is involved in several charities and trade organizations and is a member of the NY Bankers, NJBankers, New England Financial Marketing Association (NEFMA), the Long Island Association, Long Island Advancement of Small Business, and DMALI (Direct Marketing Association, Long Island Chapter).

In October 2014, Ken was inducted into the DMALI Hall of Fame.

He's President of AJC's Long Island Chapter, serves on their Board of Governors and Regional President's Council and also chairs their annual golf outing. Ken is also a member of the New York Board of Regents for the Center for Security Policy and participates in their Victory Coalition briefings.

Late last year Ken started Alert Long Island, the first downstate New York chapter of ACT for America, the leading grassroots national security organization in the world.

Ken lives in Mount Sinai at the Hamlet Willow Creek — an award winning golf course. Despite his proximity to the course... you can't tell from his game!

austin-williams.com

Let's Define Your Brand. Like, Right Now.

The procrastinator's express guide to
creating a compelling brand positioning

by *Bill Swanston*

PARTNER & EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR, FREDRICK SWANSTON

Illustrations by Elias Julian

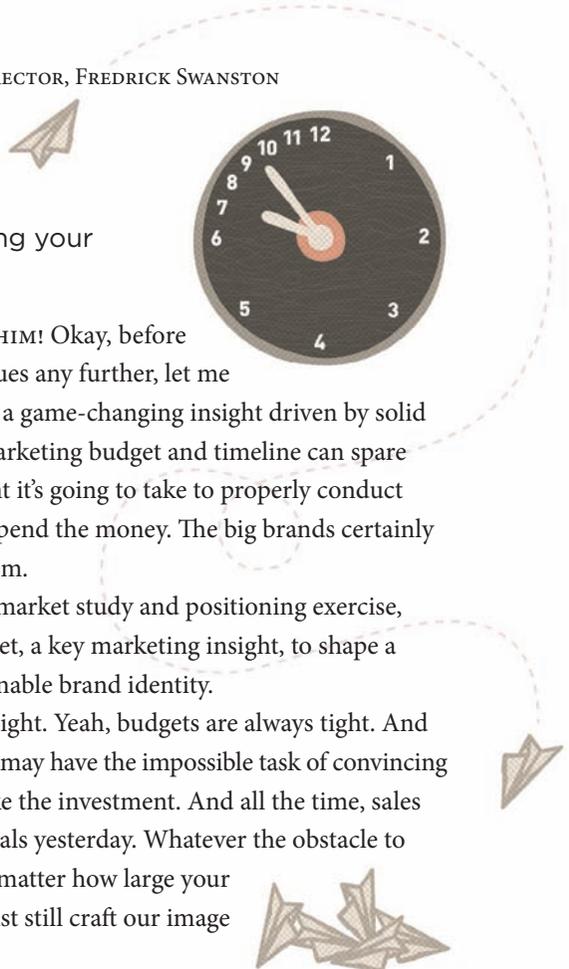
No research required

The dangerous art of defining your
brand without a net

MARKETING BLASPHEMY! STONE HIM! Okay, before upsetting my data-mining colleagues any further, let me just say there's nothing better than a game-changing insight driven by solid research. That's the best. If your marketing budget and timeline can spare the year-long, six-figure investment it's going to take to properly conduct positioning research, you should spend the money. The big brands certainly do. And it sure does pay off for them.

At the end of a well-guided market study and positioning exercise, you should uncover a golden nugget, a key marketing insight, to shape a differentiating, ownable, and actionable brand identity.

But sometimes budgets are tight. Yeah, budgets are always tight. And sometimes, the owner of the brand may have the impossible task of convincing the owners of the company to make the investment. And all the time, sales teams need your marketing materials yesterday. Whatever the obstacle to conducting a deep market dig, no matter how large your business, we as brand stewards must still craft our image based on something intelligent.



To create a year's worth of well-conceived, consistently designed marketing materials, you will have to define your brand. So let's get started.

Twelve words or less

Write a concise statement, not a clever headline

A brand positioning statement is not written to be remarkably clever. It's not witty or wry or snarky. It's not written by copywriters, after all. That said, we can learn something about writing a clear benefit-driven statement from an age-old rule in outdoor billboard advertising. Yes, we advertising agencies love to make up bogus dictates to sound smart to our clients. But the following guideline for outdoor headlines actually makes some sense in clear communication strategies:

Outdoor headlines are twelve words or less.

That's the magic phrase length that anyone can absorb, travelling at speeds in excess of 55 MPH. "Pete's Farm has the Freshest Peaches in



Georgia. Next Left." Anyone going fast and furious can still get the gist of that statement. You have some mighty fresh peaches, and if I want some, I better get off here. Got it.

So now try this. Define your own brand in twelve words. Really do try for less. Some would argue that seven words is the ideal length of an outdoor

headline. But you'll have to include the name of your company, product, or service in the statement. So minus your business name, the core sentiment should be around seven words.

This messaging litmus test is a lot harder than you might think. Take our peach stand. Pete also has these amazing strawberries the size of plums. People love those, and what's one more fruit in the headline? And Aunt Kathy started selling these amazing fudge lava cakes. Those are selling like, well, hot cakes. And nobody wants to upset crazy Aunt Kathy. Plus, the farm isn't right off the exit. You have to juke left past the Piggly Wiggly. So let's revise the headline to make everyone happy: "Pete's Farm has the Freshest Peaches, Biggest Strawberries & Aunt Kathy's Fudge Lava Cakes. Next Left, Then Juke Left Again Past the Piggly Wiggly." Say what? You lost folks at "Fudge." Literally. People are driving amuck trying to figure out where and when to exit for those dang fresh peaches.

So be ruthless. Get lean with your diction and get out your grammar knife. Cut out the unnecessary, fatty words so you're left with the leanest, choicest piece of communication.

Positioning options

Put a few stakes in the ground

I'm guessing you haven't done the first "Twelve Words or Less" exercise, have you? Maybe you're thinking you should skip all this unsupported-by-research brand positioning hogwash and read Dan Nguyen's chapter about Actionable Research. Spoiler Alert: He recommends research that's actionable.

Perhaps the thought of setting permanent ink to paper with a solitary brand statement seems overwhelming. You're not alone. Ask any of your marketing colleagues to define their brand. You'll either get a long-winded response or a blank stare. Ask some folks around the office about your own brand, and you'll get that now-familiar blank stare and/or a zillion different responses. It's daunting to think you have to boil the essence of your entire brand down to just twelve words (seven if we're being ruthless). So relax. Here are some helpful pointers to ease the burden.

First, write a bunch. Don't edit yourself. Phew, the load is already lighter. Don't try to limit the amount of awesomeness that is your brand. Get it all down on paper, laptop, or tablet.

Farmer Pete could write one positioning statement about the simple pleasures of a farm-fresh peach. He might also try one about the experience of biting into an abnormally large strawberry. Throw one in there about fudge lava cakes to make Aunt Kathy happy. Write several concise statements that clearly define a point of difference. Don't hurt yourself trying to decide on the one perfect phrase just yet.



Second, use superlatives. The latest and greatest. The freshest, moistest, hottest. Whatever it is you do or make, how is it bestest? If your product or service falls into more of a parity category, as most brands do, it's okay to still make a boastful, compelling claim. After all, it's your opinion and it can be purely subjective.

Here's a dirty little secret. Some people say Gaffney Grove's peaches are more ripe-off-the-vine than Pete's Farm's beauties. Doesn't matter. This is marketing, not church.

Third, and this may seem to contradict the superlative tip, but don't make any false or misleading claims. The positioning must be true to the actual customer experience. We only get one shot at this. Consumers are not dumb. You might be able to fool them once with an amazing ad campaign, but they will not return or say nice things to others if the advertising claims do not match the customer experience. In fact, the fastest way to kill a poor product is with good advertising.

Say a peach lover sees our awesomely concise billboard, exits left and takes a bite of a Pete's peach. If it's not fresh, juicy, and delicious, we'll never see that customer again. Worse, not only do we lose the customer, we've lost everyone this bloke warns to steer clear of Pete's peaches. Maybe we should have been pushing those freakishly large strawberries after all.

Finally, what's the end benefit? This final step warrants a chapter break. So read on, procrastinator.

Features vs. benefits

Your features are showing. But why should I care?

We're taught from an early age to write descriptively, to describe features. Think how simple it would be for you to wax on about your current outfit, right now. Personally, here on a lazy Saturday afternoon, I'm wearing a faded red, soft cotton t-shirt with a white star that looks like it was pasted on with masking tape. I rounded out my wardrobe with cotton khaki shorts that fall just above the knee. It's the culmination of Fashion Week in NYC, so I'm dressing to impress. Describing features comes naturally to us all, yet this well-learned skill is not nearly as critical as defining a feature's benefit.

There's a connection between the two, to be sure. The benefit gives the feature purpose. The feature is the "what" and the benefit is the "why." *Why* should I give a hoot about *what* you're offering? The benefit motivates me, the consumer, to act. To call, buy, visit, or whatever you're trying to get me to do. So yeah, to write a brand positioning statement, you must be able to craft a compelling benefit, one that would make someone desire something they didn't even know they wanted.

This t-shirt is soft cotton (feature) so it's crazy comfortable to the touch (benefit).

My shorts are khaki (feature) for that classic, relaxed, "I'm not trying too hard" look (benefit).

All marketing copy should include benefits. Duh, seems obvious, right? Check out your company brochure. Is it a litany of descriptive phrases that don't include reasons to care? "Our company boasts a 100-year heritage." So what? You're a bunch of old farts. What does that mean to me? These kind of fact-based statements are great, but they need to be pumped up with meaning to affect any sort of action. "With over 100 years of experience facing every conceivable problem, our veteran thinkers can help solve even

your most complex challenges.” This once-stodgy company with a boring past now suddenly has some very relevant and motivating skillsets.

We can list features all day long, but if we don’t close the loop and make those descriptions have meaning and purpose for the consumer, chances are we will lose that shopper to a more benefit-minded competitor.

Diagramming sentences

Everything I learned about positioning statements I learned in fourth grade

Chewing a wad of Watermelon Bubble Yum at my flip-top desk in Mrs. Baker’s fourth grade English class at Heards Ferry Elementary, I learned to diagram my first sentence. One of my all-time favorite teachers, she used pale blue, yellow, pink, and green chalk to draw colorful branches of words and phrases that, taken together, formed sentences like, “Mrs. Baker will publicly shame students who chew Watermelon Bubble Yum, making them spit their gum out into her open palm.” One branch for the subject, another for the verb, and twigs off branches for adjectives and adverbs. It could get pretty tree crazy. Ultimately, she taught us the simple lesson that sentences are patterns made up of different parts. I loved diagramming. What was once a jumble of words took shape. Sentences became pictures. Paragraphs became concepts. We learned the formula of writing. And not to stick gum under our flip-top desks.

I struggled a bit with reading. Still do. A book sits on my nightstand for six months. Meanwhile, my wife reads six books in a month. Subconsciously diagramming sentences helps me deconstruct pages of text. It helps me read faster today, helped me get through fourth grade and college. And it can assist you, right now, to write a clear, concise, comprehensive sentence that defines your brand.

Here’s the formula for a positioning statement. Follow this sentence structure, this diagram, and you will write compelling, differentiating brand positioning statements that cause people to act. Here’s the recipe:

Sentence Part 1. What are we? Don’t overthink this. It’s the easiest part. We are Pete’s Farm.

Sentence Part 2. What do we offer? Again, not a lot of brain power here. We offer Georgia’s freshest peaches.

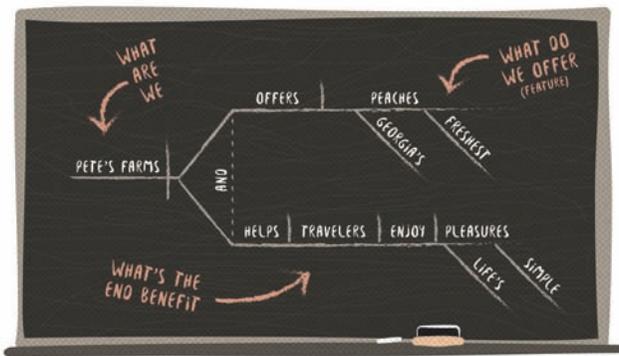
LET'S DEFINE YOUR BRAND. LIKE, RIGHT NOW.

Sentence Part 3. What's the end benefit? As outlined above, this last leg of our sentence diagram is the hardest to define because it's not tangible. We're not taught or inherently good at describing how we feel, especially we men in the room. Yet to be effective in creating brand fans — people who will advocate for our brand — the end benefit must be chock-full of emotion. It's often irrational, charged, controversial even.

For Pete and his farm-fresh peaches, we help people appreciate life's simple pleasures. Pete's peaches remind us of eating fruit picked right from Grandma's garden. It takes us back to family car trips when we stopped to stretch our legs and get a ripe treat. We're doing something that feels right for us, for our family and perhaps even for the local community, for Farmer Pete himself. It's simple, honest purity. It's a lot to put on a peach. But that wholesome goodness sells a lot of nectar.

The final diagrammed sentence, the positioning statement for Pete's Farm goes something like this (insert mental drumroll):

Pete's Farm offers Georgia's freshest peaches, helping travelers enjoy life's simple pleasures.



What we are, what we offer, and what's the end benefit. Twelve words chock full of meaning. Are you in or are you out when it comes to stopping at Pete's Farm? Before we pose that question to you specifically, we need to pause in our peachy tale about branding and pose this question: do you, our reader, fit our profile — the target audience?

Demos and psychos Segmenting your target audience

Who cares? That's the harsh million-dollar question. Surely someone out there must give a hoot about our brand, about what we're selling or serving. Just ask the CEO. "Everyone" is a common corner-office reply. If we just tell people why we are so fantastic, they'll line up in droves. Simply get the word out to all living men, women, and children. Who can argue with that logic? Nobody. And that's also who you will reach trying to reach everybody. Nobody.

After all, not everyone loves the simple pleasures of a farm-fresh peach. Some people are turned off by the prospect of anyone peddling produce from a stand on the side of the road. It's not FDA approved. Is it organic? Are they really from a farm, or are these roadside Peruvian illegals? Fortunately for Farmer Pete, lots of people do like roadside fruit. Sharing an overflowing basket of picture-perfect peaches — firm, juicy peaches that burst with flavor — is an experience many crave. It's a delicious bite of sweet summer, vacation, and the South. It's a simple pleasure on an otherwise tedious drive.

Every successful brand has a tightly defined target audience that fits into a neat little bucket. It begins with fairly accessible data. Demographics like these: **Male/Female • Age • Marital Status • Income • Education • Geography • Housing • Children in the Household.**

These are all statistics that are easily measurable. Chances are you have access to some, if not all, of this information already. It may take some frustrating conversations with the IT folks over pulling sales data, but don't give up. Accept your role as a moron in the eyes of all technology types, and humble yourself at the feet of your internal genius bar. Eventually, they will concede that yes, with a few clicks they can tell you exactly where your customers live, down to the postal code. And with that valuable data, you can access a whole host of demographics.

Pete's fans are mostly out-of-town travelers — families passing through Georgia on their way to Florida. The demographics likely look something like this:

Married Women with Children

Age 30 to 45

LET'S DEFINE YOUR BRAND. LIKE, RIGHT NOW.

Upper Income

Well-Educated

Homeowners

Diverse Geography

BRAND POSITIONING STATEMENTS	Believable	Differentiating	Motivating
Option 1	180	150	220
Option 2	80	90	110
Option 3	20	80	50

So that's demographics — the hard facts. But surely we humans are more complex than a set datapoints. We're each an individual snowflake, right? My momma told me so. Absolutely. Well, sort of. We all have patterns of behavior that are also tracked by a number of services. Nielsen, for example, has divided us all into sixty-plus neatly defined lifestyle clusters based on what we watch, the things we buy, and where we live. Provide the statisticians with your customer base, and they can divvy up your audience into lifestyle groups with scarily accurate personality traits.

The highest scoring clusters for Pete's Farm might be "Family Carseats" or "Backyard Burgers." Or some other clever name they assign. And with each cluster comes a wealth of behavioral patterns for activities, interests, and opinions. Hypothetically, the psychographics of our farmstand-to-table segment might look something like this:

Enjoys life's simple pleasures

Likes to travel

Prefers organic over mass-produced

Tries to lead a healthy lifestyle

Values family and hard work

Nielsen and the other data mining firms make these reports available à la carte for a few thousand dollars. You could certainly spend a heck of a lot more for a custom study that would yield valuable results. Or, for the purposes of this express exercise in positioning, you could skip it. The point is this. The more we know about our audience the better our positioning statement.

By understanding the profile of the farmstand peach lover, Pete can ensure his brand is on point. How? By asking them. By testing different variations of messaging with current customers. Hey, wait a minute! Testing messages sounds an awful lot like a marketing study.

Trailer park research

Six-figure results with a six-tooth budget

Again with the research. For someone who promised no research, this redneck talks a lot about research.

There's no getting around it. You will ultimately have to share your brand positioning work with consumers. Skip testing and the first exposure may be in the form of a headline, perhaps on an outdoor billboard, an online banner campaign, or a costly television commercial. Regardless of your media strategy, you'll know pretty quickly if the message resonates when you start spending money. If turnstiles turn, cash registers ring, and phones jingle, you'll know if you're on to something. Or if you're not.

A better practice, prior to spending precious media dollars, is to simply ask a handful of existing customers to review the brand positioning. Conduct a short exit survey if you're in retail or a service industry. If you head up marketing at a business-to-business company, pick up the phone and call some trusted clients. There are several free online survey tools, so you could also create a homegrown digital study by email. None of these methods is particularly scientific. It's flawed for sure and will not hold up with any true research aficionados. Doesn't matter. When there's no budget or time for proper methodology, we must still plow forward. The Farmer's Almanac predicts a bumper crop for peaches this season.

So ask a dozen folks for their honest opinions, and you'll quickly get a sense of whether or not you're on the right track.

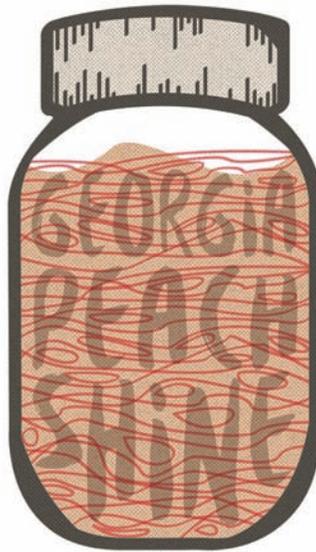
One caveat here. Do not walk around to the breakroom and ask your fellow employees. Far too many companies talk to themselves. They don't test their message with customers. In lieu of research, they ask their own

LET'S DEFINE YOUR BRAND. LIKE, RIGHT NOW.

people. Usually, they ask senior management. Big mistake. No one has a more biased frame of mind than your boss. Or your co-workers.

Choose your preferred approach — email, phone, or in person — and present your first positioning statement. Then pose the three questions below. Yes, just three. We're keeping this crazy simple to ensure 100% participation in our backwoods research.

1. On a scale of 1 to 100, how **BELIEVABLE** is this statement?
2. On a scale of 1 to 100, how **DIFFERENTIATING** is this statement?
3. On a scale of 1 to 100, how **MOTIVATING** is this statement?



Now repeat the process with your alternate brand statements. In the end, you will be able to review the scores for each positioning option, and a winner will emerge. Or frankly, one might not. You could also have a tie. Or one thought might be more believable, while another may be more differentiating. Great, so now what?

Now you will have to apply the seemingly lost art of common sense. Put your left brain on hold for just a moment, and rely now on your finely honed marketing instinct and gut intuition. Based on everything you know

about your brand, plus what you've just learned from customer input, what do you think? Don't overthink. Relax and form a now well-educated opinion. You did the hard work of crafting brand positioning statement options. You even tested them (kind of). Now put your full weight into a judgment. Turn it into a belief.

It's time to dive ahead with your brand positioning statement as if it were a fact as hard and true as gravity.

Don't be distracted by shiny stuff

Or, why this is the most important chapter in this book.

As a fellow procrastinator, you may easily be distracted by ... squirrel! Yet as a fellow brand steward, if we are to focus on one thing this year, today, right now, it is to define and promote our company's brand positioning. Nothing else will help your marketing plans more than a well-defined brand statement.

Every marketing soothsayer loves to talk about shiny new innovations in digital. That includes myself and my friends authoring the other chapters of this book. We can't help ourselves. Digital is marketing porn. It's sexy. If you can believably present yourself as a true digital expert, you've got serious swagger.

Now that we know Pete's Farm's brand message, should he have a Pinterest page? Might be interesting. Pete could post classic recipes for his grandmother's Peach Cobbler, Aunt Kathy's Grilled Peaches and Pete himself makes an out-of-body-experience inducing Peach Moonshine. Tempting, but no. Uploading a constant flow of new and interesting recipes to Pinterest would take a vast amount of time to maintain. For a roadside farm stand, most digital tactics would be a waste of time and energy given the transient audience and Pete's overall brand positioning. His tactical media plan would be better dedicated to an old-fashioned outdoor billboard campaign.

Truth is, shiny new digital tactics are just that — tactics. Just like TV, radio, outdoor, and print (yes, print is still alive and mostly well), they are all clubs in your golf bag. And before you choose an iron or a wood, you must first and foremost know what you bring to the game. In fact, a well-defined brand will help drive the tactical media plan. (One quick aside here. If you're not thinking about a digital strategy, you absolutely should. Read Ken Greenberg's chapter on the Digital Divide and get inspired.)

LET'S DEFINE YOUR BRAND. LIKE, RIGHT NOW.

There's simply not one other marketing task you can accomplish that's more important than defining your brand. Still not convinced? Recently, an angel investor conducted a study to identify common traits among all the companies they funded. One characteristic emerged. Every green-lit startup was able to pitch their story in a concise ninety seconds. It's no different for your pitch to consumers. Be able to clearly communicate what you are, what you offer, and why we should care. Do that in twelve words or less. Make it believable, differentiating, and motivating. Done. Boom, pour yourself some Peach Moonshine and raise up your Mason jar. It's time to sell some peaches.



Facebook quiz

How BuzzFeed can help define your brand personality

As a chapter bonus, let's have some fun with brand personality. Separate from positioning, your company's personality is a collection of human characteristics, the same as if you were describing yourself. (By the way, *you* are also a brand. If you take the time to define your own brand positioning, you will be much more focused in life, making the most of each and every day. But that's another story for my never-to-be-written self-help book.) The brand personality complements the brand positioning, putting your business in context to how we think about people.

To separate yourself from your corporate persona, and talk about it objectively, can be difficult. We're too close. To remain impartial, try this popular personification exercise. It won't give you all the answers in life, like a Facebook quiz will, but it can certainly help if you get stuck. Keep in mind, there are no correct responses. *The options you choose are not nearly as important as the rationale in helping define your brand personality.*

If your brand were a car, what would it be?

1. Ford
2. Honda
3. BMW
4. Jaguar
5. Ferrari

Pete's Farm is a Ford, for sure. A trustworthy Ford flatbed that was once bright red, but is now fading to a coppery orange. Reliable, familiar, and proud to be an American. Easy one.

If your brand were an animal, what would it be?

1. Dog
2. Turtle
3. Elephant
4. Lioness
5. Cheetah

Pete's Farm? Dog. Your best friend when you need one. An always deliriously happy face that never fails to put a smile on my face. Pete's Farm could also be a turtle. Slow, steady, enjoying life's journey.

If your brand were a movie, what would it be?

1. Gone with the Wind
2. Matrix
3. The Untouchables
4. Casablanca
5. Easy Rider

An indisputable classic (mainly because it's on every critic's top ten list), Gone with the Wind personifies Pete's Farm. It's quintessentially Southern, transporting us to the land of cotton. And peaches.

LET'S DEFINE YOUR BRAND. LIKE, RIGHT NOW.

If your brand were a band, who would it be?

1. Lynyrd Skynyrd
2. Radiohead
3. Metallica
4. The Supremes
5. Dr. Dre

Lynyrd Skynyrd equals Pete's Farm. Hard working, proudly Southern, fearless. It's a good time in every performance, in every bite.

If your brand were a beverage, what would it be?

1. Coca-Cola
2. Sparkling water
3. Black coffee
4. Cosmopolitan
5. Shot of tequila

Let's go off the grid here and say Coca-Cola Classic. The original sweet, fizzy refresher. Don't mess with the purity of the original. New Coke? What were they drinking when they came up with that beverage blight?

If your brand were a city, what would it be?

1. Athens
2. Tokyo
3. Detroit
4. Florence
5. Amsterdam

Tough one. A classic loaded with rich history, Athens fits. But Pete's Farm feels more like the hardworking proud city of Detroit where you can still feel good about the fruits of your labor.

If your brand were a tech company, what would it be?

1. IBM
2. Apple
3. Xbox
4. Pinterest
5. Netflix

This is a farmstand. None of the above? Okay, maybe IBM? One of the originals. We're not trendy hipster Apple. We're not particularly feminine, like Pinterest. And we're not all that innovative, like Netflix. Yeah, IBM — we're timeless and relevant, year after year.

If your brand were a male celebrity, who would it be?

1. Cary Grant
2. Tom Hanks
3. Bruce Willis
4. Brad Pitt
5. Johnny Depp

Depends on the movie, right? Tom Hanks might be the obvious choice, but I'm going with Cary Grant on this one. Iconic, classic leading man. However, considering Cary's five marriages and often-questioned orientation, let's note that Pete's Farm is a much more loyal, unpretentious, straight-shooting, honest family man. With that in mind, I might switch to Brad Pitt. By all accounts Brad is considered steady, unpretentious, straight-shooting, and undeniably a family man since he's married with six kids (though folks in Camp Aniston would certainly debate the "loyal" part).

If your brand were a female celebrity, who would it be?

1. Meryl Streep
2. Natalie Portman
3. Halle Berry
4. Audrey Hepburn
5. Drew Barrymore

Meryl and Pete have a lot in common. Timeless and hardworking, award-worthy, kind and approachable, true classics — a now overused adjective in this exercise.

Results

Your brand personality

Answered Mostly 1s: Your brand personality is classic, trustworthy, and proud. You are not a trendy, hipster brand that's a flash in the pan. No, you're the kind of brand Pete might like to have over for dinner.

Answered Mostly 2s: Your brand personality is modern, forward-thinking, and progressive. You are not stuck in your ways or clinging to the past. You're one of the cool kids, and everyone wants to sit next to you in class.

Answered Mostly 3s: Your brand personality is powerful, spirited, and masculine. You're no wallflower, and you certainly don't apologize for having strong opinions. Some of the things you do might not be popular with everyone, but the fans you do have are die-hard loyalists.

Answered Mostly 4s: Your brand personality is luxurious, indulgent, and feminine. You're not flimsy, tacky, or out of touch with the latest trends. You're on point. Your brand isn't a must-have. It's a want. On everyone's guest list, bringing sophistication to every affair.

Answered Mostly 5s: Your brand personality is adventurous, irreverent, and rebellious. You're not afraid to challenge the status quo. Your brand boldly embraces change and fearlessly asks "what's next?"



Bill Swanston

Almost an Atlanta native, Bill left to become Associate Creative Director at some of the best of the big agencies — BBDO/NY, Saatchi & Saatchi, Doner, Hill Holliday — before returning home to found Frederick Swanston in 1999. Bill's creative credentials include work that has been recognized in almost every advertising award show including Cannes, One Show, Addy's, Communication Arts, Hatch, Obies, and Tellies. Bill and his wife Michele will celebrate their 22nd anniversary this year with their two kids, film student Graham and basketball star Liv, plus their dog Dixie and two cats, Ginger and Coco.

frederickswanston.com

Package Design and the Role of the Consumer

by Kevin Keating

PRESIDENT, HANGAR12

ON A DAILY BASIS, consumers make hundreds of decisions in the grocery store.

They may decide between store brand pasta or name brand based on price. They may spend more on paper products for sustainability. However, *hundreds* of purchase decisions on consumer-packaged goods (CPG) are made each time a consumer goes to the grocery store, largely due to product packaging.

Fifty-two percent of consumers say that packaging is a huge component of their purchase decisions, according to Nielsen Research. Brand loyalties matter. So do other factors like priorities, budget, and pain points.

However, Accenture has found that only 28% of consumers are loyal to their favorite brands. The other 72% can be swayed by a number of factors, especially packaging.



Consumer choices have quintupled

If you've ever thought that grocery stores are becoming more and more crowded with choices, you're correct. **Food Marketing Institute Research** has found that the average number of products in a grocery store increased from 8,948 to 47,000 between 1975 and the present.

This abundance of choice isn't always a good thing, especially when it comes to consumers' ability to pick between the seventy-some types of toothpaste. Some consumers freeze up, and others pick the choice that's most obvious. When marketing your product on crowded shelves, packaging is critical.

Packaging marketers are ultimately conversion marketers. When we do our jobs right, we make product decisions easy for consumers. We're in the business of removing decision-fatigue from CPG decision-making, by creating packages that stand out.

However, it's no secret that designing a package that stood out among 9,000 other branded options was much simpler than one that stands out among 47,000.

Packaging is evolving rapidly

Consumer habits have rapidly changed over the past several decades, which has driven the abundance of choice in retail environments. Modern customers are less trusting of brands and more trusting of their friends and family. They're less likely to make purchase decisions based on brand loyalty, and more likely to select products that align with their values, need for convenience, or image.

Marketers have access to stores of big data insights on how consumers act, based on trails of data from mobile devices, sensors, store loyalty programs, social media, and other sources. Packaging may be undergoing a serious seismic shift, but it definitely still matters.

What are first impressions worth?

Humans are naturally visual creatures. Our brains process visual elements thousands of times faster than text. First impressions of package design are formed in milliseconds. If your label doesn't convey the value a consumer is looking for, they probably won't even bother to scope out the text.

As far as the average consumer is concerned, your packaging and your product are one and the same. If your label conveys budget-conscious, your brand is for people who need to watch pricing. If you communicate that you're the healthiest and purest option on the shelf, your brand is healthy.

In the mind of a customer, the packaging is the product.

First impressions of a package affect how consumers perceive the product contained within, and it shapes their entire brand experience.

Apple is a brand that's legendary for their obsessive attention to detail in product and packaging design. The late CEO Steve Jobs had a clear understanding of just how much packaging was worth. As a result, he and his team worked tirelessly to create product packaging that communicates a high-end, user-friendly brand.

Apple employee Jonathan Ive recounted the extensive attention paid to Apple packaging design, stating, "I love the process of unpacking something... Packaging can be theater, it can create a story."

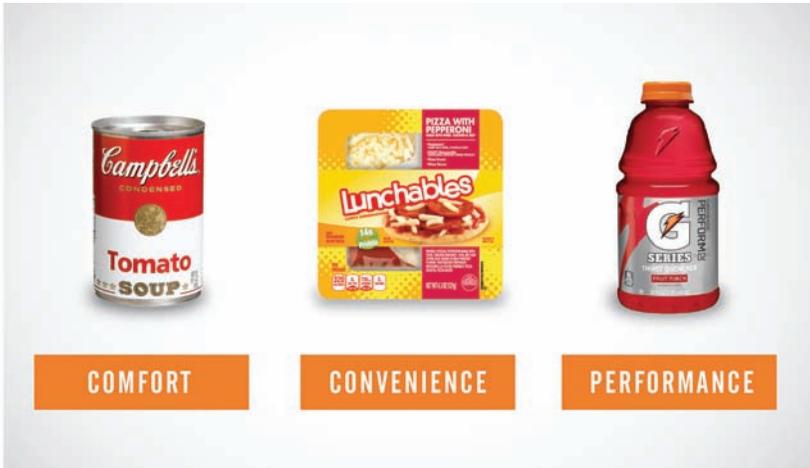
Ives couldn't be more correct. Packaging helps create your entire brand story in the milliseconds it takes a consumer to register the color, design, imagery, and other disruptive visual elements. If your packaging isn't reflective of what your brand has to offer, you might not even get a chance to prove your packaging wrong.

What's a first impression worth? Everything. As it turns out, your first impression is essentially the only impression that matters. Even if a consumer selects your product time-and-time again, the package is a reminder of what the product stands for.

What's the difference between packaging and product branding?

Branding comes first. Without a brand, your product would be perceived the same as others. Before your product hits the shelves, you've identified some basic statements about what your product is and what it represents.

During the brand process, companies identify a unique value proposition about the product. This is a simple statement about how they plan to deliver a different customer experience than their competitors. The most successful brands are so well defined, you're able to describe who they are in one word. Mercedes-Benz sells luxury. Nike sells performance. McDonald's sells convenience.



While you might not be able to summarize your brand in a single word during the brand development process, you spend time thinking about how you're going to add new value to your market. Maybe your angle is healthy and convenient. Perhaps it's far fewer ingredients.

Ultimately, the process of building a brand requires the identification of what your product is, and how it's going to do things differently. Once you've built a product brand, you're able to create packaging that further delivers these values. Fewer ingredients might translate into a simple design with less text and minimal visuals. Healthy convenience could be single-serve size packaging that seals in freshness. Brand always comes first.



Packaging is the process of developing a visual identity for your products in a retail environment. You've already established what your product stands for, and how it offers something different. In the package design process, you're creating a functional product unit that communicates your brand's unique value and benefits in a visual format.

As far as your first-time customers are concerned, your brand might not matter. They don't care if your first business plan stated your goals to change the world. As far as they're concerned, your brand is your package. Ultimately, customers don't differentiate between brand and package and product.

Corporate branding and packaging

Does corporate branding matter? Absolutely. However, I think marketers need to understand the end-user's perception of the company brand and packaging hierarchy.

Your customers don't understand that your packages stemmed from your products, which stemmed from your brand. They simply perceive your label, its claims, and form impressions about your company accordingly.

You'll struggle to develop great products without a strong company brand identity. You'll also have difficulty creating compelling packaging unless your company is likeable. However, considering how customers perceive your company is an important thought exercise. I believe it triggers a mental loop that demonstrates just how much your products and packages matter.

The recipe for iconic package design

As your competitors unveil new products on a daily basis, it's important to get packaging design right the first time. Major CPG brands successfully rebrand on a regular basis. However, these examples are typically done when a brand begins to get stale. The majority of brands who fail at initial packaging design will struggle to achieve prime shelf placement and sales for their product's lifetime.

To understand the elements of iconic packaging design, think of some of the most beloved CPG products. Campbell's traditional soup packages convey comfort and simplicity. General Mills' cereals are often energetic in



appearance, which conveys health. Seventh Generation cleaning products convey their simplicity and eco-friendliness with simple, green and white labels.

Your product's unique values and benefits should shape the appearance of your logo and packaging. While industry trends can influence your final designs, communicating who you are and what you have to offer your customers is the most important.

Factors like consumer input, sustainability, and mobile technology are increasingly playing a role in CPG packaging design, which I'll delve into later in this chapter. However, in the meantime, I'll share some tried-and-true principles of packaging design that I've observed repeatedly during my career.

1. Tell your story

Within a second of picking up your package, consumers should be able to repeat your story. They don't need to know your origin, but they should be able to answer the following two questions:

- What is this?
- What does it do?

Even if a consumer is seriously considering purchasing your product, they're probably not willing to dedicate more than a few seconds to demystifying your packaging.



Consumers need to understand that you're offering either organic soup or canned fruit. They should be able to immediately identify that your packaging is biodegradable or designed as a single-serving, if any of those factors are true. Make it obvious, while striving for simplicity and clarity.

2. Tell the truth

Even though packaging largely shapes consumers' perception of products, we've all experienced dishonest packaging. Avoid misleading with images that don't resemble your product or making design mistakes that set false expectations.

Brands tell the truth, or set reasonable expectations, in packaging content. However, never underestimate the power of visual elements.

Aside from labeling requirements, your packaging must be an honest depiction of what you're offering. Color, font, and texture all play a significant role in communicating the health or convenience benefits of your product.

3. Consider function

The most effective packaging concepts aren't just visually stimulating, they're also pragmatic, and offer convenience to consumers. Think of microwaveable soup cartons, or single-serve bags of frozen vegetables. Consider how condiment jars are increasingly designed with the lid on the bottom, to facilitate fast serving.

Your consumers care about function in their food products. You should, too. By engineering convenience into your packaging, you're able to immediately convey that your brand cares and offers value.



4. Impact

When considering packaging design, it's important to understand how your product will be displayed. Chances are, it will land in a grocery aisle, among hundreds of other similar products.



As your future customers are walking down crowded grocery aisles, will anything about your product stand out? Go beyond packaging color, size, and display panel design, and seek out a unique shape that not only stands out, but also adds value with a new function and consumer benefit. Performing competitive analyses of the packaging of similar products is crucial to creating shelf impact.

Competitive analysis should play an enormous role in selecting the right packaging design. Striving for a balance of brand authenticity and impact in your design process is crucial.

5. Consider future product developments

As your brand launches additional, related products, having a design that can be applied across multiple products matters. If consumers already love your granola, they'll be more likely to purchase your wholegrain crackers.

If you choose to create a packaging design that can't be applied to future product developments, you're sacrificing your ability to develop loyal customer relationships.

Creating designs that can scale across multiple types of CPG products requires a recognizable, well-designed brand logo. However, it also requires attention to other visual elements. Consider the following packaging elements to create a product that scales.

- **Color Scheme**
- **Proportions**
- **Contrast**
- **White Space**
- **Textures**

6. Leverage the power of the consumer

Tapping the consumer early in the packaging process is the best way to avoid failure. Fortunately for marketers, consumer research has come of age. Today, marketers have a wide assortment of tools and technology platforms they can use to better understand the consumer mindset. To ensure the best outcome will require a strategic mix of available tools that are most effective for packaging. I go into more detail in the next section.

A smart set of consumer tools for packaging design

I'm sharing a set of relatively new tools that play a prominent role in the consumer-centric package design process. These methodologies are transforming market research and making it more affordable and accessible to connect with consumers during package design.

Digital communities

These are the counterparts to focus groups. Unlike focus groups that require long lead times to recruit the target segment, digital communities employ automated technology that can recruit specifically targeted segments on demand. They allow for real-time commenting and probing by either the moderator or respondents (i.e., to other respondents, much like a Facebook wall). Digital communities are mostly a qualitative tool, so they are best used for exploration and refinement where depth of insights — for the purpose of understanding why, why not, and how (to improve) — is critical.

Real-time interviews

Real-time interviews are the counterpart to in person one-on-one interviews. Instead of going through the painstaking process of recruiting consumers to meet in person with a live moderator, people are recruited online in real-time. Given that tens of millions of people are online at any given time, recruiting typically takes five minutes. Using pre-programmed questions and uploading package design concepts, the moderator is able to text chat with the consumers, and download the transcript when done.

Online surveys

The latest evolution of panel research is to log into a portal, write a questionnaire, upload packaging images, and immediately select from appropriate groups of consumers to complete the survey (e.g., by age, gender, ethnicity, location, relationship status, household income, employment status, and educational background). Recruitment is real-time and can get very specific to identify respondents that meet certain behavioral and attitudinal criteria. The essence is to identify, among many, the few concepts and executions to be refined/optimized. This type of survey seeks answers to several key questions like purchase intent, persuasion, appeal, uniqueness, etc.

Mobile ethnography

Mobile ethnography is simply using mobile technology to take a deeper look at what drives your customers' thinking, and behaviors, and influences their decisions while shopping in a retail environment. This can include a wide range of information gathering such as what they purchased, why they chose the purchase, and their perception of the quality of products. For example, a CPG brand can study shoppers at a particular retail chain. Using geo-location, shoppers who have downloaded the app are notified they have a survey opportunity and can be prompted to take photo and videos of the packaging shelf set in the store, providing vital, rapid competitive feedback.

Automated eye tracking test

Automated eye tracking simulates pre-attentive processing, a phase of vision that occurs when we first glance at something, but before we're aware of what we're looking at. Pre-attentive processing is universal across all humans, regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, or cultural differences.

Eye tracking tests predict the areas and objects on packaging that are likely to attract our first glance, providing designers and marketers with objective, science-based information they can use to make decisions. The package test generates four types of reports: heat maps, visual sequence, regions, and areas of interest.

Social media listening

Social engagement has transitioned to being a customer service necessity. Consumers are quicker to leave a comment on your brand's Facebook page than call or email your customer relations department. Social listening allows brands to assess what is working and not working with your product and packaging. Also, listening to competitors' consumers can provide insight to unmet packaging needs.

It's all in the mix

The magic is in the mix of available tools. Using them in a strategic way gives you a window to your consumers and what they say about your packaging. They help determine whether your packaging answers these questions:

“Are you engaging with me?”

“Why should I love you?”

“Did you surprise and delight me?”

“Are you showing me you're socially responsible?”

“Did you tell me a good story?”

A deeper look into consumer online surveys

Given that I recommend online surveys to get a gut check from consumers about packaging, it is important to review the four different qualitative methods you can use to uncover helpful package design insights.

Start Test

This method is generally used in the initial phases of package design testing to gauge expectations, attitudes, and initial interest in the package concept among a targeted group of individuals. It does NOT provide the audience with visuals, but instead relies on them to give open-ended, unaided feedback.

For example, the start test can be used to better understand consumer pain points with the storage and pouring of a current beverage package. The consumer feedback can be used to develop new, innovative packaging that directly addresses consumer needs.

Monadic test

This test involves providing the consumer with a package design that is shown and evaluated on its own, separately from other designs. You get a completely clean read on each package including likes, dislikes, purchase interest, and areas of confusion or red flags.

Sequential monadic test

In sequential monadic tests, respondents will be shown several package designs, each in a different order. For example, respondents can view and evaluate both a current design and the new design. This approach allows you to take consumer feedback and make iterative improvements to the concepts.

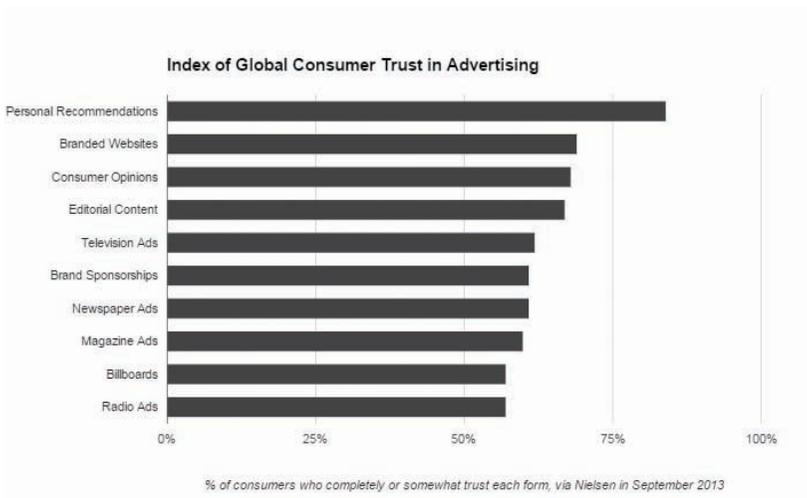
Discrete choice test

This is similar to sequential monadic testing in that multiple options are being tested. The difference is that all choices are presented at once, and respondents might be asked questions to explain their choice to better understand driving factors. For example, a food and beverage company might want to understand audience preferences for multiple aspects of a new product: the font used on the package, the icons used on the package directions, and the description and benefits listed on the package. The insights for each area are then used to further refine the product.

The status quo of packaging

Consumer behaviors and preferences are changing more quickly than ever before, which has led to the seismic shift in the marketing landscape. Social media has created the first opportunity for genuine relationships between brands and customers, who can engage in two-way conversations. With the help of big data, we're able to understand our customers on an individual level for the first time in history.

It's no secret that consumer expectations have changed drastically. Today's buyers are skeptical of marketing, due to years of being overloaded with messages. They're able to quickly crowd source product recommendations



by updating their Facebook status. If they feel uneasy about a product’s price in a retail environment, they can order it with one click off Amazon without leaving the aisle.

Today’s consumers want brands that are honest and authentic. They want to purchase from companies that treat their employees and the environment correctly. If they’re pleased or dissatisfied, they can spread their product experience to millions of people with a single tweet.

Today’s consumers have a great deal of power, but that’s not a bad thing. I believe technology has allowed your customers to fill a few crucial business functions. Their insights can shape your product development, marketing, and customer service strategies. For CPG brands willing to listen and pay attention, the amplified voices of tech-savvy customers are a competitive advantage.

Here are a few current trends in packaging that marketers need to pay close attention to:

1. Sustainability

Consumers of all ages are increasingly willing to pay more for products that are visibly sustainable. This trend is especially prevalent among image-conscious Millennial consumers.

Simply having sustainable business processes isn’t enough. Your prospective customers need to understand immediately that you’re committed to ethical, eco-friendly operations.

Biodegradable packaging, packages created from recycled products, and minimalist packaging are three ways to communicate that you care about the environment.



2. Consumer Participation

Innovation shouldn't just yield fiscal returns for CPG brands. Optimal innovation provides new value to customers. Industry disruptions occur when a new entry into the market is able to provide a significantly better experience than anyone else.

Social media insights, customer feedback, and other forms of research can reveal truths about your customers' needs. Integrate this feedback into new product development to show you're a brand that cares. Consumer participation isn't just shaping packaging, its shaping brand and customer relationships.

3. Health Food Marketing

Today's health-conscious consumers care deeply about what they are putting into their bodies, and where it comes from. Packaging increasingly includes insights on the benefits a food has to offer.

If your product is additive-free, locally sourced, or full of energy thanks to whole grains, highlight this on the label.

Consumers who perceive a food as healthy are more likely to purchase and consume products. Engineering your product's health benefits into packaging design can be critical to conveying your value.

4. Convenient Packaging

Today's consumers are busy. Explosions in the availability of food products that are single-serve, conveniently packaged, or easy-to-heat can play a critical role in purchase decisions.

5. Transparency

Consumer trust in brand messaging is at an all-time low. Creating honest labels matters. There's a reason why clear bottles and transparent packaging are far more common than they were a few decades ago, it's a literal expression of the transparency that customers want.

How to prepare for the future of packaging

While it's impossible to tell exactly what the future of packaging design has in store for CPG brands, technology and consumer trends can allow for a few educated guesses.

1. Technology Adoption Soars

Consumer adoption of technology will continue and shopping will be an increasingly digitally integrated experience. Retailers will adopt Internet of Things (IoT) technologies like sensor beacons, which will lend more knowledge than ever into how customers select products and make decisions.

As a result, brands will need to shift to a model where they view consumers as their best advocates. Consumer engagement in the product development and packaging design process will become increasingly real-time.

The abundance of big data will lead to consumers' expectations of being treated individuals. Brands will continue to develop new models and concepts focused on rapid delivery of products and packaging in direct response to consumer preferences.

While it remains to be seen whether packaging will ever be as individualized as Coke's name campaign, it's certainly not outside the realm of possibility.

2. Product Competition Remains High

Despite Whole Foods' and Wal-Mart's recent ventures into streamlined grocery experiences for health-conscious shoppers, it's unlikely that product competition will decrease. In the foreseeable future, I believe that the majority of food retailers will have a significant amount of stock, and competition for product placement in streamlined markets will be fierce.

However, there's a strong possibility that we'll see more disruption in the retail space. While many consumers have balked at the high price tag attached to trials of Amazon Fresh, there's a good chance that home delivery grocery programs could become a mainstay for busy professionals. As a result, brands' online reputations will become a critical marketing asset. Plus, packaging will need to work harder to communicate its brand story in a smaller online space.

3. Increased Sustainability

Consumer focus on health and sustainability is probably not going anywhere. Corporate social responsibility will likely become a bigger trend, and CPG organizations with community programs could become favorites among socially conscious buyers.

Legislative requirements around food and packaging safety are likely to increase, which could lead to increased requirements for food brands in all niches of the market. Brands are likely to shift their packaging towards biodegradable and eco-conscious options to meet consumer and regulatory demands.

Summary

As marketers prepare for the seismic shift in the packaging design world, my key advice is never to underestimate the power of your customer. Take advantage of opportunities to build relationships, have dialogue, and reward your buyers in real-time.

Use big data to understand who you're trying to market to, and create packaging that communicates your value in milliseconds. The CPG brands and packaging design tailored towards consumer needs has the best chance of being competitive in the future.



Kevin Keating

Kevin Keating is a 25-year veteran in branding and package design for consumer packaged goods. He founded his marketing agency, Hangar12, in 2001 and formed a specialized division, PKG, in 2011 to focus on brand strategy and package design. An expert in his field, Kevin is a graduate of the University of Illinois (B.S.) and California State University, Long Beach (M.S.), and boasts experience on notable accounts including Kellogg's, Sara Lee, ConAgra, and Perdue among others. His approach is for retailers and brands to leverage the voice of their consumer to achieve greater success with lower risks. Kevin has invested in the agency's consumer-centric approach Consumer First® modeled around Nielsen BASES Factors For Success, to create deeper consumer engagements to better deliver on brand promise.

hangar-12.com

In-store Marketing: The Changes and Challenges Facing Retail

by Kevin Janosz

COO, RITTA

THE ABILITY TO RESEARCH and buy products online has forever changed the landscape of retail — and the shopping experience of the consumer. Upon closer examination, there is also a dichotomy in consumer purchasing behavior between low- and high-consideration purchases. Research has shown that for items such as personal care products, children's toys and certain small electronics, people are more likely to make their purchases online. However, before making a purchase there is still a need to see products such as home appliances and furnishings in person. (Whether that purchase takes place in the store or later online is a different story.) Consumers will also venture to a brick-and-mortar store for products, such as smartphones, where numerous options and perplexing technology drive the need for the advice of a sales associate.

So are brick-and-mortar stores and point-of-sale (POS) displays still relevant? Absolutely. Living in the shopper's haven of northern New Jersey, I can tell you that in-store commerce is alive and well. But with the new retail landscape, do we need to adapt our in-store approach when marketing to the consumer? Unequivocally, yes.

Who is your audience?

Successful POS marketing depends on great planning and execution, and it starts by knowing your target audience. Consider the following demographic groups:

Millennials (born 1981–2000)

This young group is often very skeptical and can smell a sales pitch a mile away. As a result, marketers need to be sincere and honest in their approach.

Born into the latest technology, Millennials are attracted by point-of-sale marketing that leverages the use of smartphones — a recommended tactic that allows them to self-discover your product.

Generation X (born 1965–80)

Self-professed loners, Gen Xers are also skeptical of marketing in general and prefer product self-discovery and/or referrals. Although they did not grow up with smartphones, they certainly now rely on them heavily. Reach them with the powerful marketing strategies of authentic-use case scenarios, as well as the true benefits of your product.

Baby Boomers (Born 1946–64)

Still the largest demographic segment, Boomers are known for hard work and individualism. While this segment will research a product online before making a purchase, they still appreciate face-to-face contact with a knowledgeable sales associate, so strong, in-person service is important to this group.

Traditionalists (Born 1900–45)

In age and attitude, Traditionalists are truly the polar opposites of Millennials. They survived, or were raised by parents who survived, the Great Depression, so they do not need hand-holding. Since they do not fully embrace or trust newer technologies, traditional marketing methods are most effective with this group.

Of course, demographics like this are just the tip of the iceberg. Diving in with as much psychographic information as possible is always a sound targeting approach.

Know thy competition

It's critical to know what you're up against at point-of-sale. A best practice is to conduct in-store audits as frequently as possible. The retail landscape changes frequently, so you'll want to see which technologies and techniques your competition is using. But even more important is what they are saying from a messaging perspective.

The main key to in-store marketing is differentiation. What do you offer consumers that your competition does not? I often conduct two kinds of in-store visits. In the first, I examine both my client's in-store presence,

as well as that of the competition. I take as many pictures as I can of the overall product environment and the messaging that's presented. After bringing this field research back to the office for examination, I build a thorough report, including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis.

The second type of in-store visit is even more qualitative than the first. During this visit, I "mystery shop," pretending to be a customer. This technique allows me to interact with sales associates in the most realistic way possible to gauge their opinions. Many of them will have personal biases that I can identify and look past, but mainly I want to see how they sell and which key points they are making about the products.

Put the world on notice: you're here!

Having gained knowledge of your target audience and assessed the in-store competition, you're now prepared to get to work, forming an in-store marketing campaign and POS materials to influence sales. (Note: I said "influence sales" — not "close sales." If there's one main tenet of the current retail landscape, it is that purchases are made on the consumer's terms.) Point-of-sale materials, when properly executed, can actually change customers' minds. But to do so, they must be visually appealing and drive product benefits in a meaningful way. When developing your marketing materials, keep this in mind:

Establish an overarching framework for on-point messaging

Even before thinking about point-of-sale, the top priority is developing your "core messaging," which should include any key visuals that could support an efficient explanation of your product. The backbone of all marketing communications, core messaging ensures a carefully crafted, cohesive voice across the board. Once established, it helps all marketing — especially POS projects — to stay on-message.

Create an arsenal of versatile assets

Your primary point-of-sale marketing materials consist of packaging, display solutions, and the core messaging language and graphics. Tailoring for smartphones, with detailed product information, special offers, and video content can extend the impact of your marketing.

As part of your core-messaging arsenal, develop hard-hitting assets that work across all media. Having different formats at the ready is cost-effective and saves time. These assets should be effective, whether viewed on a smartphone screen or seen larger than life on a full-wall display.

Be prepared to customize

You also need to thoroughly study the retail stores where your product will be sold. Will the same product assortment be offered in each? Does using the same POS approach make sense for all stores, or is a tiered approach, which uses different marketing tools in different stores, necessary? This type of game plan will ensure optimal return on investment.

With this method you will be ready to roll out engaging executions, from in-store displays to companion digital marketing, with a high level of consistency and without having to patch together a creative strategy at the last minute.

Smartphone: smart consumer, smart marketer

In today's marketplace, there is an increasing demand for technology-based POS solutions. And while technology, such as touchscreen monitors, can be a part of your display solutions, leveraging the consumer's smartphone can be just as effective. In fact, 82% of smartphone users turn to their devices to help them make a product decision.¹ Just walk down the aisles of any retail store and take notice of the browsing consumers. More often than not, you will notice them clutching their smartphones.

The smartphone has become a vital component of consumers' lives; from the moment we wake up and throughout the day. In fact, the smartphone's role during the "purchase path" of the consumer is causing marketers to re-evaluate many of their strategies.

After reading something on a smartphone, nearly one in four shoppers has changed their mind about making a purchase.² That makes the consumer's smartphone one of your strongest marketing tools. Smartphones communicate, inform, and — most importantly to brands and retailers — provoke action. And an action-provoking medium is always desirable in retail, because purchase intent is at its strongest. Need a recommendation? Check Facebook. Price comparison? Right at your fingertips. And value-seekers can have coupons or special offers right in the palms of their hands at point-of-sale — a strong decision-influencer.

Leveraging smartphones and other in-store technology

An important benefit of integrating technology at point-of-sale is its ability to offer unique content that sets your brand apart. However, success also depends on seamless execution. Here are some options to consider — some successful, some not so. First, the established content approaches:

App development for a dynamic experience

During the shopping experience, apps can be key sales tools for the retailer, but not as much for the product brand. This is because a consumer is not going to download an app just to learn about your product. But for retailers, apps have the ability to offer a far more robust shopping experience. Retail apps can spotlight key products as well as provide coupons, deals of the day and other content to boost engagement. But be forewarned: the development of an app has a significant price tag, and there is the danger it may be downloaded, used only once then forgotten.

Mobile-friendly websites

As I mentioned earlier, the ability to leverage the consumer's phone as a shopping assistant is a huge opportunity for retailers and product brands. Having a mobile-friendly site is relatively common these days, but no less important. Ensuring you have the right content on your site is what matters most. Beyond valuable benefit-driven information, it is pertinent to build a community on your website — an area of your site that becomes a place for real testimonials and a controlled space for product reviews. In a recent survey, more than half of Millennials said they check product reviews on their phones while shopping in a store.³ So this type of content is desirable for in-store shoppers as well as shoppers who research beforehand.

Sorry, QR codes...

Brands often want the consumer to seek out and enjoy a deeper brand experience. On the surface, the QR code was a phenomenal idea that seemed perfect for POS, giving consumers another level of access to your brand. The concept: put a QR code on your POS display; when scanned by a consumer's smartphone, it would deliver an engaging video, more detailed product information, or even a mobile coupon. What happened? It just didn't take

off, mostly due to lack of education: consumers were largely unaware that they needed a special QR scanning app on their smartphone to enable the technology.

Moving forward, brands are taking advantage of a number of more advanced technologies:

Beacons: a proactive, interactive experience

Used in conjunction with a mobile app, beacons allow marketers and retailers alike to send a mobile message to a consumer's smartphone at a "micro-location" within a store. This gives you the ability to deliver highly targeted, location-based content during the shopper's decision-buying process — sharing relevant product information, for example, or even guiding shoppers to different points around the store through meaningful content.

How beacons work: A small beacon device is placed in a store or other physical location. (Although "iBeacon", a term you may be familiar with, refers to Apple's design standard, it is interchangeable with the term "beacon.") When a beacon detects a smartphone and a synched app, it sends a transmission via Bluetooth, prompting the app to generate a push notification — a special message or offer — on the smartphone.

A plus for brands and retailers alike: While consumers already use their smartphones in-store to compare and research products, a beacon gives you the ability to play a greater role during this process. It is a more elegant solution than other mobile engagement options, such as the QR code, because the consumer doesn't need to scan or do anything else to receive the message.

The ability to micro-target within a store allows you to send a notification about the product while the consumer is standing at a display. And because a beacon has a range of about 230 feet, it can also encourage the consumer to walk over to a display located in a different part of the store.

Another inherent benefit of beacons is to mitigate "show-rooming," by delivering exclusive in-store offers. Consumers are encouraged to buy your product then and there, reducing the chance of their leaving the store to comparison shop online.

Potential drawbacks: It's important to remember that beacon technology is app-based. If you don't have an app or if your app doesn't have a large user base, you need to partner with an app that enjoys a broad base

of customers. You also need to keep accessibility in mind. For Apple mobile devices, beacons work only with iOS 7 operating systems and later. The technology works with Android, but the app must be open — at least in the background.

NFC technology: info at a touch

NFC stands for “near field communication” and is another way to connect the consumer to specific content on their smartphone. Unlike the QR code, which must be scanned, NFC works by touching an NFC-enabled phone to an NFC sticker tag, which is roughly the size of a quarter. NFC has seen a surge in popularity and is currently the primary method used by retail payment systems such as Google Wallet™ and Apple Pay®. For marketing, you can apply an NFC sticker tag to virtually any in-store materials, including displays, any type of signage or even product packaging. But again, the drawback at this point is education and technology. The consumer would also need an NFC-enabled phone for the technology to work.

The storytelling power of video

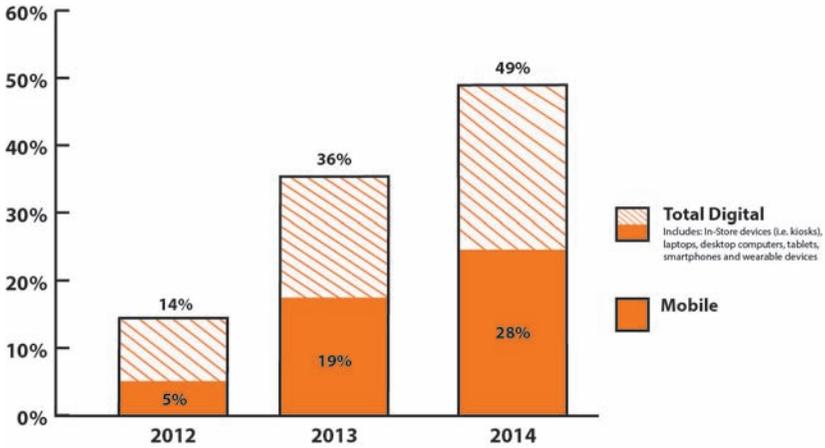
There is still no better way to tell your brand and product story than through an informative video. In a retail setting, video can be initiated through a video monitor built into your display. However, due to the cost of the monitor, this may be expensive. Also, maintenance of the monitor is vitally important — video displays are great when they work but, during store visits, I always encounter a video monitor that is not playing content. Instead, consider using one of the smartphone methods mentioned above for the consumer to experience your video content on their smartphone.

If you build it, they will come

Interactive displays with video are truly engaging at point-of-sale. Built-in monitors, tablets, touchscreens and the like are powerful tools to educate consumers and keep them actively engaged. Building a display of this nature does carry the burden of maintenance, and building an infrastructure and the content itself can be costly. But if these displays are executed properly, they become a tractor beam within the store, targeted at consumers — and a unique selling tool for retail sales personnel.

Growth of Digital Influence on In-store Retail Sales

Percentage of in-store retail sales influenced by the shopper's use of a digital device.



Data Source: Deloitte, May 2015

Empower retail sales personnel with knowledge

Salespeople tend to gobble up anything that can act as a “cheat sheet” to help them sell. Establishing an educational program for retail sales associates is a must. And while not every brand and retailer can find it within their budget to build an interactive display, there are still many tried-and-true — and cost-effective — ways to educate salespeople. Even something as simple as a pocket-sized reference guide will keep the associate on-message when it comes to your brand.

The consumer's path to purchase

Now that we've gone through some of the methodology, let's put ourselves in the shoes of the consumer. Let's say it's time for me to buy a new TV. I research online to learn the different technologies, but my focus is to look for value. Not something inexpensive *per se*, but I want to know I am getting good value for my money and not overspending for something I don't need. I walk into the store and hear, “May I help you?” — the greeting of a college-age person who is great with the “speeds and feeds” of each product, but does not have the practical experience to help ascertain which model is

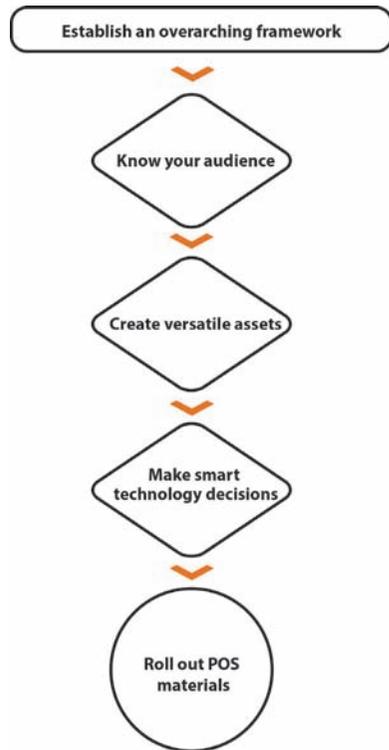
right for my needs. After spending a few minutes with him or her, I excuse myself to consult with my true personal sales associate: my smartphone. I narrow the offerings down to two choices, then scan product reviews on YouTube. Once I've made my decision, I also do quick price comparisons and notice I can purchase the product for \$20 cheaper online.

This is a win for the brand, but a loss for the retailer. Still, brick-and-mortar retailers are closing the gap, mainly by price-matching authorized online dealers and offering the best possible service, both in-store and with in-home consultations. And, of course, they have one major advantage: instant gratification. Why go home and order online when you can bring it home today? Overall, different types of consumers behave differently, but examining your customer base will ultimately dictate the best way to market to them.

In closing: the ABCs of increasing your ROI at POS

Some call point-of-sale “the moment of truth” — the last three feet where your brand is lined up directly against your competition’s, and the consumer ultimately decides which one to purchase. Even after marketers have educated consumers online and made big splashes with an advertising campaign, a consumer can walk into the store with one brand on their mind, but somehow leave with another. The fight is not over until the sale is won, so remember these things that influence the sale:

- **Aim your point-of-sale message simply and clearly to your target audience, communicating product benefits and new features in a way they will accept and understand.**



- Branding is important, especially in distinguishing your product from the competition's. A great POS impression raises brand perceptions.
- Consumers like to be engaged. So draw them in by creating displays with stopping power, then find ways to promote interaction with your display and product, such as by using smartphones.

Good luck in your pursuit of retail sales!

Sources:

¹ Google/Ipsos, "Consumers in the Micro-Moment" study, March 2015, U.S.

² Google Consumer Surveys, April 2015, United States, n=1130.

³ Google Consumer Surveys, April 2015, United States, n=365.



Kevin Janosz

Kevin is RITTA's COO and marketing communications authority — he is responsible for strategic planning, financial, and operational agency oversight, hands-on account direction and new business development. What his job description doesn't tell you is that Kevin is passionate about success-driven marketing. Back in the day, ad guru David Ogilvy wrote about creating advertising that "makes the cash register ring." In this day and age, whether it's online digital marketing, point-of-sale marketing, or mobile marketing, you can be sure it's part of Kevin's arsenal to drive brand success. Kevin uses this passion to help his clients, which include Samsung Electronics, Samsung Home Appliances, De'Longhi of North America, CORAVIN™ and ERA Real Estate. His degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing from Montclair State University, his years of experience, and his refined skills help Kevin know when, how and why consumers decide to buy.

ritta.com

Actionable Research

by Dan Nguyen

PRESIDENT & CREATIVE DIRECTOR, STONER BUNTING

RESEARCH HAS INCREDIBLE POWER in marketing. It boosts credibility, adds weight to arguments, and can even open the doors to budgets. In the right hands, well-designed research deepens marketers' understanding of their audience and provides the spark of insight that ignites creativity and lights the way to real business opportunities.

That is what we call actionable research.

Why "actionable"?

Because no one needs another binder gathering dust on a shelf.

An investment of tens (or even hundreds) of thousands of dollars should deliver insight and opportunities, not just pie charts, graphs, and tables full of information.

So what is the difference between information and insight?

When the state agency charged with preventing insurance fraud wanted to create a marketing campaign, they began by commissioning quantitative research to identify those most likely to commit that particular crime. The data analysis resulted in a fairly precise demographic profile: age, gender, income, family structure, job type. But that profile couldn't tell them anything about why such people committed fraud, or, more importantly, how to stop them.

To that end, a series of focus groups were held. Participants fitting the demographic profile were recruited with no knowledge of the topic being discussed. The conversation confirmed the quantitative study. No one in the group had a problem with committing acts that clearly fell into the category of insurance fraud. They gave the usual rationales: it doesn't hurt anyone; it's only a few hundred dollars; insurance companies have tons of money. So the questions proceeded to asking their reaction to such crimes being discovered.

What if their friends found out? What if their boss found out? No one really cared. Then they were asked — what if their kids found out? The room went silent.

The campaign that resulted from this research focused on the reaction of children whose parents were convicted of fraud, and it was the most effective marketing campaign in the history of the organization. But it took professionals with a history of uncovering opportunities to ask the right questions, interpret the answers, and turn information into insight.

Finding the perfect research

Every market researcher has his or her own favorite methodologies and will argue the merits of conjoint studies, focus groups, heat mapping, or whatever their particular pet may be.

The fact is, there is no silver bullet when it comes to research. Different approaches and methodologies reveal different types of information, and the best approach is generally a mix of methods tailored to the goals of each specific project. In most cases, that mix begins with qualitative research to establish context and understand the how and why of your audience's decision process. The information gathered qualitatively can then be verified through quantitative methods to help pin down specifics like what, where, when, and how much.

One of the biggest mistakes we see marketers make is jumping immediately to large quantitative studies without having enough background to know if they are even asking the right questions. It's easy to see how this happens. After all, data is reassuring. Numbers don't lie — right?

Consider this poll result shown on a recent Sunday morning news program. The question was "What does Memorial Day mean to you?" Given choices that included "Celebrating the start of summer," "BBQing," and "Shopping the sales," 79% chose "Remembering the fallen."

Given those options, is it any wonder so many chose the "right" answer rather than risk appearing selfish, shallow, or unpatriotic? It's simply human nature. We all want to put on the best face. But in cases like this, that desire to please can cast doubts onto whether the data accurately reflects reality.

A better gauge of what Memorial Day means might be to ask people how they plan to spend their holiday weekend. That's what YouGov.com did,

and found that only 9% of respondents said they would be visiting gravesites or attending services, parades or other local celebrations of the holiday, compared to 29% having barbecues and picnics, and another 29% getting together with family. The results paint a very different — and, one suspects, more honest — picture of Americans' relationship to Memorial Day.

Trust the professionals

The explosion of online tools like the ubiquitous SurveyMonkey.com has made conducting surveys cheap and easy. But like any tool, the quality of the work depends on the skill of the person wielding it. When it comes to crafting actionable research, who does it matters.

Marketers, researchers, and laypersons all have different perspectives and will approach research differently. Actionable research is part art and part science. Researchers trained in statistics and analysis without a marketing background tend to concentrate on the science of it, and are focused strictly on delivering data. Marketers with no background in research can bring too much bias to the project and lack process.

The most actionable research comes from those who understand both marketing and research. This allows them to connect the dots and to see beyond the data to assess the opportunity.

How they ask the questions is every bit as important as who is asking and what is asked. Everything from individual word choice to the order of the questions can bias the results.

Political opinion polls fielded by individual candidates or interest groups are full of these kinds of biased language. Generally, you can tell by the wording of the questions you are asked which side of an issue is surveying you.

Consider the difference between asking “Are you in favor of or opposed to making it legal for doctors to give terminally ill patients the means to end their lives?” and “Are you in favor of or opposed to making it legal for doctors to assist terminally ill patients in committing suicide?”

In a 2005 Pew Research survey, 51% of respondents asked the first version were in favor, compared to 44% of those asked the second version. While technically asking the same thing, the word choice colors the result.

Action requires insight

Data is only part of the research equation. Interpretation and analysis are essential to actionable research. This goes beyond the black and white analysis of the words spoken in a focus group or the numbers plotted on a graph to interpreting the nuances of the information based on the context.

A building products manufacturer commissioned a series of focus groups to get insight on how to effectively launch a new product to the commercial interior design community. One of their key questions was how important the issue of sustainability was when selecting products in their category.

After observing one group of designers, a client reported back to his manager (an enthusiastic sustainability advocate) that sustainability was indeed an important criterion for the product. The agency conducting the groups had to diplomatically explain that sustainability was not, in fact, a key issue. Yes, when asked directly whether sustainability was a consideration in their product choices, most answered affirmatively. However, earlier in the conversation, when asked the open-ended question of what their selection criteria were, there was no mention of sustainability. It was only when prompted that they agreed to sustainability. The interpretation was essential.

Actionable research demands an intellectual leap — the creative ability to make unexpected connections. What keeps it from being a blind leap is the marketer's expertise in the industry. Whether ice cream or insulation, in-depth understanding of the category, its distribution channels, target audiences and competitive landscape ensure that the leap begins and ends on solid ground.

Honesty is the best policy

Customer service professionals have it drilled into their heads that there is no “no” in their vocabulary. But presenting research results may well be the exception to that rule. Good research is not about using data to tell someone what they want to hear. Manipulating the outcome to support a specific position isn't research at all, and the opportunities that come from it are destined to fail if they have no basis in fact.

Information is neutral. Facts are not good or bad. Every piece of input adds to the greater picture of the situation and is something to learn from

and respond to. Hard as it may be to deliver, bad news will always be less costly than sugarcoating the truth or misrepresenting the results.

This most often becomes an issue in new product research. After all, if actionable research is about looking for opportunities, the results should focus on the positive, right? Not necessarily.

Take, for instance, the case of a kitchen and bath product manufacturer that was exploring the possibility of introducing a bidet to the American market. Wisely, they contracted an agency to conduct research to determine whether there was a market for the product.

Ultimately, the research showed that there were American consumers who were interested in the features and benefits of a bidet... BUT, the ideal consumer was elderly, disabled, African American, and female — all demographic categories disproportionately represented among the lowest socioeconomic levels. And the bidet was a luxury product that retailed at over \$1,000.

In this case, “bad news” saved the manufacturer from a disastrous marketing misfire that would have cost millions of dollars.

The road to actionable research

Now that we’ve explored the philosophy of actionable research, let’s take a look at the process. Actionable research always starts with two fundamental questions.

Question 1: What do you want to know?

Seems like a no brainer, right? Don’t confuse determining what you want to know with writing the research questions. The outcome of this step is areas of exploration. This lets you start with big thoughts and get your wish list out on the table. Areas of exploration can be as broad as identifying your target audience or as specific as learning how much customers are willing to pay for a new product.

There is no limit to what you can know. Good marketers and researchers both are curious by nature. So this list can get awfully long, awfully fast. However, in the harsh world of business, there is always a limit to what you can spend — in time and in dollars. Which leads us to...

Question 2: What are you going to do with it?

Do you want to evaluate the strength of your brand against competitors? Determine the size of the market for a new product? Test creative concepts? Understanding the ultimate use of the information allows the researcher to develop a plan and prioritize the areas of exploration.

Think how much differently you would approach a conversation with someone depending on whether you were looking for a new marketing assistant, a partner for doubles tennis, or a date for your high school reunion.

By focusing on the application from the beginning, you are in a much better position to get actionable insights, not just random information.

Asking Question 2 is useful on both a macro level for designing the approach to the research and the micro level when reviewing individual discussion guides, surveys, and questionnaires. It is tempting to want to use a research study as an opportunity to get as much information as possible, but evaluating every question by asking “what are you going to do with that answer?” will help keep the study as focused and effective as possible.

Once these two all-important questions have been answered, it's time to develop an approach based on those answers. Remember — there is no perfect research. Sometimes you need to do qualitative first, to understand the context and language of your audience, then follow-up with quantitative to support the qualitative findings. Other times, you can use quantitative research to identify your best target, then use qualitative to explore their motivation and mindset.

Every project is different, and what type of research you do when depends on what you already know, what you want to know, and what you are going to do with it.

Context is everything

You may have noticed words like “context” and “background” have appeared more than a few times in this chapter. When it comes to actionable research, the importance of context cannot be overstated.

If good marketing meets people where they are, it stands to reason that to create good marketing, you have to know where your audience is. And that means understanding where your product fits into the context of

their lives. Otherwise, you are developing a plan of action based on an unrealistic view of the importance of your product.

One marketer and researcher explains the importance of context this way:

The Potato Chip Story

If you asked me my favorite brand of potato chip, I would tell you Grandma Utz Kettle Cooked chips.

BUT... if you were to back up and start the conversation by asking me my favorite snack, you would learn that I am all about baked goods: cupcakes, cookies, sticky buns — can't resist them.

So then you might follow up by asking me if I ever enjoy salty snacks. At that point, I would tell you that when I am in the mood for a salty snack fix, tortilla chips and guacamole are my pick.

The diligent researcher would probe further and ask if I ever eat potato chips. Then you would learn that while I may eat them when they come with my sandwich at the deli or nosh on them when someone puts a bowl out at a picnic or party, I couldn't tell you the last time I went to the grocery store and bought a bag of potato chips.

But on these very rare occasions when I do buy chips, I buy Grandma Utz Kettle Cooked.

In each case, the subject honestly answers the questions asked of her. And in both cases, her favorite potato chip brand is the same. But the implications of this information to, say, the marketing director at the Utz company, are entirely different.

A final thought

Analyzing research requires a distinct combination of knowledge, experience and instincts. Gathering sound data is a science. And the ability to recognize the commonalities and the differences, to see the opportunity in the midst of the charts and graphs and focus group transcripts is an art. Actionable research takes both. And the most reliable route there is working with a professional who respects research, understands marketing, and is familiar with your target audience.



Dan Nguyen

Dan began his agency career as an Art Director in the early '90s, moving up on the creative side of the business with terms as Senior VP and Creative Director at Fahlgren Tampa and Lawler Ballard Van Durand in Birmingham before taking the helm at Stoner Bunting in 2007. The Home of Home and Building Products, Stoner Bunting Advertising specializes in research, marketing, and PR expertise for residential and commercial building product manufacturers.

As an agency owner with a creative background, Dan appreciates the business and the art of marketing. He embraces the power of great creative to build brands, while understanding that the best creative serves the needs of the business.

It is this dual perspective that has led to Dan's respect for the value of research and planning to the creative process. By uncovering insights into the mind of the customer, actionable research focuses everyone on the same target, helping the client make decisions and inspiring the agency to create smart work that gets results.

stonerbunting.com

The Consumer Purchase Cycle

by Jim Knutt

CEO, TROPIC SURVIVAL

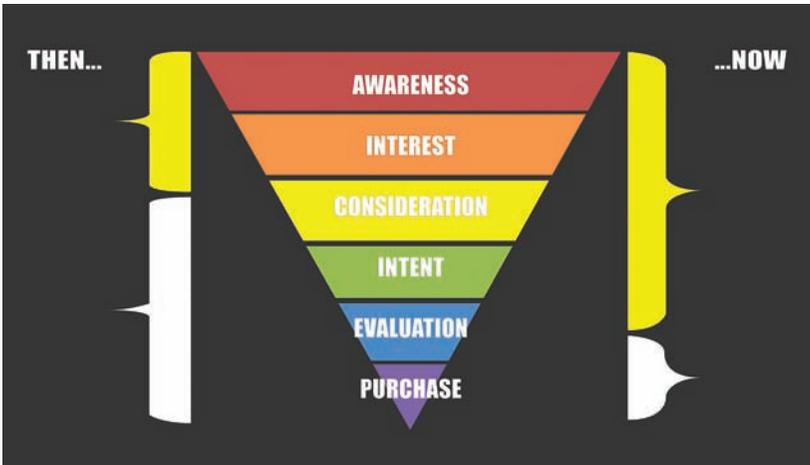
The funnel

OVER THE YEARS THE SALES process has been described using the traditional funnel of converting a consumer into a customer. This sales funnel illustrated a typical consumer's path-to-purchase with a linear decision-making model. Which moved from awareness to interest, followed by desire and intent to purchase. Digital has disrupted this model and opened the door to wonderfully data-rich options which we, as marketers, could only dream of back in the day.

The way we were

Once upon a time, the only real vehicles for brands to engage and connect with potential consumers were TV, radio, newspaper (ROP), direct mail, out-of-home (OOH/billboard/bus benches), and word-of-mouth (WOM). These traditional channels were the main influence points for consumers during their consideration phase. A brand's sales process revolved around utilizing primarily three media (TV, radio, newspaper) to raise brand awareness and pull consumers into brick-and-mortar stores, where a sales associate would close the deal.

Traditional media were the main touch points used to inform and excite consumers about a new product or brand (funnel level: AWARENESS). Once consumers experienced a trigger for a need or a want, a consideration set formed based on the options they were already familiar with. As they moved further down the conversion funnel, consumers typically visited a store and interacted with actual products and informative sales people with whom they formed a trusted relationship.



The way today

The sales cycle is no longer a linear path to purchase. There are an ever-growing number of ways to reach consumers beyond traditional channels and even more ways for consumers to reach brands. Now that consumers have these options at their disposal, they can enter the purchase funnel at any stage, regardless of previous exposure. Consumers are empowered to actively consume information while effortlessly engaging and jumping between purchase funnel levels.

Conversations between consumers and brands are just that, a two-way street. Today, about three-quarters of Americans own smartphones and almost half own tablets. So while consumers still watch TV and listen to radio, these forms of company-driven marketing are most often multitasked with another screen or activity. In order for marketers to meet consumer demands, consumer-driven marketing has become equally important. The purchase cycle has evolved into one with two types of influential touch-points, company driven and consumer driven.

The new conversion funnel: active not passive

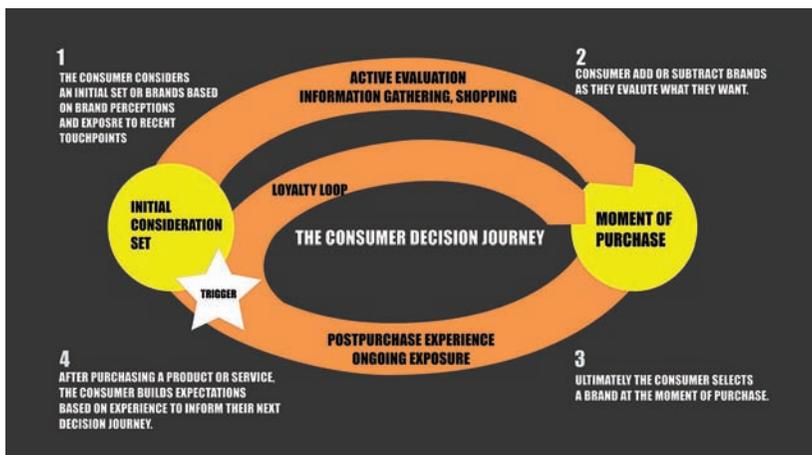
As a trigger fires, the consumer begins with a narrow initial consideration set based on prior-exposure, everything from company-driven marketing to independent discovery. This consideration set is much narrower than that in the traditional funnel. Once the consumer moves into the active evaluation stage, the consideration set increases based on the information and research

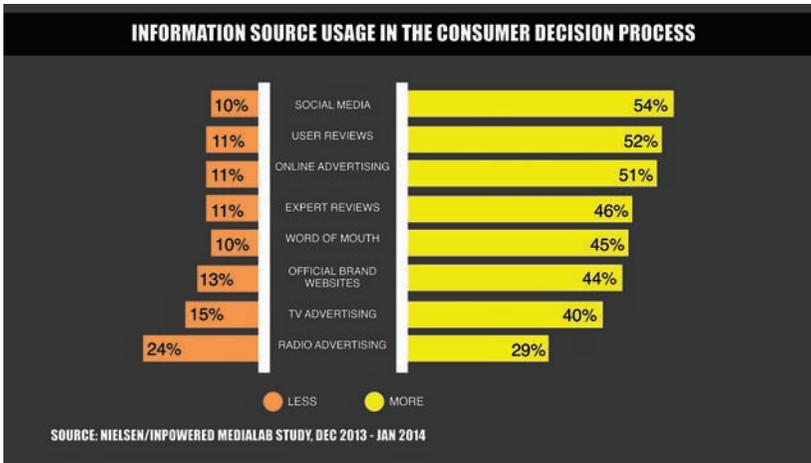
THE CONSUMER PURCHASE CYCLE

gathered through consumer-driven marketing and channels such as user-generated content, recommendations, peer reviews, informational videos, competitive alternatives, etc. This change is attributable to the inherent nature of today's digital era.

As consumers are increasingly bombarded with more and more brand messaging, they become acutely aware of company-driven marketing, which in turn, can quickly cause the opposite effect. They develop “banner blindness” and essentially tune it out. The new purchase cycle identifies two types of influential touch points, company driven and consumer driven. In the traditional sales cycle model, the emphasis was placed on company-driven marketing, reaching consumers during the pre-awareness stage to make it into their initial consideration set. This completely ignores the consumers' demands in the active evaluation stage. Now, much like with the traditional model — during the initial consideration set — company-driven marketing is highly influential on consumers. However, during the active evaluation stage, two-thirds of the influence of the most powerful touch points were consumer-driven such as word of mouth, recommendations from friends and family, and Internet research. This is where digital becomes the king of all influence.

Brands must create strategies encouraging people to talk about their product in order to create this word of mouth online, a so-called “world of mouth”. They need a presence on independent sites that people frequent for product research and must develop ways for people to talk about them in context.





Another important change from the traditional funnel is the notion that a brand's relationship with its consumers ends at the point of purchase. In point of fact, it is *the beginning* of an equally important relationship where the consumer can engage with the product and the brand in new ways and, in a perfect world, become a brand fan/ambassador.

Technology has revolutionized consumer behavior. As a result consumers are always on, always connected with others, always connected to information, and ultimately constantly distracted. The proliferation of digital content readily available at consumers' fingertips has resulted in an absolute reliance on it for almost everything, including purchase decisions.

Consumers rely on trusted content to make purchase decisions five times more than they did five years ago (inPowered and Nielsen Content Report, *The Role of Content in the Consumer Decision Making Process*, 2014). This puts the responsibility on brands to understand which content consumers trust and are influenced by.

The most influential touch points

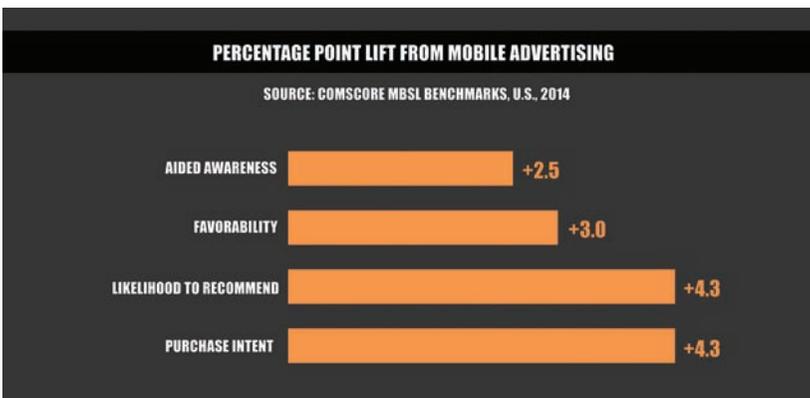
So, how do brands identify and solidify their presence at the most influential touch points? Today's consumers are greatly influenced by family, friends, peers, and what they read and see online. This makes owned media (media channels created by your business with content owned entirely by your business, including your website, email marketing, and white papers) and earned media (customer-generated publicity channels) as important as paid

media (your advertising and marketing efforts). Brands can no longer afford to neglect social or mobile, touch points must maintain consistency in brand messaging and value.

In order to influence the “always on” consumer, brands must embrace mobile as a seamless extension of their digital presence and utilize social media to network and communicate with their audiences.

The impact of mobile

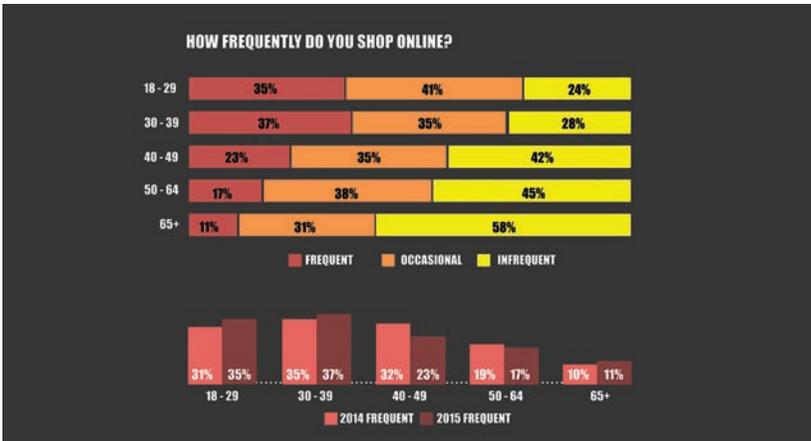
With about 75% of Americans owning a smartphone, mobile is no longer an upcoming trend; it is a necessity as both a venue for consumers seeking to connect with content and for brands looking to connect with them! Mobile’s connectivity allows brands to reach their new and existing consumers any time of the day, virtually anywhere. Illustrating the importance of a mobile-optimized website and digital presence is Google’s new Panda algorithm update, which penalizes non-mobile friendly sites’ search ranking.



Consumers are empowered, using mobile devices to be more informed about brands, to stay up to date on news and information, to watch videos, and for more efficient purchase decision-making. They also have an expectation of a positive, consistent, more personalized experience.

E-commerce impact & rapid ascent

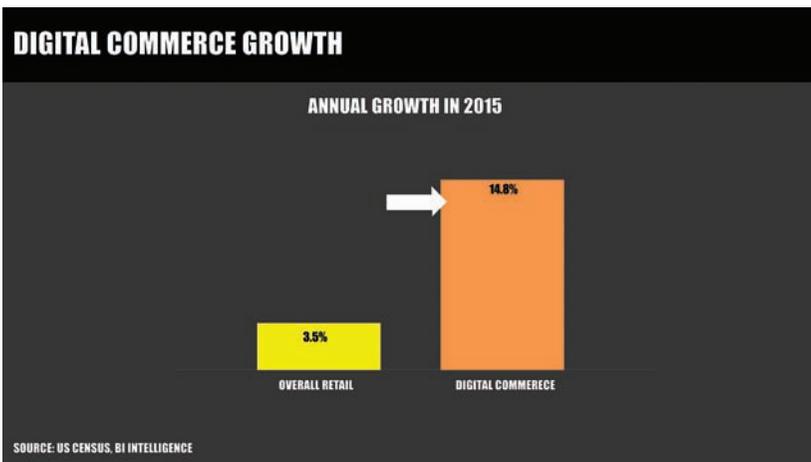
After texting, young adults spend the most time social networking and using the Internet on their smartphones. This shift from desktop to mobile in the digital marketplace has strengthened the need for brands to be visible and prominent in online searches (search engine marketing — SEM). Consumers

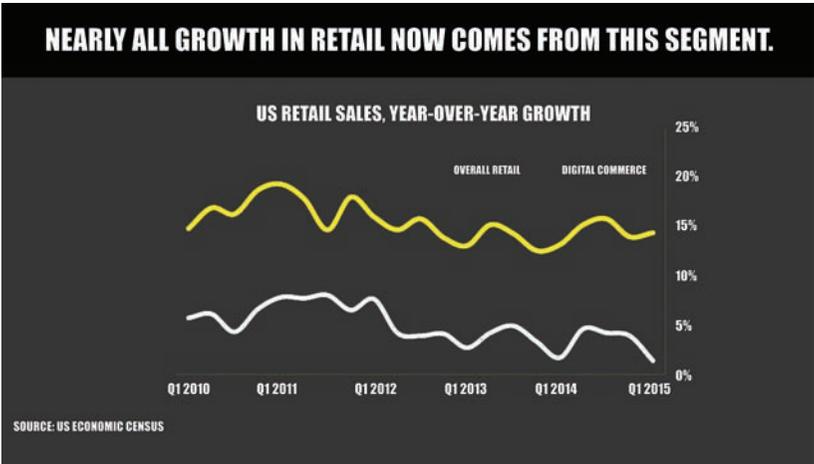


(Bronto Software, Consumers Tell All: Online Shopping Frequency, 2015)

are increasingly purchasing products straight from websites, be it on desktop or mobile. Online shopping retail sales are predicted to grow to \$370 B in 2017 from \$231 B in 2012 (CMO by Adobe, 15 Mind-Blowing Stats About Online Shopping, 2014). Interestingly, consumers are just as dependent on their digital devices when planning to purchase products in an actual brick-and-mortar as they are when online shopping, reinforcing the non linear nature of the current purchase funnel.

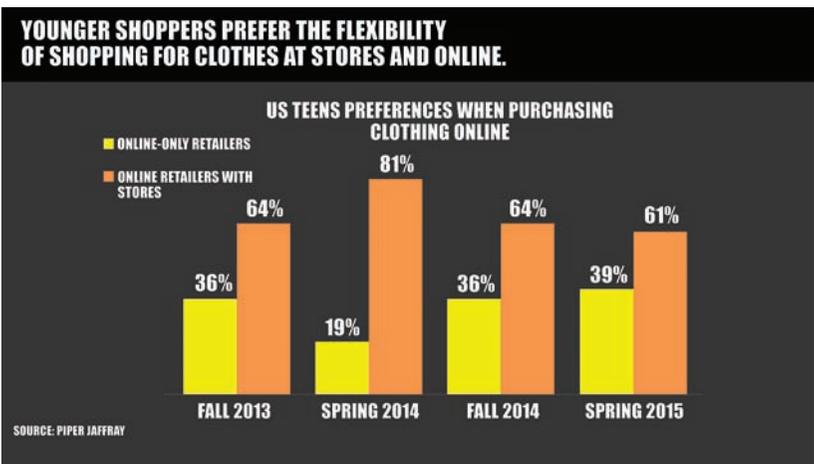
When looking at revenue generated from e-commerce versus in-store retail it may not seem like much. However, a closer look shows the exponential growth rate and upward trend of e-commerce compared with a downward trend for in-store sales.





Just as all media should work together, mobile is not only important in its impact on e- and m-commerce. Consumers’ use of smartphones prior to visiting a brick-and-mortar store is a very important point of influence for brands. Consumers use mobile to check for sales (43%) and competitive pricing (41%), to look up store information, browse an online store, and to check product inventory (Mobile Influence, MarketLive). For example, a mobile-optimized web presence with a responsive designed website that allows consumers to access information easily is imperative in keeping consumers engaged in your purchase funnel.

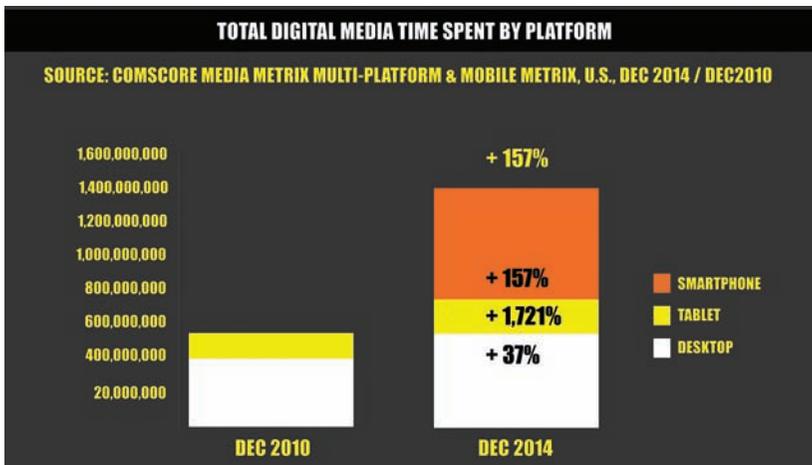
A seamless shopping experience must extend from the brick-and-mortar to the mobile site and everything in between. Digital interactions influence



36 cents to every dollar spent in the retail store, or approximately \$1.1 trillion total (Deloitte Digital, The New Digital Divide, 2014).

The impact of online search

In an age where consumers are more connected, informed, and proactive, search is as important as ever. There is no question, online searches are the most common starting point for product research on mobile devices, as reported by IAB 2015 “Rehabilitate” the mobile web report. Mobile search presence is an opportunity no brand can afford to miss. A study by G/O Media reported 80% of respondents conduct their digital “hunting” research prior to visiting a local business at least once per week.



The way people are searching has shifted, evidenced by the substantial growth of multi-platform and mobile-only Internet. Consumers use different devices for different online activities, often starting an activity on one device and finishing it on a different screen. Consumers expect a positive, screen-agnostic experience with brands that should extend from the TV to a tablet, and everything in between.

The impact of display advertising

Display advertising is highly effective in influencing consumers’ decisions prior to the active research phase. Making a great first impression can be extremely effective in delivering a large number of impressions to the right audience through targeting. While display ads help create awareness and interest, like all other digital strategies, it should be employed as part of a

comprehensive strategy and work synergistically with search. A study by comScore showed that the combination of search and display ads results in a sales lift of 119%.

Display is essential for branding consumer pre-awareness. With the maturation of behavioral, interest, in-depth demographic, psychographic, and location targeting, brands can contextually place their ads wherever their target consumer is online. Remarketing allows brands to be in front of their consumers wherever they are on the Internet, after visiting a brand's website. Regardless of whether a consumer is looking for home and garden products, or shoes at that very moment, interest in the brand has already been established and should be taken advantage of.

The impact of online video

Video remains the holy grail of online advertising, just as TV has always been the traditional media Goliath. Like TV commercials, online video benefits from the enormous power of storytelling, connecting consumers with a positive association that extends to the brand. The evocation of emotion is the ultimate goal and thus online video has the power to affect consumers at every level of the purchase funnel from awareness to purchase and retention.

The fact is people are spending a tremendous amount of their online time (1/3) watching videos (Insivia, 50 Must Know Stats About Video & Animation Marketing, 2013). They provide a wealth of information while building trust, whether it be through product demonstrations or customer testimonials. And they really work: video helps message retention and brand recall (viewers retain 95% of a message when they watch it in a video compared with 10% when simply reading a text (Insivia, 50 Must Know Stats About Video & Animation Marketing, 2013).)

Ultimately, videos are the best way to tell a story; it is not surprising that landing pages with videos lead to an 800% increase in conversions (*Funnel Science, Dallas, TX.*)

Videos are a goldmine when pushed on social media as they grow a brand's visibility, exponentially beyond its organic reach. They can be a powerful engagement tool, building viewer interactions while generating conversations and sparking interest in viewers.

When coupled with Facebook's massive, exponentially growing reach, robust targeting and engagement, video is king. Most of the viral content circulating online is videos, which makes sense since video is shared 1200% more on social media than text and links. By 2019, three-quarters of the world's mobile data traffic will be video (Cisco, Networking Index: Global Mobile Data Traffic Forecast Update 2014-2019 White Paper). The bottom line? Online video works.

The impact of social media

To date, 1.5 billion people are on Facebook with 1 billion of those users active on a daily basis. Thanks to social media, brands can benefit from consumers' constant connectivity. People turn to social networks to ask for advice and recommendations from families, and peers. Research shows 92% of consumers trust recommendations from friends/family more than any other type of advertising. Reviews on sites such as Yelp and Amazon provide evaluations that are more trusted by consumers than a trained sales person's pitch (Advertising Research Foundation Study, Digital & Social Media in the Purchase Decision Process, 2013).

Social media exponentially expands a brand's reach through earned media impressions. It also inherently affects organic ranking in searches. And while consumers are more acutely aware of branded content, they are becoming increasingly wary of paid media while relying more and more on earned media sources. Much like a sneak attack, social media platforms provide brands with a venue to disseminate valuable content directly in



people's newsfeeds where they are much more receptive to brand messaging. Creating valuable content and garnering consumer recommendations on social media are necessary ingredients to creating consumer engagement and forming deeper connections to a brand, cause, or community.

Social Media provides brands with a new and powerful pipeline, one that has a measurable impact on their purchase decisions. In 2013, about one-third of shoppers reported either discovering a brand/product or changing their opinion about a brand/product during journey to purchase because of social media (Advertising Research Foundation Study, Digital & Social Media in the Purchase Decision Process, 2013).

The power of social remarketing

Social remarketing triples engagement and doubles conversion rates by placing branded content and advertising within a consumer's timeline with interesting content they are already paying attention to and interacting with. How does that happen? Brands know who is interested in their product by utilizing behavioral and interest targeting. Brands ensure consumers can afford it with demographic targeting. And with social media remarketing brands can gauge engagement.

The way of the future

It is exciting to imagine what the future has in store for us with technology evolving at such a rapid pace. Successful advertising can never be allowed to be a tale of the tail wagging the dog. As the world moves at light speed towards mobile experiences, advertisers must continue to evolve native channels to reach consumers. The online experience will become hyper-personalized, able to anticipate and predict consumers' needs and actions in order to provide an experience complementary to their daily routine. As the lines of what consumers perceive to be advertising/marketing become blurred, it is important with the advent of new technologies that brands provide innovative and immersive marketing experiences. An example of a technology previously perceived to be light-years away, augmented/virtual reality is now a reality. Ultimately, a brand's survival will depend on its ability to quickly adapt and successfully integrate campaigns with new technologies, tactics, and horizons.



Jim Knutt

Jim Knutt founded Tropic Survival Advertising and Marketing, a multilingual advertising agency, with a client roster including La-Z-Boy, Lexington, Fairmont, Four Seasons, Leon Medical, the Cleveland Hospital, and more. In 2012, he founded CometAds, a digital marketing agency, after realizing clients of Tropic Survival needed new services to help them expand their brands digitally.

A recognized visionary in the field, Jim has won over 50 national and international industry awards. His experiences and passions include ad tech, electronic media, strategic and creative development, and digital marketing.
tropicsurvival.com

CONCLUSION

Now It's Up To You

I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD the cliché, “Change or Die.”

We prefer, “Change and Thrive.”

Yes, change is uncomfortable, but not more uncomfortable than being left behind. The eight chapters in this book have given you the mindset and some of the tools to make your shift more successful, but it takes one more ingredient: You.

Now, we're not naïve enough to suggest that successful change happens with the snap of your fingers. These changes can't be put in a microwave (like Minute Rice) for instant results. Change will happen and success will occur with trial and error and determining where the best fit is for marketing your product and service. And no, every fit isn't the best fit. One size does not fit all.

While any company can have a beautiful web site and “do” social media, not every company can have the foresight to see the seismic changes that will affect your bottom line.

We're convinced your success in the new marketing landscape is directly related to having a strong foundation and being able to crack the marketing code with the answers to these questions:

1. Does your company have a unique “story” to tell that makes it stand out from the competition?
2. Does your company offer a product, service, or experience that is not only of value, but memorable enough to break through the clutter so your target audience hears it?
3. Does your company employ a team of goodwill ambassadors — staff who have a passion for the company's culture, philosophy, and product?
4. Does your company understand what business it's really in? (Southwest Airlines isn't in the airline business, but in the business of providing people a safe, fun, memorable way to get to their destinations.)

5. Does your company understand the value of a customer and the exorbitant costs of gaining new customers versus retaining current ones? Is there a customer retention strategy?
6. Does your company know who its best customers are — not by demographics — but by their first names? How is your company rewarding them for their loyalty?
7. Does your team have an intimate knowledge of your product and an understanding of what's most profitable — in real dollars and cents?
8. Do your company and team strive to make a difference in your community, where your customers live and work?
9. Does your company have a “face” — a personality, CEO, president, or owner to whom customers can relate and readily access?
10. Does your company leave an everlasting impression with customers that creates memorable conversations and encourages repeat purchases?

Now it's your turn. Your turn to lead your company through the seismic shift in marketing. Your turn to develop your company into a category leader.

How to turn your company into a category leader

It's not the size of your company that determines the leader in your business category — it's your customers. They make the ultimate decision based on the feelings they get from interacting with your business.

Nobody remembers the also-rans or losers; everyone remembers. If you're committed to be the leader in your category — in the national or regional market place or even your local trading area, then let us know. The North American Marketing Alliance **northama.com** — eight great advertising and marketing agencies — can help you drive sales, convert leads, ring registers, and help you survive and thrive through the seismic shift in marketing.