



# Book The 24-Hour Customer

## New Rules for Winning in a Time-Starved, Always-Connected Economy

Adrian C. Ott  
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### Recommendation

No one has enough time today. In her heavily researched book, corporate strategist Adrian C. Ott explores this issue and its implications for businesses. She proposes innovative practices that transform consumers’ increasing lack of time into a fulcrum that can boost sales. Conscious of her readers’ time limitations, Ott provides handy “Two-Minute” capsules that summarize each chapter’s main points. *BooksInShort* recommends Ott’s timely advice and her new methodologies for increasing your sales while saving your customers time and trouble.

### Take-Aways

- People today have little time or attention for your advertising message.
- To overcome this, adopt a comprehensive “Customer Time-Value” mind-set.
- Systematically use “Time-ographics analysis” to develop and market your products or services to time-starved consumers.
- Determine how your products fit consumers’ priorities of “motivation (time magnets), habit (time on autopilot), convenience (time savings), and value (time minimized).”
- The motivation quadrant requires the most time and attention from consumers.
- Success in the habit quadrant depends on your products or services enabling consumers to “set it and forget it.”
- People who want to save time are ideal purchasers of products and services in the convenience quadrant. Fast-food restaurants and FedEx exploit this need.
- Companies that succeed in the value quadrant, such as Walmart, offer the best prices.
- Tout your offering’s “time benefits,” not its features.
- Time-Value mind-sets foster innovation, increased revenue and competitive advantage.

### Summary

#### So Many Choices, So Little Time

Consumers face a multitude of product choices, and customer loyalty is dwindling. People suffer so many demands for their time that companies have difficulty creating advertising and marketing that holds consumers attention. Shoppers increasingly protect their precious time and tune out anything overtly commercial.

“Time is not money. Time is more important than money.”

In this “media-rich, mobile, multitasking world,” companies must focus on and gain buyers’ attention and time. Consider Ty’s Beanie Babies, the extremely popular

stuffed animals. Beanie Babies eventually faced competition from Ganz, the company that manufactures Webkinz, a similar menagerie with an extra incentive: online avatars of each cuddly critter. Ty had a well-known brand name, a cheaper price and attractive channels for distribution. To compete with Webkinz, Ty developed a “Beanie Babies 2.0 virtual world.” But Ty could not displace Webkinz. Parents limited their children’s online playtime for Webkinz toys, and kids had no additional time for Beanie Babies.

“Countless dollars are spent on understanding customer preference, brand recognition and product satisfaction; virtually none is spent on customer time.”

Marketers should worry less about “customer preference, brand recognition and product satisfaction,” and more about consumers’ available time. Assessing the growing constraints on your buyers’ time and attention requires an organized, local framework. A new customer “Time-Value Innovation” approach helps you make the best use of your consumers’ time and attention. This mind-set addresses important questions: How can your company sell in a world of constant distraction? How can it develop opportunities via the Customer Time-Value orientation? How can it win customers? And what is the best way to hold onto customers despite competition?

## Exploiting Opportunities

Engineers at Nike noticed that runners near their campus in Beaverton, Oregon, used ear buds to listen to their iPods as they ran. So Nike worked with Apple to develop the Nike+ Sport Kit. It includes a wireless sensor “that tucks into the sole of the Nike shoe” and an iPod receiver that plugs into the music player. The sensor records “distance, pace and calories burned.” Although other products do the same, they do not offer a solution for the ubiquitous iPod. Nor do they link to Nike’s website, where runners can compare their exercise data to previous workouts and to other users’ statistics. When Nike upgraded customer interactions with this inventive application, its running-shoe market share jumped 13%. Nike differentiated itself by focusing less on the shoe itself and more on how runners spend time with the shoe.

“The cost of time has increased.” (Dr. Paul Romer, Stanford University)

Today, consumers spend less than 3% of their waking hours researching and purchasing products or services. The situation is not much better (10% to 15% of working hours) in the business-to-business market. Yet the market offers an ever-increasing number of products and services.

Invest some time and attention in analyzing your “Time-Value Tradeoff.” The value of your products and services must be greater than their price plus the time the consumer spends researching and buying. Many customers today refuse even to register for online free samples; it takes too much time.

## “Time-ographics Analysis”

Use a Time-ographics analysis to understand the time and attention a consumer will spend evaluating and possibly purchasing your product. Time-ographics is a four-quadrant framework that examines your customers under “motivation (time magnets), habit (time on autopilot), convenience (time savings) and value (time minimized).” Most marketers devote their efforts to gaining a position in the motivation quadrant, however this is not a stable position for many brands and is subject to attention entropy; customers lose interest over time unless a continual stream of innovation captures their attention. Consumers spend many hours each day in the habit quadrant – for example, driving to and from work – but habit activities take place on autopilot with little or no conscious thought or attention. Conversely, consumers spend minimal time (but give their full attention) in the convenience quadrant. That’s the whole point of convenience, be it fast-food restaurants or FedEx shipping. Price drives everything in the value quadrant, where consumers spend very little attention or time.

“Businesses are stuck trying to get through to customers that are actively avoiding them.”

Market your offering according to this Time-ographics analysis, using the most appropriate promotions; tout innovation and the item’s “time benefits” instead of its product features. Time-ographics analysis focuses on consumer behavior that prompts action. If consumers don’t rate your products highly in terms of the time-value tradeoff, they won’t find the time in their fragmented lives for your product. Four factors affect how consumers spend their time:

1. **“Time perception”** – People do not efficiently perceive how long it takes to do something.
2. **“Time preference”** – Buyers who like doing something (for example, looking at new cars) will spend more time at it. If they don’t like something (shopping for groceries, for instance), they will spend less time at it.
3. **“Time constraints”** – Harried shoppers with little time may ignore your product.
4. **“Trigger events”** – These moments prompt people to buy something.

“Dominating a window of time blocks customers from the competition.”

Where do your products fit within the Time-ographics framework? Which quadrant is most important for you? Establish a “context timeline” by asking such questions as: “How much time does the customer spend on a particular activity?” “How often?” “What is keeping her from spending more time?” “What might make her invest less?” What “competing activities” could displace your products in your customers’ lives? Examine your typical consumers’ attention spans. Do they multitask? Do they engage with multiple technologies concurrently (such as watching TV, surfing the Internet or talking on their cellphones)? Customers may be active in multiple quadrants at the same time.

“If it weren’t for the last minute, I wouldn’t get anything done.” (Anonymous)

Map your products to analyze your consumers’ propensities regarding time and attention issues. Plan how you can engage your clients in the future. Develop new time and attention parameters by using these three techniques:

1. **“Increase time value (or decrease time cost)”** – Develop “dwell time,” the period a consumer spends inside your store or at your website. Grocery store managers position such staples as bread and milk in the back so customers must traverse their outlets. Web retailers use “today’s deals” to hold visitors at their sites. Enabling “instant gratification” is another method. Online sellers put this idea to work by providing prequalified customers with “single-click” purchasing power.

2. **“Redefine time use”** – “Time slicing” is one way to do this. For example, Avelle rents luxury items such as Prada and Louis Vuitton handbags to fashion-minded clients who can’t afford upmarket goods but who enjoy having them for a short time.
3. **“Shift the purchase and consumption flow”** – Consumers typically move through these stages to buy goods: “awareness, consideration, preference” and “purchase.” But savvy companies now “integrate purchase into consumption.” That is how Amazon exploits its Kindle e-reader. Some firms now also transpose “the order of purchase and consumption.” For example, *The Wall Street Journal* lures new readers with free Internet sections while reserving “premium” editorial information for subscribers who pay for the service. Clearly, online technology offers novel and hitherto unavailable opportunities to sell products and services.

## “Time Magnets”

In a Time-ographics analysis, the motivation quadrant requires the maximum amount of time and attention from consumers to give your products traction. Maintaining such devotion over the long term is not easy. Instead, move the customer out of this quadrant to, for example, the habit quadrant, where purchase decisions take place automatically. To illustrate, a “subscription-based software product that automatically renews every month” is a habit. When operating in the motivation quadrant, engage with customers’ emotions and intellects. To do so, productively focus on one or more of three basic motivations: “peers” (acceptance), “power” (status issues), or “personal pursuits” (diet, investments, self-improvement, and so on).

## “Time on Autopilot”

You can score big in the habit quadrant if your products or services enable consumers to move ahead smoothly in their lives with little care or thought. Indeed, the less mental effort the better. You don’t want your customers stopping to consider alternatives. A good example is Google’s search engine. Most people are so accustomed to searching via Google that they feel no need to explore other options. BlackBerry is another notable “habit-forming product.” Products with no initial cost help consumers develop habits. So do those that feature automatic renewals or that enable customers to put them to use in “bite-sized time,” for example, Twitter, which delivers true “time-relevant value.”

## “Time Savers”

People who do everything at the last minute and those who want to become more productive are ideal purchasers of products and services in the convenience quadrant, which is all about saving time. Fast-food restaurants, FedEx and convenience stores exploit this need, which often takes the form of random purchases. Location and time-relevant value are common characteristics of companies within the convenience quadrant. Performing successfully in this quadrant means that firms can often move into the habit quadrant. You can use three methods to establish a sustainable “convenience position” for your firm:

1. **“Reduce search time”** – It’s all about being in the right location.
2. **“Reduce purchasing time”** – Amazon’s user-friendly “one-click” fast checkout plan is a prime example.
3. **“Reduce consumption time”** – Garde Robe functions as a “tailor or butler” for its clients, making sure it always provides them with the right clothing and accessories in perfect shape, ready and available for any occasion. With a deep knowledge of client preferences and an online database of the client’s wardrobe, Garde Robe reduces the time it takes for clients to locate and have their desired garment on hand. This knowledge and data inertia creates customer preference for Garde Robe’s offering over the competition’s.

## “Time Minimized”

Companies that succeed in the value quadrant, such as Walmart, offer the best prices. McDonald’s McCafé, which provides cheaper lattes than Starbucks, competes on price, not quality. It is “good enough.” Here are three approaches for competing in the value quadrant:

1. **“Expand category variety”** – Superstores are effective because they offer a broad range of categories in one shopping trip.
2. **“Synchronize with the buying trigger”** – Don’t overwhelm customers with too many buying options. Make it easy for them to decide.
3. **“Deploy agile promotions and offers”** – To develop effective sales campaigns, you need reliable data on how your buyers act.

“Owning the time and attention of the customer is a key way to create competitive advantage.”

In today’s frenzied, multitasking world, time-value is an increasingly important factor. Innovations you can use to exploit it for your product include:

1. Performing a Time-ographics analysis concerning “context and opportunities.”
2. Evaluating “time-boundary strategies.”
3. Developing “product adoption and market traction” through the application of “time-value tradeoffs” and tools.

“For innovators and marketers, it is not about the time value of money, it is about the money value of time.”

Develop and introduce innovative commercial offerings that leverage the time-value dynamic. Make time and attention your watchwords “from product development to packaging and pricing, to sales, to consumption, to customer service, to end-of-life.” Perform a “portfolio analysis,” plotting your products on the Time-ographics framework. Perform a “customer time and attention audit.” Relate sales and marketing expenses to “customer time.” Consider where your company can innovate in order to put customer time and attention issues to work for you.

## About the Author

Corporate strategist **Adrian C. Ott** is founder and CEO of Exponential Edge Inc. She regularly speaks at universities and industry events and has contributed to *Fast Company*, *Strategy & Leadership Journal* and other major publications. Prior to founding Exponential Edge, she was a Hewlett-Packard executive for 15 years. She

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