



# Book UnMarketing

## Stop Marketing. Start Engaging.

Scott Stratten  
Wiley, 2010

---

### Recommendation

Traditional marketing strategies have lost steam as social networking and other tools provide companies with more options for engaging directly with potential and current customers. The “UnMarketing” way encourages connecting, listening and engaging. Scott Stratten delivers his unmarketing advice in a series of vignettes written in a personable, humorous style. Though the author breaks little new ground here, *BooksInShort* recommends his entertaining stories, examples and how-tos. They perfectly illustrate how to stop marketing and start unmarketing to make friends, attract new business and retain current customers.

### Take-Aways

- Customers prefer to connect to a company’s human aspects.
- “UnMarketing” means building relationships by engaging with your market in an authentic, natural way.
- Social media let people get to know each other and hold conversations online.
- People will talk about your company and brand whether you join the conversation or not.
- Using social media, businesses can garner detailed feedback from customers.
- Client experience comes from engaging with your entire firm, including employees.
- Happy customers provide your best marketing because they promote your business through word-of-mouth.
- Salespeople must engage positively with everyone or risk losing sales.
- Even with sound unmarketing, you still need a great product or service to succeed.
- You are your company’s most important asset, so be genuine and transparent.

### Summary

#### Create Customer Relationships with “UnMarketing”

Relationships build businesses. Unmarketing discards cold calling and other traditional techniques and embraces a method based on connecting and engaging. Unmarketing lets you gain trust and eventually turn prospects into customers.

No business instantly earns trust. Marketers advertising in the yellow pages hope customers will choose their company out of all the competitors listed. But why would prospects select a company they don’t know? A business applying unmarketing may instead suggest that prospects subscribe to an email newsletter or visit a blog for advice. This allows potential customers to get to know a firm and develop sufficient trust for the next step: a complimentary consult.

“People don’t care about your business until they know you care about them.”

Consider small-scale free offers. Which would more likely entice you to try a new restaurant: an ad or an invitation to sample a select dish for free? There is an initial outlay of costs and resources involved in inviting nearby residents for a limited seating tasting. But if they love the food, they’ll come back. An ad can’t convince them to pay for food they’ve never tried.

“You need people who will not only engage with others, but want to, because it shows.”

An artist who engages prospective clients doesn't sit on the sidelines hoping an onlooker will fall in love with the art and buy it on the spot. The unmarketing artist asks prospects to sign up for an email that gives subscribers a preview of new art. This small commitment is a good first step in building a relationship, and it gives the artist permission to follow up. The artist can then thank the prospect for stopping by, enclose a few pictures and request feedback, thus building the relationship.

## **Working with Social Media**

Posting ads on Twitter and asking people to join your Facebook page doesn't build online conversations. Such activities send the wrong message and won't produce any return on relationships (ROR). To join the online conversation the right way, help others, respond to their blog comments and solve the problems they mention in their Twitter messages (tweets). No one – companies included – can control what happens to a message online. And people will discuss your company whether you participate in the conversation or not. So be proactive and join in.

“Customers buy first from people they know, trust and like.”

To compel people to listen, work on building a platform using three steps: “traction, momentum and expansion.” To employ traction, start and join conversations on a regular basis. To connect with an ongoing conversation, ask questions, provide answers and share helpful resources.

Once you connect with people and they feel comfortable communicating with you, move into the momentum stage of your platform. This is where you shift relationships outside of the online social network and manage customer expectations. For example, Vistaprint [a maker of business cards, signage and other collateral print materials] has customers worldwide. Vistaprint alerts its followers when the company signs in and out of Twitter so customers don't feel ignored after Vistaprint has signed off for the day.

“Blogs and tweets rank very well in search engines, and word of mouth is as easy to start as a single tweet.”

The final phase of building a platform is expansion, which entails continuing the conversation elsewhere online – for example, you can use a blog that engages readers with its information and comments.

## **Dealing with the Negative in Social Media**

Negative publicity spreads quickly in social media, but your company can recover. The first step is to monitor social networks continually for any mentions and respond to them. For example, a Tufts University student used Twitter to complain about a bad food item from the school's food service. The university's dining team caught the tweet, apologized and asked questions. This immediately calmed the student who accepted the response and moved on. Tufts listened, acknowledged and engaged.

“Twitter is a community, a conversation, not a pitch platform.”

You must reply intelligently. Responding without showing understanding can be more harmful than ignoring a complaint. A coffee shop customer wanting to hang out and work on his laptop expressed frustration on Twitter about the shop's lack of electrical outlets. The shop's online spokesperson responded, “We are in the coffee business, not the office business. We have plenty of outlets to do what we need.” This conversation took place publicly on Twitter, and it undermined the coffee shop's reputation.

“It's not about how many followers you have, but your engagement with them.”

Such incidents justify the need for your company to heed online conversations. You will benefit from the time and attention spent responding to what you learn directly from your consumers. For instance, an unhappy pizza delivery customer tweeted about a disappointing experience. The company responded quickly and went the extra mile by creating a videotaped apology. The film clip went viral and resulted in turning a bad situation into a publicity coup.

## **Wrong Ways to Use Social Media**

Social media are not meant for constantly linking to your content or repeating another person's positive tweet (“retweeting”) about your company or other overtly commercial actions that reek of advertising. This communicates that you're interested in yourself and you don't care about engaging others. Be conscious of the implications of your content. For instance, messages that say “click here to get more followers” or “sign up for a fat camp event” reflect poorly on your brand. Posting statements about politics or religion also can affect a company's reputation.

“Give people enough value on your site that they want to stay in touch and learn even more.”

Don't use social networking to demand reciprocal endorsements or universal support for your cause. You wouldn't write a testimonial for someone you don't know, and neither will anyone else. Using the Internet to unleash anger is going to waste your time and can possibly damage your reputation.

“By building trusting relationships with people, you have at your disposal a potential large group of experts who can give you feedback when you need it most.”

Interacting through social media a few minutes every day is more effective than a few hours once a week because the timing of your communiqués matter. No one expects instant replies, but a delay of more than a few days makes your firm look unresponsive.

## **The Right Ways to Use Twitter**

A tweet takes seconds to create and seconds to fall off the radar. So use Twitter often and consistently to improve your chances of being heard. How much you tweet doesn't matter. Respond when you can assist others or provide tips that others will retweet.

“When people complain to you, they are first looking for validation, not compensation.”

It's OK to talk about yourself and your activities, even those that have nothing to do with business, on social media platforms. Such tweets tell others why they should get to know you better. Using a photo of yourself instead of a corporate logo humanizes you and your organization. A realistic photo will help people recognize you when you attend events with other social networkers. A staged or inauthentic photo will only hurt your image and your business. Always strive to be as natural and true to your own personality as possible.

“We are a very forgiving culture if you own up to your mistakes.”

Offering to send free products to influential social media users can help or hurt your firm, depending on your approach. Personalize your messages and encourage influencers to provide honest reviews. Social media marketers at one firm found that they could measure the results of their campaign by looking at the number of times people talked about their product before and after the campaign.

## **Your Blog and Newsletter**

Websites play a vital role in your social media strategy because they allow people to learn more about a company. To share information on a website and to keep its content fresh, create a blog with consistently high-quality posts, but don't become paralyzed by trying to create perfect blog post.

“Satisfied customers are the best way to market your business, because they are the ones that become your word-of-mouth army – they are your customer evangelists.”

Businesses also can give away knowledge through an email newsletter, but many fail to draw consumers because they send newsletters containing only sales pitches. Like social networking messages, newsletters need to deliver information and be engaging. A website is a good place for firms to post testimonials from actual satisfied clients or your organization's product or service. Be aware that the US Federal Trade Commission has changed its guidelines regarding testimonials. So if you operate in the US, be sure your website complies with those regulations.

## **Employee Engagement**

Bringing in a new customer takes more effort than retaining a current one, so make sure you keep your existing clients happy. Send out a “Stop Start Continue” survey asking patrons what they think your firm should stop doing, start doing and continue doing to meet and surpass their expectations. When the survey responses come in, follow up by acknowledging and thanking respondents, and discuss the feedback.

“Even if you delete something on the web, the Internet never forgets.”

Your staff members can reach out to consumers by positioning themselves as experts, and by sharing useful content through audio, video, writing, seminars, teleseminars, telesummits and e-books, among other vehicles. A TV repairperson, for instance, can explain how to buy the right TV, while a chiropractor could give tips for doing stretches to avoid injuries. The trick is to apply the three *P*'s: “point, prove it, perform it.” Pointing identifies the key idea, proving backs up the idea with an example, and performing explains how to implement the idea.

## **Customer Service**

Companies make mistakes, and people generally forgive them. But if customer service changes for the worse and errors persist, the company won't hold on to its customers. For 20 years, author Scott Stratten started his morning by buying coffee from the same place and ordering it the same way. Eventually, he noticed that the employees didn't make his coffee correctly. These changes exacerbated his irritation about other inconveniences – the shop wouldn't take debit cards and the coffee came with an awkward lid – so he started buying his coffee at McDonald's. McDonald's offered more drive-through locations and accepted debit cards. Most customers won't complain. Like Stratten, they'll simply leave.

“I was in your store, you've got me through the door, what can you do to make sure that when I leave, I will come back later?”

Zappos, an online shoe retailer, is known for excellent customer service. It earns consumers' trust by allowing them to return unsatisfactory shoes – no questions asked. FreshBooks also emphasizes customer care: The firm requires all new employees – no matter what their position – to work in customer support for at least two months.

“If you believe business is built on relationships, make building them your business.”

Walmart has a policy that all employees must greet every nearby customer. If your business has a similar policy, follow through on it or else customers will view your company as inauthentic. “People don't care about your business until they know you care about them.”

## **Creating Something That Goes Viral**

Viral marketing – the active buzz that happens when a message quickly spreads through any medium – is a good thing. To have a shot at going viral, first determine the type of message you want to use. It should have four characteristics:

1. Your message should be funny, have a wow factor or stir people's emotions.
2. It should not be just about you.
3. Define success. Your goal should be concrete, such as creating a list, building customer relationships or making sales.
4. Pick the right medium for the message, such as Flash video, live video, streaming video or social media.

No one can predict what will go viral. You want to make sure that, whatever happens, your company's technology is ready. A server or email newsletter service can crash if too many people try to view a video or subscribe to the service at the same time. Set an appropriate budget and plan for scalability so you can catch every opportunity.

## About the Author

**Scott Stratten**, president of UnMarketing.com, is a consultant whose clients' videos have garnered more than 60 millions views online.

---

---