Book Sticky Marketing

Why Everything in Marketing Has Changed and What to Do about It

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Recommendation

As the subtitle of this book states, "everything in marketing has changed." Marketers should no longer concern themselves with the previously undisputed principles of unique selling propositions (USPs), client benefits, positioning, local competition and even superior service. Social networks have redistributed power into the hands of the consumer. Now, to make your brand attractive, you must take the focus off the transaction and provide value, create an experience and join in the online conversation. Grant Leboff thoughtfully outlines the new, "sticky" method of marketing, explaining why "customer engagement" reigns supreme. He lays out the ABCs of "sticky marketing," including helpful summaries at the conclusions of each chapter. *BooksInShort* recommends that all marketers give this a thorough read and refer to it often.

Take-Aways

- The Internet revolutionized communication and, as a result, has made traditional marketing methods obsolete.
- Consumers now have easy access to information and an abundance of choices.
- The "customer engagement" model is a holistic, reciprocal marketing method.
- To gain customers' attention, provide value and become a trusted source of information.
- Use "Problem Maps," a strategic tool, to identify issues that matter to your customers.
- You want people to value highly the experience surrounding your product or service.
- Boost customer engagement with "partnerships, content, positioning and the emotional selling proposition" (ESP).
- Businesses must participate in the online conversations their customers are having.
- Encourage customer interaction by soliciting "user generated content" (UGC).
- In this age of "personalization," companies must cater to each individual's requirements.

Summary

Business as Usual? No Such Thing!

Since the introduction of the Internet, the ways that a company interacts with customers, conducts business, and markets products and services have completely changed. Not since the invention of the printing press has an industrial advance so revolutionized communication. The printing press allowed one person to communicate with many. Subsequent technological advances, such as radio and television, elevated this capacity. The Web provides "many-to-many" communication. Companies that first recognized this new outreach quickly surpassed those that didn't, no matter how big or established their brands. For example, Yellow Pages was

the search destination of choice for nearly a century; Google now dominates online searches.

> "The customer is no longer king, but your partner."

In "one-to-many" communications, those who controlled or had access to a media distribution channel, such as television, radio or newspapers, were in charge of the content circulated to the masses. Those who sold products and services bought access by purchasing advertising time or space. Receivers of the information had few ways to respond. Now, the Internet provides everyone with a channel of communication. Individuals are creating their own distribution networks through social media outlets such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube. Brands and media moguls no longer control information. People speak among themselves and decide independently what they think of a company's products and messages. Access to the masses is relatively inexpensive, putting small businesses on a par with large corporations.

Shout Out

In the past two decades, access to information has skyrocketed, as have consumer choices in every product and service segment. Prior to the explosion of media outlets and the Internet, companies would "shout" their messages at the public by purchasing advertising or by reaching people in their homes via direct mail or phone campaigns. Consumers tolerated companies shouting at them because they wanted the information. If they were in the market for a car, for example, they might pay attention to ads from local car dealerships, regardless of how pushy or obnoxious their commercials.

> "Marketing is no longer a means to an end, it is the end in itself."

Now people can find information they desire at a click of the computer mouse. Geography, time, day and accessibility no longer limit product and service availability or choices. This abundance offered at the customer's convenience creates a low tolerance for intrusive messages. Even carefully constructed advertising doesn't wield the same influence it once did. People take their cues from their peers on their social networks or from their own research on the Internet. Shouting won't bring customers to your door; they'll find you at their choosing.

The "Funnel," Upended

The funnel approach is the basis of traditional marketing. The objective was to shout a message at as many people as possible via a range of ad vehicles. An advertiser considered a campaign successful as long as it recouped its costs. The funnel worked only when consumers had limited access to information and limited choices. But reaching customers this way does not give them "value." The idea of delivering value is not new to marketers. In 1983, marketing guru and professor Leonard Berry invented the phrase "relationship marketing" to describe engendering customer loyalty by fulfilling consumer needs through service and personalization. The goal of relationship marketing is the transaction, with emphasis on client retention.

> "Marketing today requires keep[ing] as many people engaged as possible."

Today's new, better approach is "customer engagement," a holistic, reciprocal marketing method. When you provide consumers with something of value, they give you their time. To determine if your offer has value, always ask yourself, "If I were my customer, would I give up my time for this?" The transaction is secondary to the value offer. You hope that potential customers will, over time, come to respect and trust your company. Then, when they want the product or service you sell, they will consider your firm.

> "Conversations are happening online, with you or without you, and power has shifted from companies to the public."

The competition for customers' attention is fierce. If your value offerings gain notice, you are in a better position to earn their business. The new model of "return on engagement" (ROE) marketing has usurped the traditional approach that emphasized "return on investment" (ROI). Now "sticky marketing" has turned the funnel upside down.

> "We are no longer passive receivers of messages, but active players in the creation of that information."

Reach out to people in the virtual places they visit, such as websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the like. Pay attention to online conversations about your product or service. A good quality data capture system is crucial to learning about your customers. As you get to know and understand your clients, you'll be better able to communicate in ways they find relevant and valuable. That is how you become an entity they trust and use as a resource.

"Problem Maps"

Experienced marketers are familiar with promoting a product or service and touting how it satisfies buyers' needs. This approach remains fundamentally "transactional," so it's useful only to someone contemplating a purchase. Instead of benefits and transactions, sticky marketing emphasizes the value of your product or service. In other words, "Ask not what your marketing can do for you, but what your marketing can do for your customer."

> "The reality is that more marketing messages are created by the public than by marketing departments."

While benefits may be top-of-mind when consumers consider a purchase, a more effective approach is to identify the problem they want to solve. For example, a person who is not in the market for a car might still care about improvements in fuel consumption. By thinking in terms of solving problems, you can deliver messages that are on target and provide greater value, while building credibility and trust with prospects who will turn to you when they are ready to pull out their wallets.

> "It is no longer what companies say about themselves that matters; it is what others say that really counts."

"Problem Maps" are strategic tools that allow you to identify concerns that are relevant to your target market. Creating a Problem Map helps you understand the issues your customers face and how you can help solve them. The map is a 16-box matrix, with four "headline problems" listed across the top. Beneath each problem, record

three challenges people experience as a result of that problem. For example, a phone answering service might create the following Problem Map, speaking for its potential business clients:

- **"Headline Problem 1** – I need my calls screened, but cannot afford [an assistant]."
- **"Resulting Problem A** – I end up wasting valuable time on calls I shouldn't take."
- **"Resulting Problem B** – I miss important calls, which annoys my customers."
- **"Resulting Problem C** – I struggle to manage my time properly."

It's the Experience that Matters

As goods became commoditized, companies offered better service to differentiate themselves. However, the Internet's ability to provide more choice and convenience essentially commoditized service itself. What people now value is the experience surrounding your product. For instance, two restaurants might offer similar meals at a comparable price point. One of the restaurants offers a beautiful view and, therefore, provides a better experience.

> "Marketing today is not about delivering clever messages but about having good conversations."

The restaurant with a view might offer patrons a "romantic experience" by creating an attractive menu, offering a date night special, developing a cozy ambiance or featuring live music. It might partner with florists, day spas, chocolatiers or jewelers to provide a complete immersion in romance. Such strategic partnerships are a crucial aspect of sticky marketing, allowing companies to engage with consumers and deliver value.

> "The Internet is a world of sharing and transparency."

Service goes in one direction, while experience is interactive and goes two ways. The customer must buy into the experience for it to be effective. The Internet provides a wonderful vehicle for people to participate, interact and become involved by commenting, offering suggestions, reviewing products or even criticizing. Businesses should encourage consumer contributions, or "user generated content" (UGC), by providing forums for such interplay. Some companies solicit opinions from the public and incorporate that feedback into their products.

> "The key to engagement is always to put the customer first, by making sure that all communication is relevant and provides value."

Previously, marketers identified "unique selling points" (USPs) to differentiate their products, gain notice and make their goods appealing. Now companies must makes themselves attractive by creating an image for their products or services based on "customer engagement points" (CEPs). These engagement points are multidimensional and happen through a variety of vehicles on different levels.

> "In the technological world, one of the scarcest resources available is customer attention."

Build CEPs in any of these four spheres:

- **"Partnerships"** – Form reciprocal alliances with other businesses to enhance the customer experience.
- **"Content"** – Provide relevant, applicable, interesting content through various channels such as a website, YouTube, email and RSS feeds.
- **"Market position"** – Become a specialist and trusted advisor in your market segment.
- **"Emotional selling proposition" (ESP)** – Identify the feelings your product or service evokes. Do you merely sell chocolate, or do you sell indulgence in the form of chocolate?

The Vocal Majority

The term "silent majority" means little now that most people have a platform from which to share their views and opinions. Blogs, Facebook and Twitter make everyone a marketer. At any moment, people may be online, discussing your product or service. Smart companies listen carefully to conversations on social networks about their work. Their customers become their business partners or, at times, collaborators.

> "Benefits are benefits only when you are ready to buy."

Companies can solicit UGC in many forms, requesting feedback about design, color and delivery, or asking for ideas and proposals. Customers who participate feel an emotional investment and an attachment to a brand. For example, Lego developed a "design by me" website which encouraged users to create Lego designs, some of which Lego produced and sold.

> "By thinking in terms of problems that your customers face, it is far more likely that your communication will resonate with them."

People trust communications from other customers more than they trust corporate marketing messages. Every discussion about your product or service contributes to or detracts from your brand image. Companies can't control this conversation, but their marketers can take steps to protect their image and maintain their reputation by providing worthwhile content, building reliability and reinforcing their expertise.

> "Giving customers an increasing influence over the products or services your company offers can become part of the experience itself."

Companies can no longer use spin to shape a message. Customers will quickly ascertain the disingenuousness of the communication and share criticisms of it on their social networks. Businesses have no choice but to be authentic, genuine and transparent. Because customers want to experience, interact and engage with your brand, they need to trust your company's values and beliefs before they risk an emotional investment.

A Wealth of Abundance

Product scarcity and geographical limitations are outdated concepts. When businesses had only a handful of competitors, they were secretive about product innovations, resources and marketing. Today, scarcity exists in few industries, and consumers can find nearly anything they want online. Companies must cater to each individual's requirements in this age of "personalization." For example, people will no longer pay for an entire CD if they only want to hear one track.

"Experiences are more three-dimensional than products or services."

The result is increased specialization at one end of the spectrum and "no frills" mass marketing at the other end. Professionals who were once competitors might find it beneficial to pool their resources and collaborate. For example, accountants working in the same area might want to establish niches, such as small businesses or tax work, to avoid competing for the same customers. They may also want to cooperate by mutually referring clients who don't fall into their specialized areas. Businesses can work together on a project basis in an effort to deliver customized products and experiences.

About the Author

Grant Leboff wrote the bestseller *Sales Therapy*. He is on the advisory council of The Global Marketing Network and has contributed articles to the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent* and the *Financial Times*,