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ENGAGING MARKETING MINDS

MAY/JUNE 2019

LANE CHANGE

THE GRAND OLD ART OF PIVOTING

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REFOCUS

There are countless stories of disruptive start-up businesses. Netflix, Amazon, Uber, to name a few. Just about all of them were considered technology plays. One of the results of all technological innovation is that leaders become more paranoid about the competition. Most executives are overly concerned with the competition regardless of size. They consider start-ups as abrasive disruptors that change the norms of business. In fact, most leaders are conditioned to focus strategy on the firm, analyzing the competitive landscape and responding to competitors. We even love using analogies around sports and war to define our mission.

Our addiction to focusing strategy on the competition is most likely driven by available data. In other words, it is pretty easy to see what our rivals are doing and a lot less complicated than trying to understand customers. But real innovation and real disruption emanate from the customer and not from keeping tabs on the competition.

Focusing on competitors may have worked well in the past and still has some merit, but it won't carry the day in a world driven by disruption. Businesses—led by the core marketing minds—would do better to stop focusing on “beating the competition” and return to the basics of business, which are rooted in acquiring and retaining clients.

Peter Drucker once said, “The purpose of a business is to create a customer.” This seems pretty straightforward, but we have become conditioned to concentrate our collective energies elsewhere. Today, we believe that a new era of customer-centric thinking is about to take hold. And we want to be at the forefront of it.

Many executives get overwhelmed because they are immersed in competitive strategy. So, we believe it is a great time to pay attention to value from the client standpoint in order to determine what really matters. Simply put, it is time to refocus on the customer.

In this issue, we talk more about client focus in “Lane Change,” a story that focuses on the grand old art of pivoting. In our second feature, “Tip of the Tongue,” we make an argument that awareness is the most critical part of the sales and marketing funnel. Getting the client to notice you is the first step to seeking understanding and creating real value.

Enjoy the issue and warmest wishes,



Gina M. Danner, CEO



Deep Sea Learning

05



Got a minute

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REAL INNOVATION AND REAL DISRUPTION EMANATE FROM THE CUSTOMER AND NOT FROM KEEPING TABS ON THE COMPETITION.

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ickey and Minnie Mouse. Donald Duck. Goofy. Winnie The Pooh. Tigger. You can come up with scores of reasons as to why Disney World is known as the happiest place on earth. Who could walk away not feeling that way? Look at the Disney business model. When you enter the gates, it's like entering another world—40 square miles (roughly the size of San Francisco) of attractions for people of all ages and nationalities. Resorts, restaurants and shops galore.

And for those who have made the trek, you might also notice something else—it may be one of the most connected places on earth.

While the rides and attractions have mostly remained the same over the years, technology has redefined how Disney connects with its customers. In the old days when you visited Disney, you'd purchase a ticket at the entrance to the park and then decide which rides and attractions to visit.

Practicing the grand old art of reinvention

LANE CHANGE

By
MJ Pallerino

“YOU TRULY CAN CUSTOMIZE YOUR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO ONE CUSTOMER. AS YOU RECEIVE MORE AND MORE DATA, YOU GET BETTER AND BETTER AT UNDERSTANDING THEM.”

— CHRISTIAN TERWIESCH,

PROFESSOR, THE WHARTON SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

When you were hungry, you'd head to one of the many restaurants. Faced with a long wait at say, Magic Mountain, you would just come back later.

But Disney's evolution—the pivot, if you will—changed all of that. Today, before you ever arrive at the park, you get a MagicBand. The wearable device is an all-everything conduit of connectivity, serving as an entry ticket to the park, a digital wallet that pays for everything you want and your room key. Hungry? Place an order on the band and location sensors take you to your food. Lines too long? Your band will help nudge you to another corner of the park.

Incorporating a digital element into the mix made the Disney experience bigger, better and faster. It's the kind of decision that Christian Terwiesch and Nicolaj Siggelkow say more business leaders must have the faith to make. In the case of Disney, Terwiesch and Siggelkow, co-directors of the University of Pennsylvania's Mack Institute for Innovation Management, say the pivot was a strategy designed to better interact with its customers' needs.

“As a brand, you do not want to compete for every transaction,” says Siggelkow, professor of Management at the The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a Fellow of the Strategic Management Society. “You want to enter a long-lasting connected relationship. That's

“YOU WANT TO ENTER A LONG-LASTING CONNECTED RELATIONSHIP. THAT'S HOW YOU CREATE YOUR OWN AUDIENCE. IN A TRULY CONNECTED CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP, YOUR COMPETITION IS IRRELEVANT.”


— NICOLAJ SIGGELKOW,

PROFESSOR, THE WHARTON SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



how you create your own audience. In a truly connected customer relationship, your competition is irrelevant.”

In their book, “Connect Strategies: Building Continuous Customer Relationships for Competitive Advantage,” Terwiesch and Siggelkow stress that brands must move their interactions with their customers from the traditional model of episodic interactions to a continuous relationship that offers highly customized products or services when or even before the customer wants them. It's a strategy they call a “connected customer relationship.”

In a world where everyone is becoming smarter and more connected, brands have to redefine themselves for the new age. By entering into these connected relationships, you create market sizes of one. “You truly can customize your products and services to one customer,” says Terwiesch, who also is professor of Operations and Information Management at Wharton. “As you receive more and more data, as you replace the sporadic interactions between brand and customer through continuous relationships, you get better and better at understanding them.” 

DEEP SEA LEARNING

In their best-selling book, “Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant” and “Blue Ocean Shift,” world-renowned professors Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne argued that cutthroat competition results in nothing but a bloody red ocean of rivals fighting over a shrinking profit pool.

Embraced by organizations and industries worldwide, the book challenged business leaders to change their way of thinking. The authors broke the competitive landscape into two bodies of water, a “red ocean” where the same people with the same services ate away each other’s margins, and a “blue ocean,” where demand is created rather than fought over.

Kim and Mauborgne believe that red oceans are all the industries in existence today—known market spaces. This is where industry boundaries are defined

and accepted, and the competitive rules of the game are known. In blue oceans, competition is irrelevant because the rules of the game are waiting to be set. This analogy describes the wider, deeper potential to be found in unexplored market space.

In essence, the process of Blue Ocean Strategy is to create and increase elements of positive customer experience to differ from the competition, and to reduce or drop the parts that have been taken for granted—once not deemed necessary in the market.

The thinking is in line with the strategy that Terwiesch and Siggelkow say companies must adopt today, and why they must transform themselves to compete with an increasingly connected and educated consumer. They break the customer journey into four stages: Recognize, Request, Respond and

Repeat. The fourth stage is the most fundamental of the strategies because it helps transform stand-alone experiences into long-lasting, valuable relationships.

“It is this stage that allows companies to learn from existing interactions and shape future ones,” Siggelkow says. “If they can, they will be able to create a sustainable competitive advantage.”

The Repeat dimension helps brands with two forms of learning. First, it allows them to learn how to better match the needs of an individual customer with the company’s existing products and services. Over time, and through repeated interactions, Disney learned that a customer seems to like ice cream more than fries, and theater performances more than rides. The information enabled it to create a more enjoyable itinerary for the customer.

Second, beyond this sort of customer-specific learning, Repeat allows companies to engage in population-level learning, which in turn allows them to adjust their existing portfolios of products and services. If Disney learns that the general demand for frozen yogurt is increasing, it can add more stands serving frozen yogurt.

Over time, Terwiesch says these two levels of learning have another very important effect: “The knowledge can create opportunities for companies to create an even wider range of services, and to develop trust relationships with customers that become very hard for competitors to break.”

In a competitive landscape filled with journeys that force you to decide from swimming in the red or blue oceans, it is important to find the right process and tools for the ride. And if there is one thing that Kim and Mauborgne taught us in “Blue Ocean Shift,” you have the power to decide.







TIP OF THE TONGUE

WHY AWARENESS IS THE MOST CRITICAL PART OF THE FUNNEL **BY ALYSSA RUANE**

LET'S SAY YOU ARE A HAIR PRODUCT LOYALIST. Or maybe you only buy OLED TVs. What brand do you prefer? Your choice is built on trust. That much we know.

That's why in a saturated market, brands are scrambling to stand out from their competitors across all marketplaces. When quality is expected and price points are similar, how can your brand rise above the noise and give consumers a reason to purchase your product?

Trust is a tricky thing—especially with consumerism. Finicky customers are tough to impress in today's world, making brands scratch their heads wondering how to earn consumers' trust.

Robert Rose, founder of The Content Advisory, says the speed by which you begin building trust is the critical part of the awareness stage. One of Rose's mottoes is that "Trust starts with both the story and the storyteller." He offers a great example: "I can shout out loud in a quiet restaurant and make you aware of me. But who I am, and what I shout, is an incredibly important piece of whether or not you'll actually behave the way I desire."

Rose says to imagine it like this: You're wearing a badge; therefore, people immediately recognize you as an authority. So if you yell for everyone to follow you in a crowded restaurant, everyone follows. The conversion rate tends to be high. But if nobody trusts you, or if you start shouting incoherent things, the outcome will be much different.

His analogy lends itself heavily to the reason content marketing is so important in 2019. With a great content marketing strategy and a focus on quality, brands can position themselves as industry experts. The key is to create content that is helpful to the reader.

"The strategies that most often fail," Rose says, "are where content marketing

is simply seen as a replacement asset for collateral material such as catalogs, ads, etc., and are created randomly to meet business demand."

So, how do you create content that serves both the reader and the brand? It comes down to creativity, like much of successful marketing does.

"Content is one of the easiest ways for brands to have a real conversation with their audience," says Melanie Deziel, international keynote speaker and founder of Story Fuel.

As a marketer, you're interrupting the consumer to pitch them your product—whether the disruption is a TV ad spot or a video that plays in-store. "It's not really wanted, if we're being honest," Deziel

says. "But I think one of the wonderful things about content marketing is you're actually able to create things that add value. When you're creating content that's really more for your audience than for you, customers feel like, 'This is a brand that's helpful to me,' and you end up creating a connection."

DO GOOD WORK

Just as the market has become saturated with businesses trying to succeed, the content marketing industry has begun to see its own jump. "Good content tends to work," Rose says.

But the difference between good content and bad content is quite important. Bring yourself back to Rose's example about shouting in a crowded restaurant. Bad content sounds like incoherent babbling, tarnishing your brand's credibility. Good content leaves the reader more informed, entertained, or, at the very least, aware of your brand's existence in your particular industry.

Content marketing is not a new way of appealing to audiences, but innovations in technology have allowed marketers to continuously produce fresh ways to connect with consumers. Deziel, who previously worked at The New York Times' in-house creative agency, T Brand Studio, says that it had created articles, infographics, interactive infographics, AR and VR to try and keep up with reader expectations.

In the past five or so years, content marketing formats have shifted. "In the earlier days, it was mostly text-based—articles, blogs, Q&As," says Deziel, who has been in content marketing since 2013. "But editorial content has changed, too. We're seeing a lot of growth still in the audio and podcast space. It won't be a fit for every brand, every product, but smart brands are

“CONTENT IS ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS FOR BRANDS TO HAVE A REAL CONVERSATION WITH THEIR AUDIENCE.”

— MELANIE DEZIEL,
FOUNDER, STORY FUEL





going to explore audio, podcast, for a new way to connect with their audience.”

No matter the format, Deziel says the most important part of content marketing is measuring success. “You spend all your time creating the content. Not measuring the effectiveness would be a waste, so set clear goals before you begin crafting. With systems in place, you will be able to see what to improve on in the next campaign.”

But it would be a fatal flaw to only view content marketing as a campaign-focused endeavor. Rose suggests businesses look at content like a product-development group rather than a campaign-focused group. “By changing operational models to one where content becomes as important as product, the business can start creating an operational model that can meet actual business goals.”

Doing so will help avoid commoditization of content, which ultimately isn’t helpful for a brand. “The content that’s the easiest to make is the content that’s the least unique,” Deziel warns, likening it to “low-hanging fruit.”


For both the marketers’ and the brands’ sake, it’s imperative to be open to new ideas. Originality shines in content marketing, and in order to produce scroll-stopping content, you’ve got to stay on the cusp of new technology and keep quality at the forefront.

Rose says that great content leads, suggesting that some brands create content simply as an afterthought, which is likely ineffective. He says these brands should take a pause from the cycle of constant content churning to ensure they are being strategic about the thought

leadership platform they are trying to build. Lead with your content.

Deziel believes that experimenting will keep you fresh. “It’s easy to get caught in the same routine, putting out the same content in same formats on same schedule, but that would be boring for you as a creative and for the client.”

Being intentional about the content you put out there will not only break through the noise, but it will also pay off in the long-term. The longer you give consumers value via your unique content, the more trust you build over time, cementing your status as an industry leader and reliable brand who puts the consumer first.

And when someone’s ready to buy a product like yours, your name will be at the tip of the tongue. 

TACTICS

SHARPENING YOUR ANGLE

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE CONTENT INTELLIGENCE

In the content marketing game, understanding what's working and what's not can be a challenge. That's

where content intelligence comes in. Employing this strategy enables you to gain actionable insights into your content

strategy. Here, performance marketing experts Spiralytics offer a four-step plan for honing your strategy:

IMPLEMENT REGULAR CONTENT AUDITS

Periodic audits allow you to gain timely insights into your content's performance

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR COMPETITORS

Regularly monitor the competition so you can benchmark with areas to improve on and get ideas for better marketing content

MONITOR AND TABULATE YOUR CONTENT ROI

Try to find out if your brand is making a considerable profit by making sure it's tied to your goals and KPIs

OBTAIN THE RIGHT DATA MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Content intelligence is highly dependent on accurate data, so find the right software that can report and summarize vital insights for you

HOME SCHOOL

3 WAYS TO SMARTEN YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

The key to building a streamlined buying cycle for the customer is simple, right? Your sales and marketing teams must be in sync. But what's the trick? How do you build relationships internally and externally? According to the "7 B2B Marketing Strategies You Need to Know to Build a Better Marketing Plan" by Salesforce and Pardot, there are three ways to better enable your sales team. Here's your homework:

1. UNDERSTAND WHAT'S INVOLVED IN THE SALES PROCESS

While this seems like a given, it's a critical part of the marketing and sales dynamic. Listen in on sales calls and find out what sales reps are saying to

their clients and prospects. Make sure it aligns to what your marketing is saying. Sometimes marketing messaging is hard to translate into everyday practices. If buyers aren't getting the same message from sales, reconcile the two.

2. SHARE YOUR VIEW OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Everything marketers create is angled at ideal buyers and the target audience. But when it comes to connecting with your sales team, it isn't always clear why they've chosen to target different segments. Make sure your sales team understands why and how you're targeting your customers in the context of your campaigns.



3. TEACH YOUR SALES TEAMS HOW TO USE CONTENT

Content can be the ultimate ice breaker or that final tweak to move the deal closer to close. Not all content is created equal. You know that. Does your sales team? Find out how they are using your content and help them understand what they need. This can also lead to identifying areas for more content.



GOT A MINUTE

Your 9-step plan for collaborating on content

There's a lot to be gained by joining forces with others to tell your brand's story. Why? Collaborative content helps deliver your message to more platforms, more media and a larger audience. It also helps keep your content fresh. Here, Barry Feldman, founder of Feldman Creative (www.theroadtorecognition.com) and author of "SEO Simplified for Short Attention Spans," dishes on the 10 ways you can get the most out of content collaboration:

1. WEBINARS

These are a classic example of collaborative content. You can even build a press center with archives of the topics and resources you've included.

2. A ROSTER OF EXPERTS

Rounding up a roster of experts is a tried and true formula for blog posts, e-books and other content types. Your team of experts also will help you share and promote the content across myriad networks.

3. INTERVIEWS

Interviews with thought leaders are a great way to solidify the substance of your content.

4. QUOTES

Securing a simple quote from an expert outsider is another solid way to add substance to your content offering.

5. PRESENTATION

Presentation, as they say, is everything. Effectively telling your story can be a valuable ally to your content well.

6. PODCASTS

Podcasts are a natural for collaboration. Most podcasters host interview shows with subject-matter experts. Another viable strategy is bringing two or more experts together on a regular basis.

7. VIDEO

Like podcasts, video is another important aspect of the collaborative format. Video content can include industry influencers, vendor partners, customers, etc.

8. WORKSHOPS/EVENTS/COURSES

Gathering your collaborators for a training type symposium and/or lunch & learn, etc., is a great way to tell your brand's story.

9. BLOG

If there's a no-brainer on this list, it's the blog. Become a thought leader and seek opportunities to invite experts to contribute guest posts to your blog.

ONCE UPON A TIME

Turning your direct mail campaign into the next great story

Everybody loves a good story. So why not turn your next direct mail campaign into a story people will remember. Infusing

the great art of storytelling into your next initiative is as simple as following this checklist by the QuantumPostcards team:

1 MAKE IT EMOTIONAL

What feeling do you want your audience to walk away with when they look at your direct mail campaign? Trust? Reliability? Those are good places to start. The feeling can be anything you want it to be. Just make it universal.

2 CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

All good stories feature a good character. Just make sure that whichever character you choose—human, animal or even an inanimate object—has a likable personality.

3 SPELL IT OUT

Incorporate a clear call to action that ultimately benefits your business or organizational goals.

4 BE VISUAL

Compelling visual imagery is the key to a great story. If you write the story out in text form, always include a photograph or other image beside the text. Graphics are good, too.

5 FIND A SOUNDING BOARD

What good is your story if it doesn't make sense? That's not a rhetorical

question. The answer is bad. Have someone proof your story and answer the following questions: What emotion did they walk away with? What did they like? Can the story be improved? Outside feedback helps ensure your story is strong and conveys the emotion you want.

6 GO WITH THE PROS

Use a high-quality printing and mail system to take your plan to the next step. Nothing ruins a good story like poor craftsmanship.





On why having a culture of service helps differentiate your brand

Great customer service is still the exception and not the rule, despite our state-of-the-art communication tools. This means that the ability to deliver emotionally engaging, person-to-person interactions has become opportunity No. 1 for your business.

Research shows that most people will choose a human over a digital capability when seeking advice. And the more time we spend behind screens, the more we crave experiences when we're away from them. Yet it seems that many companies have invested in technology while letting the "human side" of service wither. Building a culture of service is the best opportunity for competitive differentiation.

On identifying what kind of culture you want to create

Imagine you're a fly on the wall, overhearing people's conversations at a party. The first conversation takes place among your employees. What do you hope to hear them say about working for your company? Now, imagine you walk into a room that's crowded with your customers. How do you want them to describe their experience with you? What do you want them to tell their colleagues? Once you've identified the words and phrases that would be ideal (for both groups), reverse-engineer the culture with those outcomes in mind.

On the best tool to make that happen

There is a model I use called The Four Motivators® Framework, a proven methodology in which

ON THE RECORD WITH BRIDGET BRENNAN

STRATEGIC CONSULTANT SHARES HER
THOUGHTS ON BUILDING A TEAM CULTURE

Bridget Brennan's best practices were tested on a diverse set of brands. Lexus. Sephora. Allstate. The Minnesota Vikings. In each case, the highly sought-after strategic consultant set out to prove that creating an inclusive customer experience inspires increased sales, referrals and repeat business.

Along the way, she carved out a niche as a leading authority on marketing, sales communication, customer engagement and consumer trends, especially for the popular women's market. The author of several thought-provoking books, Brennan is also a highly lauded speaker, presenting at conferences and universities around the world.

Here are her thoughts on creating a culture that inspires consumer trust:



businesses can help their customers feel connected to their associates and the brand. The motivators keep your customers connected to you, your brand and your business; inspired to buy from you specifically; confident in their buying decisions; and appreciated for their business. These four simple but powerful motivators can help any business create emotional connections.

YOUR FIVE-STEP PLAN FOR FOSTERING A TEAM CULTURE

1. Activate

Demonstrate that you value your team's ideas by asking for them, and then delegate responsibility for bringing the best ideas to life

2. Collaborate

Enable your employees to share knowledge and problem-solving with one another, whether it's through an intranet or an internal messaging platform

3. Optimize

Schedule team-building activities throughout the year

4. Celebrate

Celebrate successes and share "happy customer stories" at regular team meetings; make the experiences become instructive, best practices

5. Recognize

Reward excellent performance (there are many creative ways to do so) and publicly acknowledge it within the office

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