

TOM

A Little More Action

ASACKER

“Behavior is what a man does, not what he thinks, feels, or believes.”

- Emily Dickinson

What’s the purpose of marketing? Despite Peter Drucker’s emphatic assertion that it’s about behavior change—“create a customer”—most businesspeople have come to believe that the purpose of marketing is merely to spread messages and change people’s minds. And they attempt this charge with a mass of money and a mess of tactics; either overtly through advertising and promotion, or more subtly through viral marketing, product placement, and even blogging. Unfortunately, awareness and desire are only two ingredients in the marketing formula for anything but low-risk, impulse brands, and by ignoring the other two, marketers are spinning their wheels and wasting millions in a half-baked, customer creation process.

Does it really matter if people feel that your business or brand is the bees knees, the cat’s meow, or the be all end all? Of course it does! But only if those feelings move them beyond attitude to behavior. Take Google’s new web browser, Chrome. People are buzzing about its simple, minimalistic functionality; its small memory footprint and responsiveness; and its game-changing strategic positioning. But if those same people don’t adopt it before Microsoft, Mozilla, Opera, and Apple have had a chance to release their new and improved versions, all is for nought.

Face it. People are creatures of habit. They lay down patterns of behavior and, in general, deviate only slightly from those patterns. This reality is critical for marketers in fast-moving markets like IT to grasp, but today it has implications for every brand—new or old, high tech or low tech. Why? Because we’re living in a much more dynamic marketplace than even a few years ago. New brands are popping up like weeds in a field (by one estimate, 700 new products are introduced every day). And with this overwhelming amount of activity and choice comes a tendency for people to do . . . are you ready for this? . . . absolutely nothing.

In his book, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*, psychology professor Barry Schwartz shows that the bewildering array of choices flooding our brains ultimately results in behavioral paralysis. Instead of relishing our freedom to choose, we’re exhausted by it. Instead of tuning in to all of these new and improved brands, we’re starting to tune them out—or at least the ones that appear essentially equivalent in their potential to make a difference in our lives. And there’s the rub.

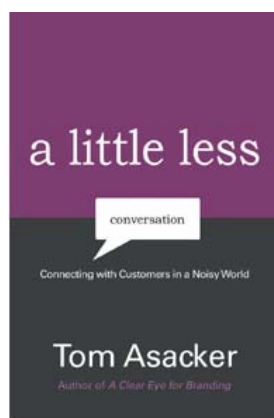
There's a principle in physics that says if a thing can't be distinguished from anything else it doesn't exist. That same principle applies to brands. If a brand can't be distinguished from an existing brand, it simply does not exist in the mind of the customer. The question to mull over, and then obsess over, is, "distinguished in what way?" If you believe the physics of most marketing today, that "way" is a superficial one: logos, colors, taglines, jingles, humor, virality, etc. But this cosmetic and garrulous approach is not helping. In fact, all it's really doing is adding to the problem. It's like using a drill to let water out of the bottom of a leaking boat.

The solution is to move beyond attitude change to behavior change. Start with the end in mind. Forget about prescriptive marketing and come at the problem as a physician would: by first diagnosing it. Ask yourself (and your people): given all the choice in the marketplace what compelling reasons do people have to purchase, use, or recommend our brand? What unique components of value will they receive in exchange for their investment of time, attention, money and self-worth? Describe precisely, and in exhausting detail, how choosing *you* will improve *their* lives and make them feel better about *themselves*? Got it? And do you believe passionately in the unique bundle of value that you offer? Great!

Now, get everyone in your business fired up with these compelling reasons (a.k.a. your brand)! Forget clever ads and fancy marketing materials (Think value first, not information). Take your unbridled passion and get out there and meet people where they live, work, and interact with each other. Offer them an experience that will demonstrate your passionate belief in your brand . . . in helping them. Articulate it with your innate and powerful, human voice and empower them to share it with others. Turn off the marketing noise (frankly, we're all pretty sick of it), and turn up the volume of your childlike sense of wonder, compassion, and rampant enthusiasm. It's really pretty simple: If you're ready to exist, then give customers a little less conversation and a little more action . . . please.

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Tom Asacker writes, teaches, and speaks about radically new practices and ideas for marketplace success in chaotic times. He is an independent brand adviser and author of critically acclaimed books including *A Clear Eye for Branding* and *Sandbox Wisdom*, and his latest, *A Little Less Conversation*. Visit www.acleareye.com to learn more.



Tom Asacker's new book will be available in September. You can get more information or order copies by visiting www.acleareye.com/books.

"Tom is timely, thought provoking and all about the new brand vision. I went to school on his ideas!"

- Jeff Taylor, Founder, Monster.com and CEO, Eons.