

# TOM

## Follow the Yellow Brick Road to Loyalty

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“A heart is not judged by how much you love; but by how much you are loved by others.”

— *The Wizard of Oz*

Remember when Toto pulled back the curtain and unveiled the wizard, whose existence up until then had been shrouded in mystery? Well, you may not have been aware of it, but you too have been exposed. Today's business reality is that we are no longer sales and marketing wizards. Yup... the jig is up! The audience knows how we do all of our tricks.

It certainly has been a heck of a ride, though, hasn't it? Think of all of those artful product ads that we used to pull out of our magic hats. You know the ones, where we used our stunning assistants (celebrities and spokespersons) to seduce people into buying our magic brand. Or we'd fill our marketing performance with smoke and fire and chest-thumping superlatives, just like the great and powerful OZ!

Remember when we used to send our assistants (salespeople) out into the audience armed with bags full of product? And how they'd use their magical convincing and closing skills to sell them? It used to work and work well, right? We even used our Svengali-like manipulation on our employees, didn't we? We'd disguise the truth, promise the world, and hypnotize them with our patter.

Well, those heady days are gone forever. We can no longer impress, cajole or delude our audience into remaining loyal. So now what? How do we get our audience to return to our show? How do we foster loyalty in a world full of product and price parity, and full of skeptics, cynics and other “freethinkers”? Simple! Do what the Wizard of Oz ultimately had to do. Give them what they believe they are missing—the virtues that they desire:

- **A heart.** Like the Tin Man, most people want to do what they consider the “right thing.” They want to help others and participate in a worthy cause. Doing so makes them feel good about themselves. Companies like Tom’s Shoes, Starbucks, and Stonyfield Farms, to name a few, promote and support causes that their audience's employees and customers' can connect with... with their heart. This altruistic bond enhances loyalty to the feelings that these brands evoke. Want this kind of bond? Give them the feel-good emotions that they desire.
- **A brain.** Never underestimate your audience's desire to understand what’s happening around them. Sure, they’ll watch your brand show (assuming, of course, that it’s entertaining and engaging). But now, since the curtain has been flung wide open, they’re driven to know exactly *how* and *why* it was done. They want to know who you are; what your intentions are; what makes you different and better; and how it is that *you* can

do what others, try as they may, simply can not do. To get these “Scarecrows” to remain loyal to you, you must proffer answers to all of their “felt” questions, so that they consider themselves in the know, smart, and understood. Remember... your audience is loyal to the feelings they get *from* you. They are not loyal *to* you!

- **The nerve.** Most people are motivated (like the Cowardly Lion) to avoid fear. Fear of rejection, failure, the unknown, the uncertain, the unpredictable. In addition, your audience has a strong desire to eliminate the fear of future suffering. The fear of wasting time. The fear of wasting money. The fear of being wrong. The fear of looking foolish. The fear of flying monkeys. Fear. Fear. Fear. You can appeal to these “Lions” by taking all of the risk out of their decision making and placing it squarely (and strategically) back on your business. How? The way Hyundai recently did: with assurance... in whatever forms you can think of —money-back and “make it right” guarantees; free shipping, installation and support; no-risk test-drives; and so on. But, when all is said and done, if even a hint of doubt remains about your offering, your audience will go somewhere that eliminates that doubt. Because they’re not loyal to you. It's the feelings! Remember?
- **A home.** People are strongly motivated to belong. To have a place where everybody knows their name (or, at least, how they feel). This feeling of “affiliation” has been mastered by companies such as Harley-Davidson, Mini Cooper, and Apple, not to mention many emerging online communities. When I snap up the leather, hop on my Harley, and click my boots three times, I am transformed. I feel like a member of a special tribe. It's not about horsepower and gas mileage; it's about... feelings! A Harley executive was quoted as saying, “What we sell is the ability for a 43-year-old accountant to dress in black leather, ride through small towns and have people be afraid of him.” Forget altruism, forget information, forget fear. This is about identity. There is no stronger bond.

So that's it! We've covered everyone with the exception of poor Toto, who simply wants to be loved and cared for. Easy, huh? Not at all! If it were easy, everyone would be doing a great job of it. And what exactly is that? Branding, of course. Creating and sustaining strong customer relevance by strategically appealing to their changing expectations, desires, and feelings.

Oh, and one other thing. Humans are not fictional film characters. They want *everything* on the aforementioned list (funny creatures... those humans). So give it too them. Give them the feel good, altruistic cause, along with transparency, assurance and community. And toss in some love and caring. Just make sure to do it with flair.

P.S. Never forget the true lesson of the Wizard of Oz. Act like the person (or brand) you want to become and it will eventually become your reality. Good luck.

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Tom Asacker has been teaching and inspiring organizations and entrepreneurs for more than 20 years. World-class brands including Procter & Gamble, UPS, Hewlett Packard, and General Electric have called on Tom, a renowned speaker and strategic advisor, to shake up their people, fill them with ideas and charge them with inspiration. He's the 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](http://www.acleareye.com) to learn more.