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BREAKING THROUGH MARKETING CLUTTER

JUST LOOK AROUND. LOOK AT ALL THE MARKETING COMING YOUR way. Marketing is all around you. As you're reading this, there are likely signs, radio commercials, point-of-purchase displays, labels, offers in your mail, TV ads, magazines lying around, salespeople, online advertising, social media, and on and on and on—all around you. Add all these up and the number of marketing messages you're exposed to every day usually amounts to more than 3,000; some say 5,000, and still others claim even more. Regardless, the point is that we are inundated by messages all day, every day. Walk into a grocery store or any retail establishment and this number soars. The same goes for the online content world; messages show up as blog posts, feature articles,

special reports, slide presentations, infographics, downloads, webinars, online video, white papers, and more. The whole world of content marketing has exploded. Even if people do happen to set eyes on these messages, whether they actually take any notice is a different matter.

MESSAGES COMING AT YOU NOW

Messages that connect with your interests, needs, wants, and desires will lead you to stop, look, and listen to them, to take notice. The right message delivered in the right way to the right target gets noticed. If your target doesn't want or need what you are talking about, getting noticed will be a proverbial pipe dream. Messages coming at you that make you more aware of these wants and needs will also get noticed. Let's say that you have a dream home in your sights and you hear of ways to buy it and live in it; in this case, it's very likely that you'll take notice of these messages. Information about rental apartments, in this case, will not catch your attention.

Just think of a recent trip to the grocery store. Supermarkets are filled with a high density of messages, all of them screaming, "Buy me!" You don't notice every one of these messages while food shopping; you scan and look for the food items that fit your preferences. Sometimes you see new things and may explore further, but taking initial notice is related to something you like, need, or want.

Part of getting noticed involves reaching for the emotions of people that marketing messages are intended for. To get people to pay attention to your marketing messages, you need to find their emotions. Messages with no emotional connection are not noticed and certainly not acted upon. If you can make people feel happy, proud, nostalgic, or comforted, they will be far more likely to notice your message. When crafting your message, think about how it hit those senses and feelings. Once your senses and emotions are stimulated, you will take notice and become interested in pursuing more information. That is the purpose of a headline, a starburst, or a graphic: to pull an interested reader or prospect into the next sequence of messaging.

Marketers are trained to put their messages where their target markets are or where they look. Looking and noticing are two different things.

Think about these differences. Think about satisfying needs, wants, and interests and you will get noticed.

CUTTING THROUGH THE CLUTTER

How does a marketer stand out in the crowded marketing storm? How can you, as a marketer, hit your target market right between the eyes? How can you cut through the media clutter that's all around you? Answering these questions represents the holy grail of marketing. In this section we'll talk about a few ways to break through the clutter; more ideas will be developed later in this book.

Every day there are new messaging ideas and repurposed content from thought leaders and marketers of all sizes and types, utilizing new methods that eventually come at you. If your messages are part of that clutter, your goal is to lift them above the clutter and get noticed. This book is full of ideas, stories, and situations that offer solutions to breaking through marketing clutter. Here are eight essentials to consider as you start off and move closer to that marketing holy grail:

1. *Focus on solutions.* This is what customers are really looking for. And when there is demand, half of your marketing job is done. Products and services that have a high demand get noticed early and often. Give your target market what they want or what they're interested in looking at. Offer something that shouts, "I'm a problem solver" or "I'm a solution" quickly and your message will get noticed.
2. *Aim at your target market.* Marketing that doesn't hit its intended target is classified as a waste, inefficient, or junk (as in "junk mail"). Marketing that does hit its target market is classified as interesting, effective, and very efficient. The key point here is to give your target market something that interests them. If you're a senior citizen interested in classical music, a direct-mail piece about the newest music releases for the latest rock-and-roll bands just won't do the job; you have no interest in that information. You're not part of the rock-and-roll music target market.
3. *Use headlines and subtitles.* Make these titles (and subtitles) provocative, thought-provoking, extreme, and completely unexpected.

One of the best headlines I've seen—one I know got noticed—was, “Things the Government Won't Tell You About Terrorism.” Another one that garnered equal attention, was, “7 Mistakes Banks Make Every Day.” Both would get my attention and make me want to read more.

4. *Have a crystal-clear message.* Graphics can get attention but don't let them overwhelm your marketing to the point where your message isn't being communicated. The famous advertising guru David Ogilvy once said, “I do not regard advertising as an entertainment or an art form but as a medium of information. When I write an advertisement, I don't want you to tell me that you find it creative. I want you to find it so interesting that you buy the product.” You can't bore people into taking notice with boring or unclear messages.
5. *Try extreme marketing messaging.* The truth is, extreme marketing works. Things that state the opposite, the negative, and mistakes get attention. Here are examples of headlines or messages that get noticed because of their extreme nature:
 - How to Run Your Company into the Ground in One Week
 - How to Make Your Salespeople 10% More Efficient
 - How I Grew Profits by 0.005%

All these headlines would probably get your attention and make you want to read on because of their extreme nature.

6. *Offer a marketing hook.* This is another way to get noticed and it's especially prevalent in content marketing circles today. Simply put, information is offered as an incentive for additional contact. This “hooks” a prospect into the fold, setting the stage for further communication. That's what I did as a business owner. One of my hooks was offering a list of “99 Direct Marketing Tips.” Another hook that I offered on my website was a special report titled “50 People to Instantly Add to Your Network.” People wanted that information. Offering the information separated me from the competition and customers and prospects became hooked. Here are other examples of hooks:
 - Call us today for a free mortgage loan calculator.

- Download a free recipe ebook using our spices and seasonings.
- Stop by today for a free vase for your Mother's Day flowers.

All these hooks offer something of value to an interested prospect. They'll all increase not only the attention your pieces get but your response rates as well.

If you're using print marketing to communicate to your target market, put these hooks in a starburst graphic. If it's in an audio or video format, make it extreme, loud, and memorable. Online browsers and shoppers respond to free downloads and interesting and relevant content, including ebooks, top 10 lists, checklists, guides, workbooks, and more.

7. *Leverage odd items, shapes, and sizes.* Another thing to consider when you want your pieces to stand out from the crowd is to create something that's a different size or has a different tone or is otherwise outside the normal format. This includes odd-shaped mailing pieces, extreme colors or messages, and choosing unusual times at which to approach your target market, like talking about Christmas in the spring. Carlsbad Brewery once dropped fake passports in the New York City subway system to notify their target market about a new product they were launching. Finding a passport on the subway was unexpected; it's not something you see every day. Carlsbad's messages got noticed.
8. *Answer directly "What's In It for the Prospect?"* Holiday Inn Express advertised that their motels had the "number-one customer-rated showerhead." Have you ever been asked to rate a showerhead? Holiday Inn discovered this was important to their target market and communicated that message directly to them. You can listen and read all about the features of a Holiday Inn Express, but hearing about the Number One Customer-Rated Showerhead speaks to something *all* visitors want. What's in it for them? A superior shower. Superior showers get noticed.

Standing out from the marketing clutter will always be a marketer's challenge. Starting with these fundamentals will help you break through.

THE MIND AT WORK: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MARKETING

Much has been written about the role of psychology in marketing. Understanding how the human mind works as it relates to marketing is fundamental to getting noticed. Marketers work every day at understanding how customers act, think, and feel—all toward the ultimate goal of getting prospects and customers to buy. *The Oxford American Dictionary* defines *psychology* as the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behavior in a given context. Marketing is an attempt to influence behavior.

Understanding acting, thinking, and feeling is the core of psychology. Psychologists study behavior surrounding these essential functions. Much of behavior as it relates to marketing centers around how people react to brands, products, services, benefits, wants, needs, and more.

Social media is at the forefront of marketing psychology. Consider the following: I learned, as a business owner, that people do business with people. They don't do business with a logo or a tagline. Sure, identity and image further relationships, but we all still ultimately conduct our business with one another. This is part of our inherent need to participate with others in the form of a community. That is the essence of social media: belonging to and engaging with and within a community. People also notice people. They might notice what is being said, appearances, and actions, but we all pay attention to the *person* who is speaking or acting, or who we're simply looking at. *Noticing* people or a person is the first step toward developing a relationship.

Relationships turn into sales. The number-one reason people buy from anyone is trust. People buy from people they like, people they know, and people they trust. Think about vendors or customers you speak to on a regular basis. When you drop your dry cleaning off at the cleaner's, do you have a conversation at the counter with the same person every time? Do you feel that they know you and that you know them? Do you talk about the community, family, or other common interests? If not at the cleaner's, you probably have your spots within your community where this happens. It may even be in an online community. These conversations, connections, and relationships build trust, which strengthens relationships. That is the foundation of buying and selling.

In psychology, trust is believing that the person who is trusted will do what is expected. From a psychological standpoint, trust is integral to the idea of social influence: It is easier to influence or persuade someone who is trusting and it's easier to be influenced or persuaded by someone who is trusted. Trust is a major factor that creates relationships between people.

Just look at trust at work when considering the opinion or recommendation of a close friend compared to hearing an advertisement on the radio or seeing one in print. The personal recommendation ranks significantly higher. People trust their friends; they don't always trust advertising. We are inclined to notice and buy from those we are in a relationship with and we value that more than many other factors.

People buy with their heart, not their head. You may be able to give me dozens of logical reasons why you would buy something, but if it is not felt first, it won't be noticed, and secondly, it won't be bought. It's true that some people approach buying decisions with more logic than others, but most make purchases based on their emotional state at the time—how they feel, not what is logical.

Customers and prospects choose products based on all kinds of factors. Usually, it's impossible to influence every factor, so a successful marketer needs to balance the factors of getting noticed, appealing to emotion, and catering to the rational decision-making process—all parts of personality.

Investopedia describes the “halo effect” as a marketing term to explain the positive bias shown by customers toward certain products because of a favorable experience with other products made by the same manufacturer. Put another way, if you like one food manufacturer's brand of soup, the halo effect makes it likelier you'll buy another flavor of the soup they make, and perhaps buy their other products as well. Investopedia goes on to state that, basically, the halo effect is driven by “brand equity,” that is, one brand earning more money than another brand because consumers feel that a known brand name is worth more than a lesser-known brand name.

The halo effect suggests that you will buy from someone because you like them. Like them and they get noticed. Like them and you like their message. Like them and you usually like what they are selling. That's the power of a social relationship.

There is a psychological notion that says people will react to and especially notice the unconventional versus the conventional. Put another way, one marketing psychologist noted that the novel trumps the conventional every time. If someone walks into a rodeo wearing a pinstripe suit and sunglasses, he gets noticed. If he is in cowboy attire, chances are he will blend in and not be noticed; in that situation he would be conventional. Interesting gets noticed. Things do not have to be shocking, off-the-charts, obnoxious, or too extreme, but blending in typically does not get attention. That is the psychology that leads to buying. This leads to not only getting noticed but getting talked about.

As a final point here, I'm not asking all marketers to become psychologists. That's not necessary to successfully market a product. Understanding how purchase decisions are made and the balance between emotions, relationships, and rationality does go a long way, though. Achieving the right balance of these key factors will get you noticed in a cluttered world.

BUSTING THROUGH THE CONTENT MARKETING DELUGE

Unless you have been living under a rock, you know that most of the world has dramatically integrated social media marketing into daily life. Social media has been the proverbial game-changer in both our business and personal lives. This dynamic genre of marketing is always changing and is only becoming more and more powerful.

Word of mouth has always possessed that power. Social media has made that bigger, faster, and more immediate. People can now influence each other more than ever, creating what has been called the biggest revolution to hit marketing since television.

Now putting social media and marketing influence into overdrive is the whole field of content marketing. Fundamentally, content marketing dispenses content of all kinds, to all takers, all the time. Content can take any number of forms: social media posts, blogs, websites, articles, slideshows, webinars, podcasts, white papers, video, photos, and more.

This staggering amount of content only adds to the barrage of marketing messages. With so much new and repurposed content, in so many forms, and new thought leaders in this field, it's becoming easier to

get lost in the content storm. That's not a good thing if you are a passionate marketer. Getting content noticed is what you are passionate about. Paying attention to getting noticed is now as important as generating and repurposing the content itself.

This book is full of examples on getting noticed, getting remembered, and getting talked about. Many of these I have experienced or observed. These intentional forms of marketing represent "marketing like you mean it" at its fullest. Let's break content marketing down into a few parts and apply them directly to getting content that will stand out in the aforementioned tsunami.

CONTENT TOPICS

Coming up with compelling content topics is the lifeblood of content marketing. Ask yourself, "What ideas can I generate that are related to helping others do something, think of something, or have a new point of view?" "What ideas can I think of that will prevent mistakes, solve problems, or share successes?" The flow of engaging, relevant ideas will keep the content that informs your content marketing program in strong form. Repurposing some of these ideas will create even more ideas. Getting ideas from target market members, including customer and prospects' "pain points," is always a great start to content generation. All of the following ideas are content topics that come from re-using or re-formatting one original article. That is the essence of repurposing content. Let's look at examples of the components involved in content repurposing, all generated from one original article called "10 Ways to Improve Sales in the Coming Year:"

- ! *Blog post.* Take each of the ten ways in the article and create a blog post for each.
- ! *Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.* Post links to each blog post on Twitter and Facebook.
- ! *SlideShare.* Create a slideshow called "A Step-by-Step Process to Increasing Your Sales This Year"
- ! *Webinar.* Using the slides from SlideShare and the content from the original article, develop and present a Webinar: "Hot Sales Techniques You Can Implement Today"

- ! *Ebook.* “Preventing These Selling Mistakes Will Improve Your Sales”
- ! *PDF download.* “Sales Improvement Checklist”

TENDING TO PAIN POINTS

In marketing, solutions are what people pay for. In the world of content you should always be providing information that’s helping to answer the question, “What’s in it for me, the prospect?” This means not only supplying content that is solution-oriented but content that helps readers avoid the pain they are experiencing from a particular problem or challenge. The pain point is the burning need a customer or prospect has for something. They tend to be highly motivated to eliminate or alleviate this pain by accepting your solution. For example, imagine a bank offering a loan package that can be received with a signature on one page. This solves the pain point of signing so many documents at loan closing. Think about the restaurant that offers a guide on how to eat nutritiously and lose weight when eating out. This solves the pain point of restaurant food that is high in calories and fat. If there is a benefit to what you’re offering, then it answers the question of what is in it for the prospect. Content needs to talk to all of these to stand out and get noticed.

RELEVANT, FRESH, AND INTERESTING CONTENT CREATES TRUST

You can’t bore people into paying attention. That means you better have content that is interesting, relevant, and fresh; these characteristics are meaningful to both prospects and existing customers. Meaningful information is the engine that creates trust in companies, people, and brands—the connection that’s so essential to all types of marketing, on- and offline. Trust can be built with testimonials or endorsements from a trusted influencer outside of a company. That trust makes targets welcome new marketing messages and fresh content, creating positive reactions and results over time.

ENGAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

Nothing gets noticed more than communication from a friend or someone that you know. In the world of marketing—whether content, social media, or any other kind—you are very often noticed by the relationships you

establish and maintain. Relationships are opportunities for engagement. Engagement gets noticed and spreads content.

For example, a restaurant can establish relationships with customers in order to increase repeat visits from customers. These relationships also increase loyalty in the process. Some of my favorite restaurants make their website and blog a place for me to find menu items, nutrition articles, and dining tips. Like me, other visitors come back to the site to learn from the content and we feel more connected to the restaurant, that there is a true relationship and we are more likely to not only remember the restaurant but tell our friends about it and return for another dining experience.

CONTENT PACKAGING

Graphics—design, images, logos, branding, colors, and more—get noticed more than words. Graphics are an opportunity to package content in a form that’s different, stands out, is interesting, and gets noticed. This includes the marketing vehicle that the content is contained in. Maybe your prospects prefer newsletters, blogs, websites and maybe even an offline marketing vehicle. Pictures, titles, headlines, and subheadings are all part of the content packaging. Jetsetter, an online community of travelers that provides members with insider access, expert knowledge, and exclusive deals on the world’s greatest vacations uses a very simple photographic display of vacation destinations to get click-throughs and site conversions.

There are certainly more ideas than this for content marketing, but these are essential. They’ll help you stay on the right marketing track and get you noticed amid the marketing tsunami that’s hitting right now in the form of content marketing.

MAKING A COMMODITY BUSINESS STAND OUT

Sometimes businesses struggle with finding their unique selling proposition, what makes them different from all the other businesses in their category. Some struggle to find a unique point of positioning. At times, that differentiating factor is found by digging deep to really understand *why* customers buy from you and only you. Other times it is more deceiving. Many times, the brand is the same, the service

offering is the same, and the products offered are identical, or nearly so. Differentiation, getting noticed, standing out is the challenge that exists in a marketing world where many things are the same. This is not an impossibility, though. Here are considerations for standing out in that congruent world:

EXPERT POSITIONING

The whole concept of positioning is creating a perception that stands out in a prospect or customer's mind. Giving others the perception of being an expert, i.e. expert positioning, makes you stand out in people's minds. People trust experts. People like to buy from experts. People have confidence in experts, whether companies that are experts or people who are experts. Companies and people that know what they are doing and convey skill and confidence differentiate themselves from competitors who have less expertise. I have no qualms stating that I am a marketing expert. Be sure that you can back up whatever expertise you profess.

MARKET KNOWLEDGE

Knowing current trends and sharing new ideas differentiates. Differentiation is required to stand out. Market knowledge also includes knowing competitive situations, offerings, solutions, advantages, and the like. Being able to talk with customers and prospects about this is advantageous and fuels that all-important relationship that leads to selling. Knowing the market also leads to offering just the right solutions for customers and prospects. That's the kind of thing prospects notice that makes them customers, and that customers notice to make them repeat customers.

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

At the end of the day, the difference between your business and a competitor's business, if you can't find any other differences, is you. That is why many customers notice you and do business with you. Your business is the only one that has you. People may buy from you because of the relationship they have with you: They like you, they know you, and they trust you. They may go out of their way to keep that likeability alive and well. That's the type of company/person you want to do business with. You can

tell when a competitor doesn't try to get to know you or doesn't like you; in these cases, the trust never develops. Likeability and relationships are definitely differentiators.

Is it possible to stand out? These factors prove that it is.

“AIDA”

No, this section is not about the four-act Italian opera by Giuseppe Verdi. This AIDA refers to an acronym often used in marketing that describes how consumers engage with marketing messages:

- A Attention.** Sometimes “awareness” is used for the A. It’s about getting the customer’s or prospect’s attention.)
- I Interest.** Oftentimes, interest is related to benefits and competitive advantages of products and services. Interest allows the prospect to continue on with the marketing message: If there’s no interest, there’s no attention.
- D Desire.** This refers to playing on emotions and psychology. In convincing prospects that they want and desire something, their interest will continue and lead to the last letter in this acronym.
- A Action.** This refers to motivating customers and prospects to take action as a result of the marketing messaging viewed.

According to Wikipedia, the AIDA term and approach are commonly attributed to American advertising and sales pioneer E. St. Elmo Lewis. In one of his publications on advertising and marketing, Lewis mentioned three principles to which an advertisement should conform:

The mission of an advertisement is to attract a reader, so that he will look at the advertisement and start to read it; then to interest him, so that he will continue to read it; then to convince him, so that when he has read it he will believe it. If an advertisement contains these three qualities of success, it is a successful advertisement.

Just a quick note: In this case “advertisement” is used instead of the more general term, used throughout this book, “marketing.” The AIDA formula has been used in many ways over the last century. It is recognized as an important driving force in marketing messaging, copywriting for

advertising and public relations (PR), speech-writing, commercial scripts, blog posts, and content development.

Attention is what this book is about. Attention is the initial reaction of getting noticed. It could be a headline, a graphic, or a provocative statement. All of this is to catch a reader's eye and make them stop, take notice, and continue reading your message. This point of contact and point of attention is generally at the beginning of a message or delivery. The result, ideally, is that the reader wants more; they want to venture further into a message. Other forms of attention-getting include shocking or extreme statements; new information; and interesting story lines.

To get someone else's attention it's essential to stop thinking like a marketer and start thinking like those whose attention you're trying to attract. Get into their mind and influence their thinking. Part of your goal is to have your prospects feel a bond with your message and product and to respond to you favorably, supported by marketing messages.

Once attention is gained—once something gets *noticed*—moving a reader (and a prospective or existing customer) to the point of increased interest is the next marketing challenge. Interest is about engaging with prospects so that they want to spend their valuable time understanding your message more.

Many times, marketing messages are delivered in an interruptive fashion. First, they have to get noticed, but to engage the target of the message requires the building of interest. Talking the language of your prospect is a great start here. Can your prospects identify with what is being communicated? Speaking clearly and accurately builds interest. At no point do you want to confuse the prospect. This diminishes interest, for sure. Speak from the standpoint of your audience; what's in it for them? Answering this question well will help you increase interest.

Once an audience or prospect is interested in something you want to feed that interest. This is a point in the marketing process where you can help them “feel” what you're communicating, and it may also be a way to eliminate a pain point, and enhance desire. For example, your marketing message might state what life would be like without that pain point as another way to increase desire. Understanding customer/prospect emotions will help you to communicate with them in the right way.

Helping them to avoid pain, overcome fears, and feel joy and pride are just a few emotions that boost the desire factor. Lastly, anything related to a potential solution to the prospect's challenges will increase desire.

The whole purpose of marketing is to motivate prospects and customers to take action. That action, many times, is a purchase. It could also be a recommendation, a trial, or comparing one product or service to another. Understanding exactly what is motivating to your customer or potential customer is the final step of the AIDA formula.

Make sure you tell your readers and prospects what to do. In marketing this is the "call to action." Do not leave it to chance that a prospect knows what action to take as a result of the marketing messages; prospects need to be told what to do. The more specific the call to action, the better the response will be. All marketing messages should have a call to action associated with them. Some examples include:

- ! "Call us today!"
- ! Visit our website.
- ! Enter our contest.
- ! Contact us for more information.
- ! Stop by our place of business.
- ! Register for a free webinar.

In Chapter 2 let's explore some real, out of the box, methods for making sure your message gets heard above the whirlwind sweeping up your target audience's attention.

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