

About the Author



Bob Gilbreath is Chief Marketing Strategist at Bridge Worldwide, one of the nation's largest digital advertising agencies and part of WPP. Bob leads the Strategic Planning team within the agency, advising clients such as Procter & Gamble, ConAgra Foods, Kroger, Luxottica, and Abbott. His writing has been featured in Brandweek, he has spoken at Ad:Tech and Harvard Business School, and taught classes at NYU and Miami University.

The Next Evolution of Marketing

Connect with your Customers by Marketing with Meaning



Author: Bob Gilbreath
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■ The Big Idea

Marketing with meaning – the breakthrough strategy for connecting with customers!

The old interruptive model of marketing doesn't work. Customers are tuning out. They no longer listen to in-your-face messages. Instead, they demand meaning in the brands they buy and the marketing that reaches them.

Marketing strategist Bob Gilbreath's hot new concept, **Marketing with Meaning**, represents the next evolutionary step in a progression following direct marketing and permission marketing. This groundbreaking methodology engages customers and wins their business by adding value to their lives. Rather than pushing a product or service, *Marketing with Meaning* woos customers by offering them something of value independent of purchase.

In *The Next Evolution of Marketing*, Gilbreath unveils a revolutionary new approach to business that fills the gaping voids left in bottom lines when people started tuning out. Gilbreath describes the marketing revolution now underway and the powerful forces driving it.

Why You Need This Book

This book is your guide to surviving and thriving in this marketing revolution.

WHAT IS MEANINGFUL MARKETING?

When your marketing is meaningful, people choose to engage with you in an exchange that they perceive as valuable. But engagement is only the beginning. Whatever your product or service may be, when your marketing is meaningful, *the marketing itself adds value to people's lives, whether or not they immediately buy what you're selling*. The marketing itself is of value to consumers independent of the product or service.

Make no mistake: meaningful marketing is not pro bono marketing, nor is it cause marketing (although cause marketing can certainly be meaningful). To be sure, moving products and making money are still the goal and usually the result. If they aren't, it's not marketing.

WHAT MARKETING WITH MEANING CAN DO FOR YOU

Direct marketing was widely adopted in the 1950s, thanks to bulk postage rates, cheaper mailing materials, and the use of some of the first computers available to businesses. For consumers, direct marketing by mail or phone brought some added value – it provided more relevant messages and offers, along with some freedom to ignore the sales pitches altogether. But the industry also abused people's phone lines and mailboxes at an early stage. No wonder the term *junk mail* was first used way back in 1954.

Permission marketing represents a distinct improvement over the tradition “tell and sell” approach to marketing, but in many ways it has made our jobs harder,

as it has fuelled consumers' desire and motivation to opt out of marketing altogether.

Marketing with meaning is the antidote to opting out; it adds value to people's lives independent of purchase – which, as it turns out, is far more likely to win their business and their loyalty. It's marketing that is often more meaningful than the product it aims to sell.

| Direct Marketing | Permission Marketing | Marketing with Meaning |
|---|--|--|
| Approach the consumer directly, using targeted information. | Seek consumer approval and input prior to the approach. | Create marketing that invites consumer participation. |
| "Advertising arrives at my home, whether I like it or not." | "I can choose whether or not to receive relevant advertising." | "The marketing itself improves my life, so I will both notice you and give you my business." |
| "Tell and sell" monologue | "Give and take" dialogue | "Value-added" benefit |
| Interruption | Authorization | Service |
| Focus on medium | Focus on message | Focus on meaning |

What can Marketing with Meaning do for you and your business? Research at Bridge Worldwide and dozens of successful projects for our customers show that the more meaningful people find your marketing, the more they'll be willing to pay for your stuff, the more of an investment they'll make in it emotionally, and the more motivated they'll become to spread the word. This means that you'll be improving your customers' lives, your bottom line, and the world at large.

The best way to illustrate the value of meaningful is to look deeply within pioneering brands that are charting a unique but consistent course. Dove, Nike, Burger King, and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America are but four examples of major brands that are executing this new approach in truly significant ways.

They have abandoned interruption, created marketing that people choose to engage with, connected with them in a variety of innovative new forums, and successfully launched meaningful campaigns that have positively affected both their numbers and the quality of life of the people they're targeting.

WHAT MEANINGFUL MARKETERS KNOW

1. Meaningful marketers never push. They *invite* prospective customers in by creating marketing that appeals to the higher unmet needs in their overall lives.
2. Meaningful marketers know that most of our basic needs are satisfied by the products and services we already buy. But that is not to say that the marketers of these basic products are exempt from creating marketing with meaning – on the contrary. If you sell a commodity, the need and opportunities for you to create marketing whose meaning transcends your product are limitless.
3. Marketing itself must improve consumers' lives and accomplish something of intrinsic value, independent of the product or service it aims to sell, whether or not people actually ever purchase it.
4. More meaning = more money. (The longer equation is more meaning = more loyalty = higher prices = increased sales, but the net results is the same.)

MEANINGFUL SOLUTIONS

Loyalty programs can provide marketers with both valuable data and a platform for one-to-one marketing, enhancing a brand's perceived value.

Separating the meaningful loyalty programs from the meaningless ones isn't rocket science if you concentrate on a few key rules of thumb:

Do

- Focus spending on the 20 percent of customers that drive 80 percent of profit.
- Use individual customer data to guide your efforts.

- Combine easy-to-reach and long-term rewards.
- Make programs easy to enter, understand, and engage with.
- Add visible status rewards to encourage greater purchases and word of mouth.

Don't

- Reward the disloyal.
- Reward volume over profitability.
- Overpromise what you can deliver.
- Pull the plug without plenty of warning and chance to redeem.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

With viral videos, it takes something truly extraordinary to succeed, and this, because of the nature of the medium, is rare. People are increasingly sensitive and cynical about videos that try to hide marketers' true agendas. And even when a marketing-related video does attract genuine, that doesn't mean that it will successfully build your business. Here are some rules of thumb for brand and agency teams:

1. Don't start if you're not willing to take risks. Every successful viral video pushes some boundary; either legal's or brand guidelines'. Get the support you need from the people you need it from beforehand.
2. Stick to a small production budget. Don't break the bank – remember, the odds are long. And low-cost production values and legitimacy – in other words, you'll get a better response from people if your video doesn't look, feel, and smell like a slick ad.
3. Integrate your brand as seamlessly as possible. If you can't work your brand into the action somehow, then it is a wasted effort. But remember to do so subtly, or you'll be stoned by the social networks for trying to infiltrate their sacred space with advertising.

TURN YOUR BRAND INTO A TOURIST ATTRACTION

In the experience economy, you stop at a store to buy, say, a roll of paper towels, but you visit a branded destination in order to enjoy a fully immersive brand experience. Yes, the point of a branded destination is still to make a sale, but if the experience is memorable and satisfying, the stuff essentially sells itself.

If a tampon brand can realize a quadruple return on its marketing spending, surely your brand can find a way to succeed in the social space. Here are five ways that companies of all kinds can benefit from creating social connections between their brands and their customers.

1. Improve the value equation for your product or service.
2. Build loyalty with a niche fan base.
3. Provide better service at a lower cost.
4. Spread positive word of mouth.
5. Gain insights for upgrading current products and launching new ones.

To forge a genuine connection with your customers, you have to be one of your biggest fans, and it helps to be vocal about it. Contrary to what you might have learned in business school, today's successful marketers aren't staying behind the scenes – customers are responding positively to this human-to-human outreach, which often adds a memorable face or personality to the brand.

By building powerful connections between people and brands (and the people behind them), marketing can make a product more interesting and more valuable, and seed long-term loyalty. Creating meaningful connections is an approach that can certainly be more effective than solutions – yet there is another, even higher level of marketing that fewer brands have followed to even greater success.

HOW DOING GOOD MAKES FOR GOOD BUSINESS

Even during economic downturns like the present, the majority (71 percent) of consumers globally say that they are giving as much (or more) time and money to causes they deem worthy, and more than half of them will continue to buy brands that support causes, even at a premium price.

But it's not enough to do good for goodness' sake; as with any other form of marketing, cause-related marketing must be done right and executed well. There are three basic "musts" that ensure good cause marketing:

1. Your target must believe in the cause. Start by understanding what causes are near and dear to your core customer's heart. If you're looking to reach a large, general market, choose something with broad appeal, such as the Red Cross or the United Way; if your target is smaller and more focused, chances are that you already know the causes that the people in it value most.
2. Your brand must fit the cause. You'll fail to win business or fans for your brand if there doesn't seem to be an organic link between what your brand stands for and the cause you're investing in. Everything you do on behalf of your brand reflects on its equity, for good or for ill.
3. Your investment must be meaningful. This may seem to be common sense, but it bears repeating: consumers will not support a program that does not hit some meaningful, minimum threshold of giving back – and they will increasingly use the Internet to protest any perceived tightfistedness. That's not to say that you need to give all of your profits to charity, or that consumers will find, say, a nickel per purchase insignificant.

PREPARE FOR THE WORST WHEN YOU'RE DOING YOUR BEST

There's an old saying, "No good deed goes unpunished," and if you pursue this highest form of achievement marketing, you must be willing and able to defend your position from those inevitable few who will try to take you down a rung or two.

Here are some things to watch out for and risk areas that you should be prepared for in any cause-marketing program:

1. Keep your promises. If you don't, the crowd will pull you down to a place worse than where you started from and probably will never trust your brand again.
2. Actions speak louder than words. The companies cannot win by just talking about their commitment to a cause; they must take real actions that show a meaningful impact on the world.
3. Don't jump on a crowded bandwagon. Don't jump on a crowded bandwagon just because it seems like the right thing to do – people can see through a thinly veiled agenda and will hold it against you.
4. Expect backlash but keep the high ground. No good cause is immune from negative sentiment and cynicism.

What to do in these situations? First, realize that your opponents are leaning on your platform. Listen carefully and demonstrate thoughtfulness and empathy, then let your consumers defend you. If your heart and action are in the right place, they will cast the naysayers.

GENERATING MEANINGFUL IDEAS

Here is a four-step process for meaningful idea generation, which should get you and your team thinking in the right direction:

1. **Graze.** This first step involves the purposeful dumping of data on the heads of your team members. Instead of jumping straight into generating ideas, take a step back and mentally bathe in every piece of information you have so far that has gotten you to this point. This is a good step for making sure that every player on the team – some of whom will be new to the group – is equally knowledgeable by the time ideation begins.
2. **Search for Meaning.** Next, you should start looking for connection within your research, question, and observations. There is still no need to rush to an idea here, so be patient, and simply let the desperate pieces of information you have in front of you marinate.

3. **Drop It.** That's right – leave your Post-its on the board, get out of the office, and do something completely different. Go to a movie. Walk the mall. Believe it or not, when your conscious mind is distracted, 95 percent of your unconscious is still at work trying to solve the problem. This is the same process that, seemingly out of the blue, allows you to remember a name you couldn't recall hours earlier.
4. **Adapt and Distill.** One or two people from the team start sorting through ideas, questions, and comments and begin to focus in on what seems to have the most potential for success.

FINAL NOTES

Ad agencies have lost their role as trusted guide to CEOs – a clear outcome of our mounting focus on producing television commercials instead of business results.

But at least one company shows a glimmer of hope. Google stands at number eight on the most admired list, and is number five on the list of best places to launch a career. Google should actually be considered an advertising and marketing-focused company, since it makes nearly all of its money from search term advertising.

But Google is not a traditional marketing company in any sense of the word. Because it is revolutionizing the advertising and marketing business by providing a service that people find valuable, Google is considered the most valuable brand in the world today, even though it spends almost nothing on advertising.

Increasingly in our society, we feel less motivated by a paycheck and a pat on the back, but instead wish to devote ourselves to work that we find meaningful in our own lives. To return to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as our basic desires for material possession are met, we feel a natural urge to improve the world around us. And while we can contribute money or time outside of the office, people would prefer to spend their days doing work that is itself more rewarding.

Maslow believed that the path to human happiness was best achieved through worthwhile work. Management theorist Douglas McGregor has found that people want their companies to stand for something, and that they will give their best effort when they are working toward a cause they believe in.

In his bestselling book *The Dream Manager*, Matthew Kelly suggests, “When employees believe that what they are doing is helping them to accomplish their personal dreams they can tolerate quite a bit. Highly engaged employees tend to have a vision that they are working toward.”

By creating marketing that people choose to engage with, and that itself improves people’s lives, we are reaching the highest level of personal success.

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THE NEW LAW OF MARKETING – The Next Evolution of Marketing is a true beacon for all brand builders. Many books claim that. For progressive marketers and their advisers anxiously monitoring the tectonic shifts in consumer media consumption and the degrading performance of their traditional marketing strategies, this book does a great job of landing the conceptual plane described by today's media and marketing thought leaders such as Godin, Garfield, and those Punk Marketing guys. Traditional media isn't dead, but over the coming years it will become increasingly important for brands to create value with their actual marketing efforts. While many fashion brands talk the talk when it comes to digital marketing, few truly walk the walk. But companies have a lot to gain by taking digital capabilities from basic to state of the art, including an average 15% increase in revenues. In light of that growth, the marketing of fashion brands has migrated online as well. But while many fashion brands talk the talk when it comes to digital marketing, few truly walk the walk. For example, while 76% of brands see personalization as highly important, only 13% use it comprehensively. Generally speaking, brands are only at the halfway point when it comes to achieving digital-marketing excellence. They have a lot to gain by taking these digital-marketing capabilities from basic to state of the art, including a 15% increase in revenues, on average.