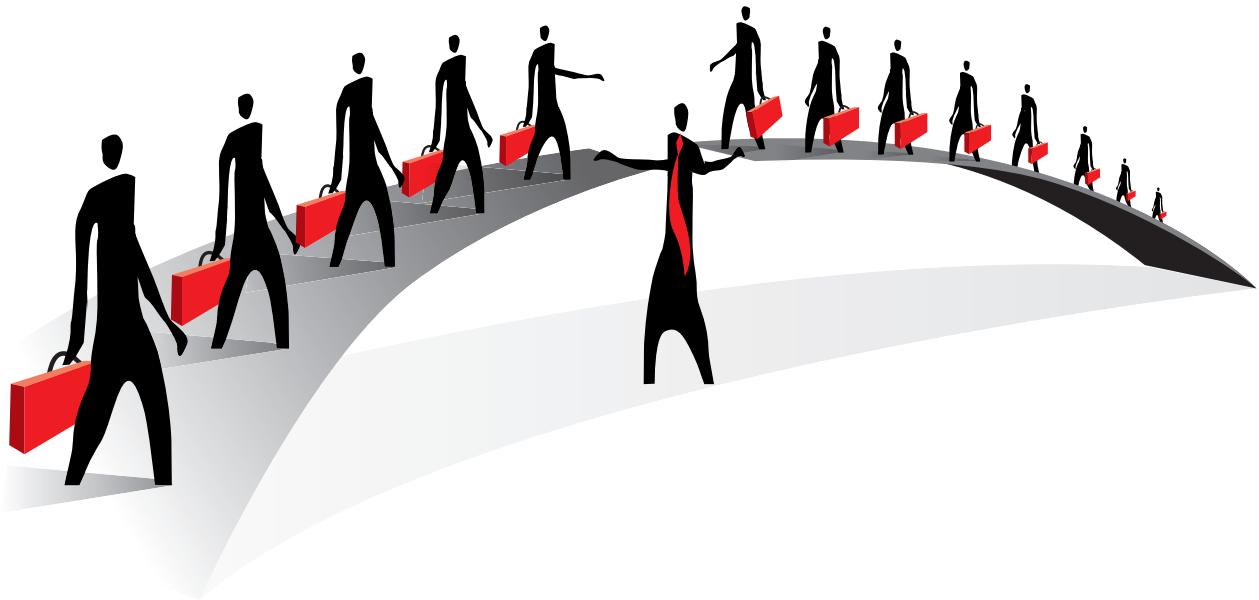


Key Considerations For Building Your Tribe

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Suddenly, we're living in a world of vertical niches. It's a world where, even for large companies, it is no longer cost-effective to try to reach tens of millions of consumers with a single, generic message.

The concept of building a tribe is not only revolutionizing how marketing is performed, but is in concert with the way people interact and communicate on a daily basis. The idea is to build a hub of interactions that becomes the unifying factor for people who are aligned with your message and brand story.

To accomplish this, it's crucial to consider the stark philosophical differences that differentiate tribe building from traditional, interruption-based marketing techniques. Here's a look at some key differences.

Wow vs. Average

Today, people don't talk about average products and services, and they won't go out of their way to buy them. What people talk about today are "wow" experiences that are remarkable in some small but lasting way. This might include customer service that extends beyond polite platitudes, content that informs, inspires and educates, or the way your receptionist handles incoming calls.

Creating wow is really something that happens in the trenches. It's what happens when all your team members and departments pull together with a common end-goal: a delighted customer. Most importantly, it's what motivates your tribe to spread the word – getting them genuinely excited about your offering.

Pull vs. Push

The push marketing of the past has always been costly. Now it has the added charm of being highly ineffective. That's because it's getting harder and harder to push mass-targeted messages to a increasingly jaded and impatient public.

Today's pull marketing is all about the art of attracting targeted prospects with relevant messages. As opposed to the long-held tradition of pushing self-centric messages to a mass audience, pull marketing seeks to engage people with messages that are aligned with their specific interests. This is why, for instance, a well-written blog can now do much more for an enterprise than a generic Yellow Pages insertion.

Permission vs. Interruption

For decades, typical marketing strategies were based on interrupting the prospect or consumer in the course of their daily activities. For instance, with a block ad that interrupts the content flow of a newspaper or magazine, or with a :30 commercial in the middle of a popular program.

Permission marketing is about getting prospects to opt into the conversation. It's about getting the prospect's permission to begin an ongoing dialogue via email, your website, your blog, or through today's wealth of social-media channels.

The future of marketing is for the companies who have the manners to ask prospects whether they want to engage in a conversation. The resulting collaborative bond is more powerful and lasting than any interruptive device could ever hope to be.

Relevancy vs. Spam

In a society where personal space and leisure time are at a premium, consumers have little patience for anything that isn't relevant to their lives. With more choices and devices at their fingertips than ever before, including spam filters and the ubiquitous DVR, they can skip or turn off messages at will.

More than ever, relevance is king. In fact, communicators who can master the art of creating engaging and relevant content can develop the kinds of followers who become evangelists for their product, service and brand – people who truly align with and believe in the thought leadership, innovation and substance that the company brings to the conversation.

Genuine vs. Corporate

We often think of the power of a brand in terms of the impact of its logo, or the impact of its credo-laden tagline. But these are just reminders about your brand – not the brand itself.

A brand promise is encapsulated in the sum total of customer experiences that your enterprise generates. It's about everything you say, do and produce. It's about things your team members do to walk the walk – including the overall quality and service mindset throughout your organization.

Typical 21st-century consumers and prospects are no longer suckers for glitzy ads and clever taglines. Marketing effectiveness is about using genuine and substantive messages to create a place for your product or service in their everyday lives.

That's why strengthening your brand promise isn't about rejigging your mission statement. It's about finding unique points of difference that are inherent within your product or service – advantages that also enhance the lives of your customers.

Story Appeal vs. Listing Features

The idea of positioning your product or service so that it finds a place in people's lives is nothing new, but it's a concept that's more important in marketing than ever. That's why smart companies focus on telling humanizing stories about their brand – versus the listing of product features that are uninspiring at best.

Think about the way story appeal has been used over the years. Beginning with groundbreaking campaigns such as the original Volkswagen ads in the 1960s. Continuing with the John Hancock "Real Life, Real Answers" ads in the 1990s. And even today with the raucous Copenhagen nightlife ads for Amstel Light.

In this over-communicated society, the average prospect barely has time to read and decipher your message. Story appeal enables you to weave an interesting persona around your product. This sets it apart from the pack – while humanizing your company for your tribe and prospective customers.

Web 2.0 vs. Mass Media

Word-of-mouth has always been one of most convincing and cheapest forms of advertising. With Web 2.0 channels at your fingertips, it can now travel at the speed of light to all corners of the world.

This is not to say that today's web-enabled tools are guaranteed to turn your company into an overnight sensation, but it is very feasible to leverage today's super-social connections to expand your sphere of influence surely and effectively.

You can no longer count on traditional media to get the job done. The idea is to put cost-effective Web 2.0 systems in place to bolster your tribe conversation. This can actually enable the consumer to play a role in shaping your brand and its overall promise. Today's big winners are enterprises who are finding a way to channel this energy to enhance the value of their brand↔tribe relationship.

TribalVision is a marketing consulting firm whose mission is to help small to midsize companies market smarter. As a marketing department for hire, TribalVision is a flexible, cost-effective alternative to the traditional marketing solutions available to the business community. The TribalVision value-add includes the crafting of strategy, channel-mix optimization, tactics implementation, executive leadership services, and the building of highly differentiated brands.

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