



Interactive Marketing: from Transactions to Conversations

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A new era of engagement marketing

Marketing gurus often talk about the 20th century as being defined by interruption marketing and the 21st century by engagement marketing. This difference represents a shift in view from consumers as passive receivers of brands to one of consumers as active participants in the production and co-creation of brands. For marketers, this challenges us to move on from a transactional approach (opening up an email, viewing a sample issue, ordering a subscription and so on) to building relationships and brand visibility (influencing attitudes, building loyalty, creating advocates and so on).

New technologies are certainly influential in driving this change in that they make it easier to have ongoing, highly personalised conversations with customers. However, potentially the impact of these technologies goes even deeper than this.

Psychologists and philosophers have called this Generation C – the ‘community or content generation’ – an emerging social model in which people expect direct participation and influence. Dr Peter Marsh of the Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC) speculates that these changes will have a significant impact on us all over the next decade or so. *“Generation C will be middle aged by 2020. This generation has grown up under the Web ideologies of open access, cooperation, exchange and sharing of information, as will all further generations. This will have profound implications on our society.”*

The potential impact for publishers

There are lots of big questions within this for us as publishers of scholarly content, and particularly of content of real value to society. We are not immune to these changes – what might the longer-term impact be on our industry? As we continue to debate the potential effect of open access, author self-archiving and institutional repositories, potentially much bigger and more fundamental changes are coming our way.

What those changes might be and just how far they will go is difficult to say. However, while we can’t predict the future, we can at least observe the present; and this gives us plenty of clues for important trends that we should watch and respond to. Key trends that I think are particularly important centre on the growing complexity of our content offerings and the potential range of business models that we can apply to these to help us broaden our reach into a wider range of markets. These changes alone require a marketing approach that goes well beyond the traditional promotional tactics that have served our industry in the past. We also now have much more of a direct relationship with our customers, particularly with our readers (whose experience of our brands becomes much more personal in a Web environment) but also with institutional purchasers, as we increase our direct sales efforts to

supplement the work of subscription agents who have in the past been very much the guardians of these relationships.

Perhaps some of the most important changes, however, are those that concern the way in which our communities interact with our content and with each other. Authors are of course becoming more aware of the value of their work and their rights associated with that work. They no longer necessarily need publishers – in the traditional sense – for their work to be able to reach a global audience. True, the current system of reward and recognition is very much bound up with traditional way of doing things, but we do have to ask ourselves for how much longer? Engagement marketing isn't a fad. The ideas associated with it have actually underpinned strategic marketing for many years, particularly within highly competitive and fast-moving industries.

On a recent marketing technology blog, the question was asked as to whether David Ogilvy – one of the greatest advertising minds of the 20th century – would recognise marketing today. The response from Rory Sutherland, current Vice Chairman of Ogilvy Group UK, was that he most certainly would. *“Ogilvy's belief was that deep consumer insight, coupled with big creative ideas, is the engine of brand building. Ogilvy has always been about 360 degree branding, using all channels to reach a consumer, always about inviting customers in, rather than forcing a broadcast message.”*

Growing importance of customer insight

To gain deep consumer insight you need to be close to your customers and really, really satisfy their needs. The more creatively you can do this, the more you are likely to gain their interest and attention. Loyalty and advocacy follow if you continue to maintain and build on these relationships, and these are the attributes of the customer-base of a successful business – even in a time of change and increasing competition. Deepening our engagement and interactivity with our communities is therefore what we need to do, as publishers, to continue to be relevant and successful in the future.

Marketing has an important role to play here. In the past, marketing within publishing has, on the whole, been very much a promotional function – seeking to build awareness of publications and achieve transaction-type responses – ideally a sale, or a high-commitment action such as a request for a print sample copy. Once that sale was achieved, our job was pretty much done and we could move onto the next potential customer. The high cost of customer acquisition through the traditional channels of direct mail and advertising necessitated this approach. Building relationships and interaction through regular communication would have been unaffordable, and anyway, back then more than this wasn't really needed. As long

as the editorial department were getting their job right, the marketing bit was relatively easy.

Now, every sale has to be hard fought-for as libraries cope to afford, and negotiate access to, the wide range of content they might wish to buy, often available from multiple sources, some of which might be free. Readers struggle to keep up with the deluge of new information published every day and authors grumble over copyright issues and barriers to access their work. Promotion alone simply isn't enough in this environment. The reality is that our customers are overwhelmed with 'broadcast type' messages from publishers – asking them to use our and buy our content and submit their work to us for publication. Let me give you an example. My sister is a molecular biologist and an active author. She gets several emails every week from journals asking her to submit an article. She sends these on to me so I can get a picture of the marketing that she's exposed to. It's not great. The messages are bland and generic – it's clear she's been picked from a list, there is no real genuine interest in her research or attempt to then explain why this journal is right for HER. As far as she is concerned, these messages are just adding to the general mess and confusion. She hits the delete key and continues to submit to the highest impact factor journals that she can, or those where she has personal connections that might have demonstrated a real interest in her work.

Work in progress

In my view, marketing within publishing is at an early stage with really getting to grips with the new digital environment. We've got all the tools to reach large audiences, frequently and cost effectively now, but we're not quite sure how to use them. We're still focused on broadcasting messages rather than entering into engaging, two-way relationships. More commercial consumer-based organizations are leaving us behind here – they are already moving on from viewing email, mobile and Web channels as means of reaching large audiences very cheaply with generic messages. They are instead increasingly focusing on the opportunity that these channels present to develop deep, personalized relationships. They're not afraid to experiment and use creative and imaginative ideas to get people using and importantly – talking about – their products. They use games and widgets, APIs and visualization techniques. They understand the influence of brand and put together bold creative ideas and look to harness the power of the crowd to build communities around their products and organizations and get peer-to-peer recommendations. They collect and use information about their customers so that they can deliver intelligent and relevant recommendations to them. This really is marketing for the 21st century – engaging, not interrupting.

This is where we need to be in academic publishing. Marketing should be viewed by our customers as a useful service, not an annoyance; one that helps them discover and get maximum value from our content. We can't expect people to keep coming to

us – we have to go to them, meeting with them in their preferred environments, listening to help us understand their needs and responding to ensure we keep meeting them.

But where to start? This can seem overwhelming and as businesses we also have to question what the return will be to us in investing in these kinds of activities. Unfortunately, as so much of this is relatively new, marketers don't yet necessarily have a track record of proving that these techniques really work. However, one of the advantages of the Web environment for marketing is its measurability – you tend to learn very quickly what works and what doesn't. Certainly, most publishers appear to be with me in feeling that developing a more engaging approach to marketing is important. From what I know of working with marketing groups across the publishing sector, things are set to progress in a more interaction-based direction fairly swiftly. Publishers are beginning to sort out their customer databases – profiling them and tagging their content so that they can match the two together with increasing sophistication. This information can then be used to identify niche growth opportunities when compared to the totality of the market, perhaps through a Ringgold analysis. Tools such as DataSalon can be used to analyse and extract information on customers across multiple databases, helping create a 'single view' of their interests and relationships with an organisation. Online hosts are developing the capabilities to offer more personalised products and promotions. Other affordable bolt-on technologies are also becoming available, such as Baynote – which uses the wisdom of the crowd to make intelligent content recommendations to individual Website users.

Acquire, participate, engage, share

To finish with, I wanted to share with you a framework that I've found to be particularly helpful in thinking about developing an interactive marketing program. This is actually based on CRM (customer relationship management) principles. By considering the four aspects of customer acquisition, participation, engagement and advocacy you can begin to adapt your marketing program to maximise your success in each of these areas. Doing so will naturally take you into the world of interactive marketing.

Thinking about marketing as a conversation is also a good way to also focus the mind on creating communications that are likely to resonate with customers. Remembering that we are dealing with human beings is an important part of this. When putting this talk together I was reminded of the famous book from the 1930s – *How to Make Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. The psychologist within me wondered how much these principles might be applied to interactive marketing today, bearing in mind that while technology might change fairly quickly, basic human nature doesn't! Carnegie's six ways to make people like you are:

1. Become genuinely interested in other people.
2. Smile.
3. Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language
4. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
5. Talk in terms of the other person's interests.
6. Make the other person feel important - and do it sincerely.

I felt this was a perfect metaphor for interactive marketing. Keep these principles in mind at all times when communicating with customers and your business will go from strength to strength.