



# 4 untold truths of marketing

an ebook by Alex Lau

SEESHARP

# Don't Overthink It

## It all comes back to the basics

Digital technology has changed the way we live. You only have to look at any group of people and see how their smart phones have become a permanent fixture in their hands for that to be perfectly clear.

One of the areas that has been impacted the most is digital marketing. The major players, notably Facebook and Google, have infiltrated all aspects of the digital marketplace ... and they're only getting bigger.

At the same time, new businesses with new offerings spring up on a weekly basis, so not only is it hard to keep up, it's quite daunting. You don't want to miss out, but you don't want to go in the wrong direction and waste time and money.

A whole new industry has developed, with the self-proclaimed gurus of the technology age positioning themselves as digital superheroes, selling online courses, funnelling you to an online platform, a paid service, and whatever helps them make a buck.

So, while digital marketing grows steadily and healthily on the one hand, the downside is that it has more than its share of shysters and get-rich-quick schemers, driven by greed and pushing unsustainable one-size-fits-all programs.

That's why I wrote this ebook. I admire the solid citizens of the digital marketing world and I'm inspired to follow their example of being community minded. After all, a rising tide lifts all boats.

What I'm presenting here is a reminder to remain grounded because the basics of marketing still apply, no matter how much the digital landscape is changing things.

**“THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY  
TO GET ANYBODY TO DO ANYTHING.  
AND THAT IS BY  
MAKING THE OTHER PERSON  
WANT TO DO IT.”**

Dale Carnegie

A lot of what you will read in this ebook is common sense. I subscribe to the “How to win friends and influence people” model of offering simple, sensible information that can help keep you focused on what works and what matters.

So, if you’re looking for “the best kept digital secret”, “advanced Facebook Ad management” or the “missing piece to your \$100k/month success”, I’m sorry to say that you won’t find that here.

It’s just good old marketing principles contextualised for the digital age for your sustainable and long-lasting growth through online marketing.

---

## It’s about four things:

1. Being Clear
  2. Being Consistent
  3. Connecting
  4. Crunching the Numbers.
- 

Enjoy reading.



**Alex Lau**  
Managing Director, SeeSharp Group

part 1

# Clarity

**Why you** need to **see clearly**  
**before** your customers can





# Clarity

## Why you need to see clearly before your customers can

Just do it. Think different.

A couple of the most iconic taglines in the history of marketing.

There are many reasons they were so effective, not least how direct they were in telling consumers to take action. But guess what. They won't work in 2017.

Just do what? Think different to what? I mean, I wasn't thinking about anything and now I have to think and do it different!?

No, this is the age of cut through. **Ambiguity is the enemy.**

In other words, **stop being cute and start being clear. Crystal clear.**



## There's definitely clutter

The estimates of how many marketing messages - whether they're straight advertising, sponsorships, branding on items we consume, or referenced in conversation - we are exposed to each day vary wildly.

Some people have bandied around numbers in the thousands, which may be true if you count every message that's around us during our waking hours, but I prefer Shari Worthington's view, outlined in 2014, which suggests that we actually see between 300 and 700 per day. That's still a lot.

Now factor in the theory that attention spans are getting shorter, mainly due to technology putting so many stimuli within easy reach, and it drives home the fact that you can't mess about if you want to get a message across.

Last year, Microsoft put out a study that suggested the average human attention span was less than that of a goldfish! They concluded that our average attention span had dropped from 12 seconds in 2000, to just over 8 seconds.

**So, as a business owner with something to sell, you'd better hit your target right between the eyes.**

## Blame the brain

If you understand how our brains work, you'd be crazy not to fall into line with that. I mean you're not going to be able to fight it let alone beat it – unless you discover some amazing way of brainwashing people!

The brain's default position is to avoid burning calories, so the easiest way is always the best.

The brain is also desperate to please itself. So, former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating was 100 per cent correct when he said, "In the race of life, always back self-interest - at least you know it's trying".

Importantly, after all these years of evolution, the brain is highly attuned to survival, instinctively looking for the exit or escape route.

In fact, that informs the attention-span issue. The reality is that **our senses are constantly bombarded by thousands of different stimuli and it's our ability to choose one that's important and focus on that, blocking out others, that helps us survive.**

**“CLARITY TRUMPS PERSUASION.”**

Dr Flint McGlaughlin

## Give the people what they want

Once you accept that there are only those three primary motivations – survival, self-interest, and laziness – you can more easily focus your marketing messages to make clear, simple connections.

### People need to know:

- What is it?
- How does it make my life better?
- How do I engage with it with minimal effort?

If you can answer all three of these questions, you're on your way.

Of course, you also want to answer these three questions as succinctly as possible, if only because your competitors are trying to do the same thing. Even if someone else has an inferior product or service, if they have a clearer message they probably have the advantage.

## What's not clear?

If consumers - potential customers - are going to “get” your product or service they have to get the “what” more so than the why or how.

That means you should be very clear about what you're selling.

As I'm deeply immersed in the operations of the small business community my company serves, I believe that too much emphasis is placed on the why and the how.

The why - expressed in your vision and mission statements - is still an important foundation, because it helps everyone who works for or with you appreciate your motivation.

The how - the detail of methods and processes through which you create and deliver products or services - is also vital to your business, because you need to get that done in the most efficient (and profitable) manner.

But those things are more important to you and your business than they are to consumers. Don't let them become obstacles in the way of giving the outside world a clear message about what you do and what it means to them.

**You must be very, very clear in your own mind and within the four walls of your business because you can't communicate something well if your thoughts are muddled.**



## Do you even know your own “WHAT”?

If given only 30 seconds, most businesses owners struggle to articulate what their business actually does, let alone what makes them stand out from their competitors.

**Think about it: the information that customers want is too hard to explain!**

How many websites have you visited with large swathes of copy, links and buttons sprinkled seemingly everywhere, images that look nice but seem irrelevant, with no clear, singular expression of what the business does?

The reason for this is simple: owners know too much about their businesses and they don't want to leave any of it out, just in case that piece of information turns someone into a customer.

I see it as a version of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out):  
“what if I miss a business opportunity because of something I cut out or didn't say?”.

**The thought that customers won't connect with your business if you present less information is, understandably, hard to reconcile.**

I can certainly relate, as it's a constant internal battle for me, too.



## Making your “WHAT” clear

Start by stopping. Stop caring so much about every little detail of your backstory. Stop worrying about your motivation. Stop the FOMO.

Focus instead on what stands out most to your customer and make that the focal point of your marketing.

If you make your “what” extremely clear it will be so much more effective than the all-inclusive-but-a-bit-messy approach, that it will attract more customers, not fewer.

Here’s a great example. Furniture removals is a pretty cluttered market. It’s not a particularly complicated “what”, but different consumers prioritise different things.

So, you’re starting up a new removals business. What should you call it? What helps you connect with those very basic motivations?

Man With A Van.

So perfect it’s genius.

**Of course, it’s not always as easy as saying it with your name, but it shouldn’t be much harder than that to articulate your “WHAT”.**





## Didn't I say **"Stop Worrying"**?

If I've heard this follow-up question once, I've heard it 200 times: "Won't Man With A Van miss out on other customers?"

**I look at it this way: if you don't even get your foot in the door, you're missing out on 100 per cent of customers!**

Man With A Van gets its foot in a lot of doors simply because of its **clear, direct** message. Then they can offer great deals and incentives to get more business.

Creating the best messaging for your business to get its foot in a lot of doors gives you the best opportunities to upsell, build a great reputation, earn customer loyalty (for repeat business), and so on.

**So, focus on doing one thing really, really well**, stop worrying about doing everything - even if you can - and **make sure people can't help but "get it"**.

**"THE ATTENTION ECONOMY IS NOT GROWING,  
WHICH MEANS WE HAVE TO GRAB THE ATTENTION  
THAT SOMEONE ELSE HAS TODAY."**

Brent Leary

## Premium branding is clarity

I've discussed the definition of branding before but, in this context, I think it's worth reiterating the aim of branding.

According to BusinessDictionary.com (gee, I wonder what they do?)

"Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers".

**To make your presence "differentiated"**, you identify a specific, desirable niche.

**To make your presence "significant"**, you make what you do so clear that it stands out from the clutter.

Now keep in mind that this doesn't impact on your broad range of products or services, it simply means that you don't try to outline them all right off the top.

**It's about creating the easiest, most obvious entry point for consumers, because - at least initially - it's all about giving them a REASON to choose you.**

## Self-awareness is Crucial

It's probably no surprise to you that one of the hardest things about business is accepting criticism. It's even harder to criticise yourself. But you have to if you want to get better.

Let's make it a bit easier to take by calling it "self-reflection". You don't need to be hard on yourself, just honest.

**Ask yourself these five questions ... and answer them as honestly as possible:**

- Is my knowledge of the business hurting my marketing messaging?
  - Do customers give me that blank look after asking what my business does?
  - Do I have trouble explaining my business to a 10-year-old?
  - Do I often use the phrase "we do everything"?
  - Do I see more we's than you's in my marketing collateral?
- 

## Clarity is getting Closer

I know some of these concepts aren't ground breaking, so much so that idioms such as "less is more" and "keep it simple, stupid" have started to sound like jargon.

But we do have to keep those things front of mind, because the temptation to lay it all out there is so strong (that FOMO I mentioned earlier).

At the end of the day, it's a mental game for us as entrepreneurs: are we willing to give up what we think is important and valuable and start giving the customers what they want?

**As business owners, we have to force ourselves to think more like consumers,** which is why it's often extremely helpful to get some outside opinions from fresh, unbiased eyes.

As consumers, we are annoyed by the noise and we learn to ignore a lot of it, but as business owners (and sometimes as marketers) we just make it a whole lot noisier.

As Donald Miller from Story Brand puts it:  
***"When you confuse you lose; noise is the enemy".***

That's why at SeeSharp we have developed a full system to help business owners gain clarity around the "what" in their business.

**CLARITY IS, AFTER ALL, THE *ENEMY* OF CLUTTER,  
AND *STRIPPING AWAY* THE CLUTTER HELPS YOU SEE CLEARLY.**

## Find out for yourself

Here's a way you can find out whether you are being seen clearly.

Get three potential customers, ideally cold leads, to look at your website.

### Ask them to answer these four questions:

- What is it?
- Is it for me?
- How can I engage with it?
- How can it make my life better?

**Whatever the feedback, embrace it, because there's no value in thinking everything's fine the way it is when it's not.**

A portrait of Richard Branson, smiling and wearing a light-colored shirt, is overlaid on the right side of a dark blue background. The text is overlaid on the left side of the same background.

**“WHEN WE LAUNCHED A NEW COMPANY,  
I REVIEWED THE ADS AND MARKETING MATERIALS  
AND ASKED THOSE PRESENTING THE CAMPAIGN  
TO READ EVERYTHING ALOUD TO TEST  
THE PHRASING AND CONCEPT.  
IF I COULD GRASP IT QUICKLY,  
THEN IT PASSED MUSTER.  
WE WOULD GET OUR MESSAGE ACROSS ONLY  
IF IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE AT FIRST GLANCE.”**

Richard Branson



part 2

# Patience

the **crucial element**  
for **ongoing success**



# Patience

## The crucial element for ongoing success

Ask small business owners “What’s the most important resource in your business?” and the most common answer is “My people”.

You can even elevate it to a more spiritual level: Christian business coach Wez Hone phrases it “the currency of Heaven is people”.

Now change the question to “What’s the most important resource in getting business?” and it becomes a lot harder to answer. It takes some thought and you get a variety of responses.

So, let’s think about how you get customers. No doubt marketing plays a significant role, and the extent and effectiveness of your marketing is driven by two resources: money and time.

From my experience, **business owners find it much harder to commit sufficient time than enough money to their marketing efforts.**

**Regardless of the budget you allocate to marketing, you’ll get a far better return if you also invest time.**



**LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT RARELY HAPPENS IN BUSINESS-CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS, SO YOU NEED TO WOO PEOPLE TO WIN THEM OVER.**

## How do you *WOO*?

**Yes, marketing is probably a little like dating. Maybe even a lot like dating!**

A certain sort of customer will jump straight into bed with you as soon as they see what you've got to offer, but you'll probably never see them again.

They're also unlikely to add a great deal to your reputation.

Customers worth having, on the other hand, need a bit of wining and dining, perhaps some flowers and chocolates, and - most importantly - some time getting to know you, before they commit.

The amount of time will vary, because different people respond to different cues, but those discerning customers aren't easy.

Some might not realise that they're unhappy in an existing relationship until they find they have a better connection with you.

In the end, **consumers value a relationship as much as you do**, but they hold all the power, because they're the ones who decide whether it's worth entering into one with you.

***SO BE CONFIDENT IN HOW YOU PRESENT YOURSELF  
AND DON'T SHY AWAY FROM EXPOSING THE REAL YOU,  
BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WHO CONNECT WITH THAT  
WILL BE GENUINE TOO.***



## The Extremes of Relationships

Taking the relationship scenario further, we're comparing what you get from a one-night stand with what you get out of marriage.

You might have some success with a one-off campaign, but it doesn't establish any sort of habit nor does it expose any true value. It's opportunistic, for both parties, just like a casual fling.

Yes, you get something out of it - an immediate, short-term "fix" of a cash injection into your business - but you don't establish any grounding for return business, meaning you have to do it all over again next week.

On the other hand, **if you establish your business and brand as the non-negotiable go-to for a certain customer need, you have the foundation of a long-term relationship.**

Claiming that "before all others" status allows you to take a few liberties (within reason). You can charge more for a premium product or service, you have the position and leverage to upsell or cross-sell, and you can even ask your committed customer base to introduce you to their friends.

**"PEOPLE ARE IN SUCH A HURRY TO LAUNCH THEIR PRODUCT OR BUSINESS THAT THEY SELDOM LOOK AT MARKETING FROM A BIRD'S EYE VIEW AND THEY DON'T CREATE A SYSTEMATIC PLAN."**

Dave Ramsey

## The Real World

See if you recognise this scenario: you have a great plan that you commit to, then something happens and you change it.

At SeeSharp, we often establish a minimum three-month strategy, because we know it takes at least that long for any sort of habits to be formed or patterns to emerge.

Some clients start to get impatient within a couple of weeks, can't understand why there aren't some stronger "results", and want to make changes. They can't make themselves trust the process.

Others see some good initial results (which we concede may simply be because they are coming from such a low base they couldn't help but improve) and get overexcited, wanting to ramp up so that they can change the world tomorrow.



## Be Sensible, Don't Overreach

As covered in *Why you need to see clearly before your customers can*, the starting point to getting your message across is **clarity**.

Once you have that, don't throw it away by sending mixed messages.

**Plan well, communicate clearly, and be consistent, with the style, content, methods, volume and frequency of your marketing messages.**

Don't even think about beginning your marketing, particularly online and via social media, until you have a message you can deliver clearly and consistently.

Then commit to it as strongly as you can, being practical and not overambitious.

It's very easy to start anything, your digital marketing included, with a great deal of enthusiasm but - as most of us who've ever joined a gym know - life often gets in the way and the best of intentions can easily fall by the wayside.

**Formulate a realistic plan that you know you can stick to, and be as disciplined as you are in your many other business commitments** (even more if that's possible).

Don't waste the initial energy and effort that builds a certain expectation on the part of your audience by pulling the rug out from under them when you can't maintain your momentum.

That's like a broken promise. If you let people down with something as basic as marketing, they won't even stop to wonder whether they can rely on you at all, because they'll already have found someone else to fill the void you left.



## Planning trumps Creativity

As personal branding guru Chris Ducker's [recent post on Instagram](#) noted "If it doesn't get scheduled it doesn't get done".

The message here is that you need to be strategic and only commit to something you know you can deliver consistently. Not for one week or even four, but on an indefinite, ongoing basis.

Don't be in such a hurry to get something out there into the marketplace that you start before you're ready. The more time you spend planning, the easier it will be to carry out the plan.

Then, **once you have your marketing in place, stick with it. Tweak it according to feedback, by all means, but don't just give up on it.**

Especially don't come up with what you suddenly decide is a better idea and replace it after only a short period.

If you've come up with another great idea and what you've planned still has a couple of months to run, that just gives you that time to plan how you're going to step it up with the next campaign based on this new message or approach.

It's easy to "lose" someone that you've started to nurture a relationship with through a misstep, something that they find jarring or unfamiliar.

Remember, the aim is for them to get to know you, and if you suddenly change your appearance, they'll be confused and might not even recognise you anymore.

**While it's great to be creative - and I'll never discourage creativity - it's better to be organised.**

THAT'S OFTEN DEVALUED, BUT **YOU CAN EASILY TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN INDIVIDUAL OR BUSINESS THAT HAS ITS ACT TOGETHER AND ONE THAT DOESN'T.**



## Why Consistency Matters

**Your ultimate aim is conversion**, turning a tyre-kicker into a buyer. Some people take a little bit of convincing, others a lot, and of course some will decide to “go in a different direction”.

By allowing your audience to become familiar with who you are, what you do, how well you do it, and what that means to them, they become comfortable having you around.

Once they become comfortable, after a little more time (again, this is impossible to quantify because it varies greatly from person to person) they will decide whether to engage.

**Engagement leads to the relationship you were aiming for all along: conversion.**

Look at it this way: you could spend \$5,000 or \$6,000 making an impressive three-minute video, but if that’s your only asset and there’s no further information or follow up, you’re asking people to go through all the stages at once.

Even if people love it, it’s still only making them aware. It takes more to make them comfortable, more again to get some engagement, and more again to consummate the relationship.

Instead, you could spend about the same time and money scripting, planning, shooting and editing, but create a consistent output of, say, ten 30-second videos.

**Consistency is about building a warm audience, so you have to apply heat gently over time.**

**“FOR A TRULY EFFECTIVE SOCIAL CAMPAIGN,  
A BRAND NEEDS TO EMBRACE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES  
OF MARKETING, WHICH INVOLVES BRAND DEFINITION  
AND CONSISTENT STORYTELLING.”**

Simon Mainwaring

## Consistent Messaging equals Steady, Scalable Business

I can't dispute that it's possible for a "one-off" can be the best thing you ever put out there, but the problem is that you can't rely on that to be a steady funnel.

However, if you do something consistently, you can see how people react and connect.

You have something you planned and are therefore able to monitor and analyse, which gives you a solid foundation on which to build (I discuss collecting, analysing and leveraging data later).

You also don't need to come up with a new idea every week.

Gary Vaynerchuk puts out fresh content every day, and it's always interesting, but his underlying message never changes. He preaches hustle.

Because his content clearly illustrates that he actually practices what he preaches, he is more relatable and more trustworthy.

**So invest time. Don't panic. Don't chop and change. Don't lose interest.**

**Having lots of ideas is great but they don't get traction without patience.**

---

## Momentum is Everything

Marketing is a continuum. You might not see much different from one day to the next, but the changes are happening and, with time, you can make significant progress.

If you are looking to build a solid brand, with a strong reputation, you must claim a prime piece of real estate in the minds of consumers – actual and potential customers – with consistent behavior and messaging.

The Golden Arches is known by people of all ages the world over as the McDonald's logo. Coca-Cola's red packaging dates all the way back to the 1890s, while Cadbury introduced its trademark purple as a tribute to Queen Victoria (it was her favourite colour) 100 years ago.

**As the old Mortein insect spray slogan goes, when you're on a good thing, stick to it!**





## What Not To Do

SeeSharp has had first-hand experience of how this approach works, as well as seeing why the opposite doesn't.

A client had produced a great video that went viral, not exactly overnight but as good as, with over a million views in six months. That brought in plenty of custom and cash, but it also kept them extremely busy.

As a result, when all of the opportunities that came from the video had been exhausted, they had no fresh content, no ongoing pipeline, no follow-up strategy.

All they could hope for was to create another piece which achieved the same results, but by that time they had more competition (some of it less expensive) and had lost traction.

**Unfortunately, the customer feedback reflected the fact that they hadn't formed enough strong relationships and weren't seen as the go-to authority in their field.**

**“THERE ARE NO MAGIC WANDS, NO HIDDEN TRICKS, AND NO SECRET HANDSHAKES THAT CAN BRING YOU IMMEDIATE SUCCESS, BUT WITH TIME, ENERGY, AND DETERMINATION YOU CAN GET THERE.”**



part 3

# A Massive Boost with Emotion



# Get a Massive Boost with Emotion

Some small business owners are so confident in their product or service that they don't consider what makes people buy it - or decide not to.

Unfortunately, that means they're leaving a lot of money on the table.

There are so many factors at work in every buying decision a consumer makes it's outright negligence to ignore some of the most significant ones.

Sure, if you lead your category in quality and have reasonable pricing, you're definitely under consideration from most people looking for what you sell.

However, **marketing isn't about the product. It's about solving a problem.**

If someone doesn't know why they need your product, if they can't see what problem you're going to solve for them, you're not going to make a sale.

Similarly, if a competitor articulates the value (to the consumer) of their product better than you do, they'll get the lion's share of business in your sector.

---

## Think like a customer

Your thought processes and your messaging should be aimed squarely at consumers.

That means "no" to "I'm awesome. Come buy from me" and "yes" to "You're so awesome. You deserve this - and it will make you even more awesome!".

This is another opportunity to give yourself a serious reality check.

Is your intimate knowledge of your business and your product getting in the way?  
Do you have an unshakable belief in your premium quality which makes you wonder why everyone doesn't automatically see it?  
Is an inability to get consumers to think like you ultimately hurting your business?  
Because, whether you're right or not, you're losing.

**Change it up so that the customer is the hero... and feels like it.**





## Tell them about it

This is where it's important to think like consumers, because it's their decision whether to make any sort of transaction – let alone form a more meaningful relationship - with your business.

What do people care about? It's things like looking more attractive, feeling healthier, having an easier life, saving time and money, getting where they need to go, being good at their job, eating tasty food, doing interesting and fun things, and generally being happy.

**In order to create a robust marketing message for your business, you must address two main issues in customer behaviour: INTERNAL and EXTERNAL problems.**

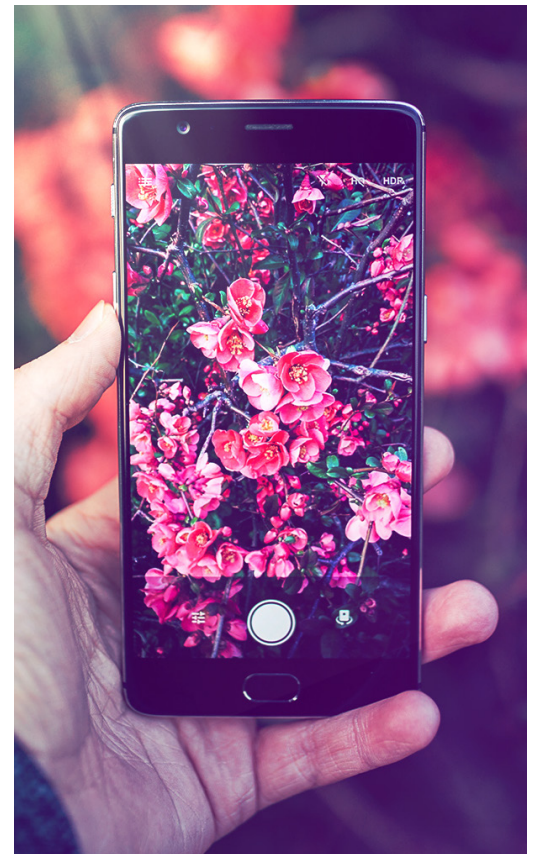
On a surface level, your product can overtly address an external problem; a functional, physical solution that brings a tangible improvement to an existing environment.

But the holy grail is addressing an internal problem. That is: satisfying a customer's deepest desires, which elicits an emotional response from them. That's what the world's biggest brands thrive from doing. Just think about your "real" motivation for buying the latest gadget from Apple, drinking Coke, or driving through McDonald's.

Take the example of home fitness equipment, which we see advertised all the time. The external problems are convenience and saving time and money by not having to go to a gym. The internal ones are physical health and appearance. I can be fitter and look better.

Your product definitely solves some problems, but you need to articulate that. That's exactly and entirely what "sales" is about.

**Each consumer is asking him or herself "how does this product make my life better?", so tell them!**



**“THE AIM OF MARKETING IS TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER SO WELL THE PRODUCT OR SERVICE FITS HIM AND SELLS ITSELF.”**

Peter Drucker

## Shaping the Message

Here's an example. An ad for a personal trainer says: "get a six pack in six weeks".

**The external driver** is better health.

**The internal drivers** are greater confidence and being happier with your appearance.

**The emotional aspect** is "I'm going to impress the ladies at the beach before the end of summer".

However, that's a very general outlook. You can shape the message to different audiences because they have different external, internal, and emotional problems they want solved.

Let's say someone is overweight. His external is a bit more urgent because the health and wellbeing is more compromised. But his internal - I just want to be a normal person better able to do everyday things - is probably also quite high.

**The emotional driver is one we all have in common - I just want someone to love me, and my weight is a barrier.**

Then there's the skinny teenager. He really wants to look good too, his confidence is low because he compares himself to the more well-built guys (and assumes everyone else does too) and he is most likely driven by a desire to show others - peers, family members - that he can do it.

What about the Babyboomer? He is more driven by keeping in reasonable shape (physical maintenance), has a need to prove to himself that he can still do it (no-one wants to feel that life is passing them by), and doesn't want to miss out on opportunities that younger, fitter people are able to take advantage of.



**“BY PUBLISHING CONTENT THAT SHOWS BUYERS YOU UNDERSTAND THEIR PROBLEMS AND CAN SHOW THEM HOW TO SOLVE THEM, YOU BUILD CREDIBILITY.”**

Ardath Albee

## Make People Feel ... **SOMETHING**

Unfortunately having a good product that's good value and solves a problem isn't enough to make most people hand over their hard-earned money.

**If people don't feel something, they'll only admire what you're selling. You need them to crave it. Better yet, you need them to feel like they can't go another minute without owning it.**

That's appealing to their emotions, because we're all emotional buyers. Think about your last major purchase and all the reasons you think you made that buying decision. I guarantee that no matter how many factors you considered, it was emotion that sealed the deal.

Even if you're the sort of person who does a heap of research, you're doing that to fulfil your emotional position of being analytical. You're being true to yourself so you can feel a sense of satisfaction that only comes with the belief that you made a reasoned and logical choice.

You may take pride in your ability to research and make sound decisions based on facts, but you also make emotion-based decisions about how much weight those facts should have.

Let's say you're buying a car. If you consider its appearance, that's emotional (aesthetics). If you consider the make, that's also emotional (badge value). If you consider fuel economy, that's emotional (saving money). If you consider safety, that's also satisfying an emotion (reducing risk and anxiety).

So, as a marketer, **it doesn't matter what emotion you're appealing to. As long as a potential customer has an emotional reaction, they're moving closer to becoming an actual customer.**



## So Many Emotions

Studies have found that advertising that appeals purely to emotion is around twice as effective in persuading someone to buy as ads that are entirely logical and rational.

At the same time, language that speaks directly to and about the consumer is proven (a very emotionally persuasive word) to be more effective than talking about the product or the world in general.

**A product that promises to make someone look better appeals to his or her vanity. One that makes someone feel as if they'll be missing out if they don't have it leverages envy, jealousy, covetousness or, as we call it these days, FOMO.**

You could appeal to pride or trendsetting or leadership - the desire to be seen as having the best or to be the first in your peer group - or guilt, fear, competition, greed, belonging, and a good handful of others.

**Perhaps one of the strongest and most important is trust (that's where "proven" comes in).** Some of the language depends on your market, for example higher-end brands should avoid using the term "free", as that can be seen to cheapen their offering, while some of it is more likely to be campaign specific.

Then, of course, there's the imagery. People respond strongly to visual cues, so words aren't nearly enough to get the emotions running.

Advertisers don't only use models in ads because they're nice to look at. People subconsciously make the connection between using the product and looking good, or even being associated with good-looking people.

**CELEBRITY SPRIUKERS WORK THE SAME WAY.  
IF I USE THE SAME PRODUCT AS GEORGE CLOONEY,  
I'LL BE JUST LIKE HIM.**





# Emotions also Influence Loyalty

While information may help change someone’s emotional state it’s the emotion that matters.

But changing a potential customer’s emotions isn’t enough. To turn that person into an actual customer, you need to elicit an emotion - or a combination of emotions - that makes them pull out their credit card.

In September, the Harvard Business Review published an article identifying [30 “elements of value”](#), and placing them in a hierarchy pyramid.

**They grouped those elements into four categories: functional, emotional, life changing, and social impact.**

At the base of the pyramid are the functional elements, things like saving time, reducing effort or costs, simplifying life, and reducing risk.

The next level lists the factors the HBR writers identified as emotional: reducing anxiety, rewarding the buyer, attractiveness, wellness, fun, and so on.

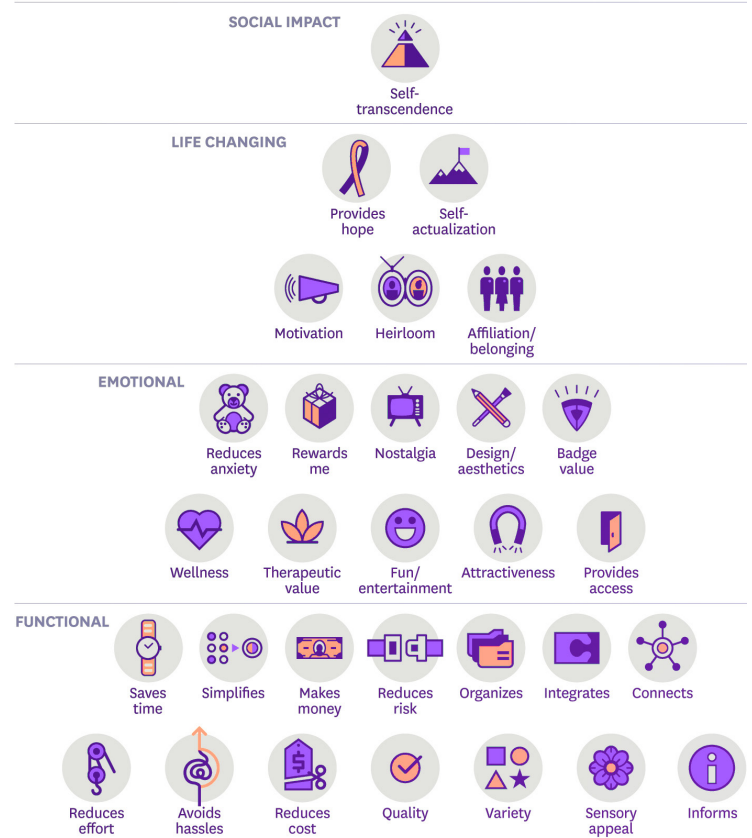
Above that were five elements labelled as “life changing” and one as “social impact”.

**However, despite the categorising, ALL of the elements elicit emotions.**

**You feel something when you save time or money. You feel something when something that used to be hard is now easier. You feel something when you can do something more safely.**

Looking at all 30 elements of value, they are all about emotion, even the one sitting atop the pyramid, which they have called “self-transcendence” (things like giving to charity or saving the environment, doing good for someone or something other than yourself).

The conclusion they drew was that the more of these 30 elements of value a business offered, the greater the customer loyalty and the higher the company’s sustained revenue growth.



SOURCE © 2015 BAIN & COMPANY INC. FROM “THE ELEMENTS OF VALUE,” SEPTEMBER 2016



## Sharing is Caring

Now let's practically put that in the context of social media.

Be conscious of the fact that if you appeal to someone's emotions you're much further along the path to a sale than if you don't.

The emotional connection may initially be just that: they "get" you, as a business or brand.

**You've appealed to a feeling in them that they like feeling, so they like you for making them feel that way.**

If you post something on social media, a "like" is a good thing, but a "share" is a lot better, *because that shows that you have brought out stronger emotions in that person.*

When you share something on social media it indicates that you feel comfortable, even proud, being associated with that post and the person or company that created it. By hitting the "share" button, you are announcing to the world that that brand, content and key message are representative of you and your identity, and that's highly emotional.

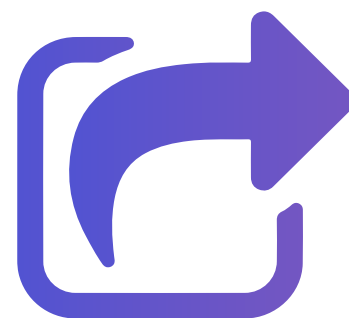
For example, if you share content about the Leonardo DiCaprio documentary *Before the Flood* you're showing that not only are you someone who's concerned about the environment, but that you're proud of it.

**Much like being an actual shareholder, the social media "share" is a serious commitment.**

That's where trust comes in, because people are more likely to publicly commit to a business or brand they trust, and their trust, in turn, plays a significant role in whether their friends and peers follow their lead.



A "LIKE" is a good thing  
**BUT**  
a "SHARE" is a lot better



**"CONTENT BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS.  
RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT ON TRUST.  
TRUST DRIVES REVENUE."**

Andrew Davis

part 4

# data is valuable





# Opinions are cheap, data is valuable

So, you have clarity about what you're selling, you're committed to consistency and putting in the time to build your brand, and you've identified and incorporated the appropriate emotional triggers into your marketing.

**Unfortunately, I have some bad news. Even if you're doing everything else extremely well, it's all being undermined if you don't capture and crunch the data.**

Sure, your gut instinct could be very effective. You speak to people and get good feedback. Your business is profitable and sales are on the up.

But it's all based on a fragile, ad hoc, way of operating that's not sustainable in the long term, let alone able to be steadily improved upon.

**MEANWHILE WHAT ARE YOU EVEN BASING YOUR MARKETING ON?**



## Where's your proof?

**Any marketing exercise is useless if you don't have a way to test and measure.**

The results you see might simply be an anomaly or may have been significantly impacted by external factors, yet you would incorrectly attribute them to what you've just done.

Even asking people can be totally misleading due to a form of confirmation bias. We are inclined to see and then recall things in a way that fits in with our existing experience and understanding, and tell others what we think they want to hear.

**Data doesn't mislead you. It shows you what actually happened.**

It's up to you to analyse it and decide what to do next, but at least you have factual, empirical evidence on which to base your decisions.

It's less thinking like a business owner or even a customer (which I often suggest), and more thinking like a scientist. You simply observe and record behaviour and draw conclusions from the evidence.

**CAPTURING AND ANALYSING DATA** GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO **STRENGTHEN YOUR MESSAGE AND INCREASE YOUR SUCCESS.**





# “YOU NEED THE KIND OF OBJECTIVITY THAT MAKES YOU FORGET EVERYTHING YOU’VE HEARD, CLEAR THE TABLE, AND DO A FACTUAL STUDY LIKE A SCIENTIST WOULD.”

Steve Wozniak

## But it Sounds so Hard

**Doing things well isn’t always easy, but you really cannot afford to overlook data analytics in your marketing, so you must either learn that skill yourself or allocate the budget and the people to get it done.**

It shouldn’t be hard to find people. [A World Economic Forum study](#) has found that one of the fastest expanding fields of employment over the next 10 to 15 years will be in marketing, with skills in data analytics, social intelligence and new media literacy (no, I didn’t know that was a thing, either).

At the same time, I completely understand that many small business owners are afraid of looking at data and analytics, and there are several reasons.

For some, it’s better to be blissfully ignorant than to risk finding out something unsettling or unpleasant that will not only force you to act, but depress you as well.

Others are concerned that something that they’re personally invested in might not be working all that well and seeing the facts will leave them with no option but to ditch it.

**Perhaps the most common reasons for avoidance are that it means making hard decisions and spending some money to implement changes.**

What I say to all of that is, once you start getting the insights data allows you to have, and especially once you’ve made an adjustment that makes a positive difference, you’ll be hooked. I’ve seen plenty of reluctant starters become converts!

**Above all, this is an exercise in honesty. If you’re happy lying to yourself, you’re happy with your business failing. The truth of the data will, however, set you free.**

Initially, testing and measuring properly might cost a bit, but before long it’ll be saving you a lot. The next step is making money, and good data and analytics does that.



## Don't Worry, You're NOT Starting from Scratch

**Thanks to rapid advances in digital technology, it's never been easier to collect and review data**, and the result of having access to so much data is the potential to gain so many insights that can positively impact your bottom line.

For example, Google AdWords offers a Keyword Planner which gives you data gained from millions upon millions of searches so that you can easily see what words and phrases are being used most, then incorporate the best ones in your content.

Other companies have spent years analysing thousands of headlines, articles, blog posts, and other social media content to determine what works best.

For example, we've seen some significant changes in which words are most likely to result in someone clicking a headline to read a blog post.

We also have a great deal of data around the psychology of colours, including how people perceive a business that uses certain colours, and we know that people are more likely to respond favourably to an image featuring a person than one only showing a product.

So, there's plenty of information to ensure that your starting point is well-considered. From there, it's up to you to find out what works best for your business and your target market.

**Don't risk being left behind by competitors who are embracing data analytics, after all, they don't even have to do it well to be better than someone who's not doing it at all.**



**“IT NO LONGER MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE TO SEND AN ADVERTISING MESSAGE TO THE MANY IN HOPES OF PERSUADING THE FEW.”**

M. Lawrence Light

## You're Definitely **NOT** Reinventing the Wheel

**Collecting the data is only a small part and, admittedly, interpreting it isn't always simple, but sometimes the changes that you make are.**

Some businesses and marketers have reported that people have responded favourably or unfavourably to a single word in a slogan or marketing message, while others have found that a change of colours on a website has resulted in longer user sessions and more conversions.

**There are good reasons behind most website design conventions: they're backed by volumes of data on usability and user experience.**

So, keep in mind that you're not reinventing the wheel. If certain things have been proven to work for many other businesses, and particularly if they are in a similar field or have similar products or services to yours, don't think you'll stumble across something revolutionary.

People are really not that complex and, to a large degree, human behaviour is predictable. Consumer behaviour can be even more accurately predicted, if only because the world's biggest companies (and their advertising and marketing agencies) have spent enormous amounts of money studying it.

That means you don't have to spend a lot of time or money getting well set up, but you should dedicate a reasonable amount to the tweaking that you will need to do to make everything work for you as well as it can.

**Ultimately, the aim is that of all marketing and analytics: to make more sales.**



**MORE SALES**

## Where to Start?

Google Analytics gives you some important insights into users' online behaviour from seeing where people come from, what they do once they get to your site, and how long they stay.

When it comes to advertising on Facebook or Google, both give you extensive data on how many people have been exposed to your ads and what they've done next.

The next level is something like Hotjar, which tracks user behaviour on a website or landing page, including how the cursor moves around, to create a "heatmap". You get a visual representation of exactly what users are looking at when they are on each page that they visit.

What's known as A/B testing or split testing, where half the visitors to a website are served one version of something and the other 50 per cent something slightly different is also generally very revealing.

It could be as simple as testing the position or colour of a button, or the text of a call to action. Sometimes both options are effective, but in most cases one will be a clear winner. Then it's no longer an educated guess, but a proven fact, that that colour or that text is better than the other version.

Of course, you can then keep going, matching the winner against a new option.

**Whatever your analysis tools, if a particular link or button drives most of the traffic to an important place, whether it's an enquiry or sign-up form, a product information page or the shopping cart, you'd be thinking about how to put that link or button on more pages.**





## What we can learn from Netflix and Obama

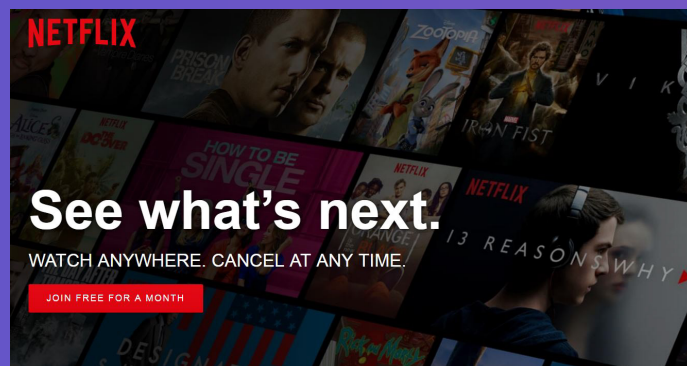
The people at Netflix thought it would be better if people could browse the entire catalogue of shows before signing up, so they listed all of their programs and movies.

They were fairly convinced that allowing non-members to browse content would improve sign-up conversion. But they did some A/B testing anyway, with five tests comparing two different versions of the site.

### What did they discover?

**People don't want to browse the catalogue, they just want to sign up.**

If you look at the Netflix website, you'll see a big red button saying: "Join free for a month". And that's about it.



But wait – there's more! When they asked people, 46 per cent said they wanted the catalogue, so what the testing clearly exposed is that you can't believe what people say as much as what they do.

Then there was the Obama campaign. Not only did the campaign crunch an incredible amount of voter-related data, it placed an unprecedented level of importance on social media and online assets. For the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign, the website barackobama.com simply asked "Are you in?", offered two fields for an email address and ZIP code, and a red button saying: "I'm in!".



But that wasn't their starting point. Overall - on the website, blog, Facebook, and Twitter - they did between 400 and 500 tests of images, wording, videos, buttons, and so on.

For example, they tried having an image of a smiling Obama on the website home page, but found conversion rates were higher without it! Instead, the picture of the president smiling was placed on the "thank you" page, where they went a step further and canvassed for donations to fund the campaign.

## Optimisation is an Ongoing Challenge

**Optimisation is a great word for what we're trying to do, because it means getting the very best from something.**

There's site optimisation, which ensures the performance of a website is as fast and smooth as possible.

There's Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), which aims to improve a site's ranking on search engines.

Then there's something that's a bit more complex, Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO), which involves making small changes to a website (and other digital assets) to improve how efficiently it turns a visitor - a tyre-kicker - into a customer.



Even though it has its complexities, because it is data driven it's simply a case of analysing and interpreting what the data tells you.

**Again, the important thing is that you gather the data in the first place. You can't analyse it or act on it if you don't collect it.**

That means the starting point for any online activity and particularly any marketing campaign must be "how will we measure this?".

**There's no point doing something with no means of measurement.**

**“WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT CONSUMERS ARE LOOKING FOR, WHAT THEIR VALUES ARE, AND HOW CAN WE MEET THEIR NEEDS. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT BIG DATA; IT'S ABOUT TRANSLATING THAT INTO THE TRUTH.”**

Gayle Fuguitt

part 5

# the bottom line



# The Bottom Line

## It all comes together in the end

The data is really the final piece in the marketing puzzle. It tells you what's working and what isn't, which gives you the information and the opportunity to do it better.

However, if any one of the four pillars I've covered isn't in place, the whole thing comes tumbling down.

So, be **clear** about what you're selling and what messages will help you communicate that clearly.

Be **consistent** and patient in getting your messages out there, and allowing people to get to know you and your offering well enough to feel familiar and comfortable.

Work out what **emotions** you want to elicit in potential customers to induce them to spend their money.

Then **test and measure** absolutely everything ... and keep doing it.

If you start with the right mindset, implement the right systems, and make the commitment necessary to keep moving forward, you will reap the rewards.

**“AUTHENTICITY, HONESTY, AND PERSONAL VOICE  
UNDERLIE MUCH OF WHAT'S SUCCESSFUL ON THE WEB.”**

Rick Levine

