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Sep. 16, 2008

What to Do When Customers Say "No Thanks!" to Marketing

By Graham Hill, Customers & More

I am pretty sure you all know by now that the 'Marketing Commons' is destroying trust in marketing, marketers, and the companies that do it. In a nutshell, faced with more marketing having less effect on customer buying behaviour, marketers are resorting to yet more marketing to get customers to buy. Just serving to make the problem worse!

A recent survey of customer attitudes to marketing by CCB FastMap brought home just how awful the situation has got:

- When asked how they would like to be contacted by companies, **63% said 'Not at all!'**
- When the same question was asked of customers that already had a relationship with the company, **23%** didn't want to hear from the company at all, rising to **above 50%** for banks and utilities
- When asked if they wanted to share data with third-parties, **86% routinely ticked the opt-out box**

Marketers have only themselves to blame for the parlous state they have got their industry into. But what should they do to make marketing a trusted partners again?

The most common answer seems to be analytically-targeted marketing. But even with advanced statistical models, marketers only know a tiny amount of what they need to know about customers and their situation to target customers properly. Response rates are simply too low for analytically-targeted marketing be the answer.

Statigists like John Hagel have suggested that 'push-pull' marketing may be the answer. This integrates the best of **customer-driven pull**, e.g. responding quickly to customer requests and **company-driven push**, e.g. real-time marketing to get the right message, to the right customer, at the right time. Companies like Toyota have implemented push-pull marketing to great success. And have used their lean expertise to remove up to 50% of the time and costs of marketing in the process too.

But is it enough in these untrusting times? Marketing journalist Alan Mitchell thinks not. He has long been an advocate of 'buyer-centric commerce' where buyers (customers in all but name) control all their data and aggregate their demand through trusted third-parties, to be offered up to potential suppliers to fight over. There are a few companies tentatively testing buyer-centricity like this out, but these are early days. And it is one thing to control your own data related to a pending house move and another entirely to control all your mobile phone call data records or all your credit card transactions.

What do you think? Are customers fed-up of irrelevant marketing spam? What do marketers have to do to extract themselves from the Marketing Commons?

Tip of the hat to Alan Mitchell's article, 'Making customers more revealing' in the Financial Times. Alan's blog, 'Right Side Up' is well worth reading too.

Post a comment or email me at [graham\(dot\)hill\(at\)web\(dot\)de](mailto:graham(dot)hill(at)web(dot)de) and get the conversation going.

Further Reading:

Alan Mitchell, Financial Times
Making customers more revealing
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6dd60fd2-80e3-11dd-82dd-000077b07658.html?ncli...>

Right Side Up
<http://www.rightsideup.blogs.com/>

John Hagel
From Push to Pull
<http://www.johnseelybrown.com/pushpull.pdf>

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Graham Hill is the founder of customer management consultancy **Customers & More**. He has more than 20 years of experience in customer-driven change programs with companies of all shapes and sizes. He can be contacted at [graham\(dot\)hill\(at\)web\(dot\)de](mailto:graham(dot)hill(at)web(dot)de). [Blog: [Customer Insider](#)]

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