

# ARE ALL MARKETERS LIARS ?

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## **Abstract**

*Today, consumers demand higher levels of quality, reliability, and durability of product. A marketer must understand consumer's expectations and try to satisfy those and retain the consumer's loyalty.*

*The shift from golden age of marketing to post age creates new challenge for marketer because consumers do not trust television commercials anymore. In this age consumers love being told a story*

*To tell a story marketer must understand what is a great story. A great story must true, authentic, trusted, appeal to people senses, and must agree with people worldview. So it is a challenge to marketer in creating and telling a story to consumers. Good story will be spread automatically by consumers to their friends, colleagues and others .*

I was inspired to write this article after I finished reading the Seth Godin Book "All Marketers Are Liars". Instead of exploring this book, I will discuss today's marketing phenomenon and problems with the goal of answering the question "Are All Marketers Liars?"

## • **The Business Challenges Facing Marketing**

As we know the dynamics of the business environment are large in scope and thus creates challenges for marketing activity. According to Denison and McDonald, there are several specific challenges for all of marketing professionals:

1. Internalization of businesses. This relates to the impact of globalization by which buyers and sellers face no market boundaries. Therefore marketing requires the capability to restructure the domestic market in order to compete in the international market.
2. Customer expertise, sophistication, and power. The customer, both consumer and industrial, will be demanding higher levels of quality, reliability and durability of product supplied to the market. The development of information technology means that the customer can get access to information from many sources. Therefore marketers must work more closely with customer so that they can understand customer's expectations in order to create an experience that will satisfy customers' needs.

3. Lack of market growth. Market maturity in many sectors has dictated that marketers have been challenged to find ways of retaining customers and identifying "niche market" in which they can compete with an advantage.
4. Process thinking. New system thinking is focused on fulfilling customer specific needs. This has meant that marketers face a situation where they need to focus on building long-term relationships with customers and generate higher levels of customer loyalty and commitment.
5. Time-based competition. Businesses exist in an environment of rapid change which necessitates that they focus on hitting the market early before the entry of competitors and recover the initial investment quickly. Price setting becomes vital in this context.

These challenges mean marketing must apply an analytical scientific approach which utilizes logic, systematic data analysis, and sophisticated market research. Whilst operating in this changing environment, marketers also face weaknesses including poor image, complacency, poor integration and lack of a secure knowledge base. Others include increasing risk-averse behavior, failing to recognize opportunities and losing commitment to innovation.

#### • **The Role of Marketing**

In his book, Seth Godin defines marketing as spreading of ideas. This spreading of ideas is the single most important output of our civilization. Facing the increasing demands and constraints of customers and competition, marketers must play a key role in making marketing works.

In the golden age of marketing, if you had enough money, you could buy television commercials and in this age television was a miracle. Before this age, companies made commodities and marketing was not particularly important. After the golden age, the role of television fell apart and consumers no longer trusted television commercials anymore.

How does marketing work in this post golden age? There are five important considerations here:

1. Consumer worldview and frames got there before you did
2. People only notice the new and then make a guess
3. First impressions start the story
4. Great marketers tell stories we believe
5. Marketers with authenticity strive

The conclusion here is that marketers in the post golden age must tell stories, not simply buy commercials.

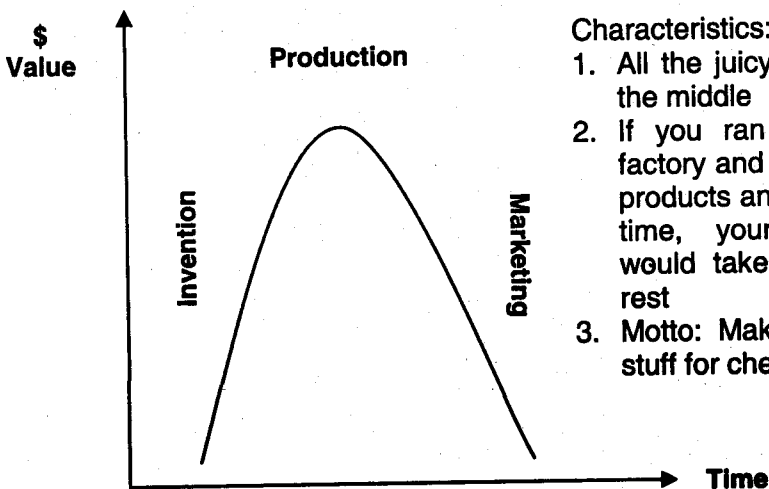
## • Telling A Great Story

When I stood in line at the McDonald's counter to buy some food, a question came in my mind. Why people are so interested in coming to McDonald's even if only to buy one ice cream cone or some fried chicken or a burger? I think many people agree that the taste of McDonald's is not the best, but why do people love McDonald's so much? How come people do not mind buying Rolex for such a high price? Why do people prefer go to Starbucks for a cup of coffee rather than another coffeeshop? The answer is that the marketing of these organizations are telling a great story to their customers.

What makes a great story?

1. A great story is true, consistent and authentic
2. Great stories make a promise
3. Great stories are trusted
4. Great stories are subtle
5. Great stories happen fast
6. Great stories do not appeal to logic, but they often appeal to our senses
7. Great stories are rarely aimed at everyone
8. Great stories do not contradict themselves
9. Great stories agree with our worldview

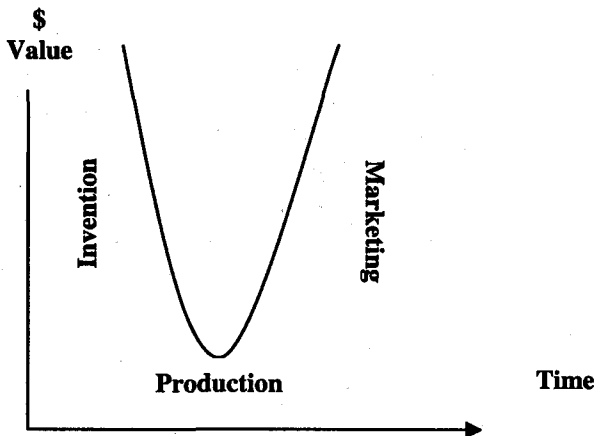
To make a great story we must know and understand our power so we can find the secret behind it and finally we can make things look different.



Characteristics:

1. All the juicy stuff was in the middle
2. If you ran an efficient factory and made quality products and shipped on time, your advantage would take care of the rest
3. Motto: Make your good stuff for cheap

**Old Power Curve**



**New Power Curve**

**Characteristics:**

1. Invent stuff worth talking about
2. Tell stories about what you've invented
3. Motto: Make up great stories

Sources: Seth Godin, *All Marketers Are Liars*, p.27-28

• **Consumer Worldview and Frames Got There Before You Did**

Do you agree if I say that we all want the same things? If we all want the same things why don't we use or choose the same products or services? In the real world, it is obvious that we don't all want the same things. Why?

Different people have different worldviews so people can see the same data and make a totally different decisions. A worldview is comprised of rules, values, beliefs and biases that all individual consumers bring to any situation. As a marketer, you will find it difficult to try to change someone's worldview but what should you do? You will identify a population with a certain worldview, frame your story in terms of that worldview and you win. Frame is a way you hang a story on to a consumer's existing worldview.

Marketing succeeds when enough people with similar worldviews come together in a way that allows marketers to reach them cost-effectively. Your opportunity lies in finding a neglected worldview, framing your story in a way that this audience will focus on and going from there. You must know that worldview is not forever and not who you are. It's what the customer believes right now.

While targeting the right worldview is essential, the real magic of marketing occurs when you use a frame. A frame allows you to present an idea in a way that embraces the consumer's worldview, not fights it.

The best marketing stories are told (and sold) with frames but ultimately spread to people who are open to being convinced of something brand new. It's not enough to find a niche that shares a worldview. That niche has to be ready and able to influence a large group of their friends.

It's awfully dangerous to assume that consumers are all the same. It's even dangerous to assume that they're all rational.

We can conclude that every consumer has a worldview that affects the product you want to sell. That worldview alters the way they interpret everything you say and do. Frame your story in terms of that worldview, and it will be heard.

- **People Notice Only The New And Then Make A Guess**

We can learn how our brain works. The brain usually looks for differences. If it is not new, we ignore it. Our brain also looks for causation and relies on our prediction machine to make guesses. Finally, our brain relies on cognitive dissonance in that we ignore contradicting data for as long as we can get away with it and focus on the events we agree with.

People only notice stuff that's new and different. And the moment they notice something new, they start making guesses about what to expect next.

- **First Impressions Start The Story**

Almost every important buying decision is made instantaneously. In order to survive the onslaught of choices, consumers make snap judgments. So the first snap judgment is crucial. Marketers must create a first impression of authenticity.

Bad first impressions lead to stories that are not accurate. It will create superstitions that we tell ourselves and believe in. Facts are not the most powerful antidote to superstition. We need powerful and authentic personal interactions. That's why candidates still need to shake hands and why retail outlets did not disappear after the success of Amazon.

Humans are able to make extremely sophisticated judgments in a fraction of a second and after having drawn that conclusion, they resist changing it.

- **Great Marketers Tell Stories We Believe**

Stories let us lie to ourselves and those lies satisfy our desires. It's the story, not the goods or services you actually sell that pleases the consumer. We must differentiate fibs and frauds. Fibs are lies that make the story come true, but frauds are a marketing pitch that once revealed in a story make a believer angry. Fraud is a story that's told solely for the selfish benefit of the marketer.

Storytelling works when the story actually makes the product or service better. If you want to grow, make something worth talking about. Not the hype, not the ads, but the thing. If your idea is good, it will spread. Telling a story authentically creating a product or service that actually does what you say. It will lead to a different sort of end game. The marketer wins and so do her customers. But, crafting a story that tricks people into making short-term decisions that they regret in the long run is the worst kind of marketing sin. Refusing to take responsibility for it afterward is just cowardly.

As a consumer, we should ask the marketer two questions:

1. If I knew what you know, would I choose to buy what you sell?
2. After I've used this and experienced it, will I be glad I believed the story or will I feel ripped off?

- **Marketers With Authenticity Thrive**

You don't get to make up the story. The story happens with or without you. If you are not happy with the story, the only way to change it is with direct contact between the consumer and another person. It is personal interaction. Before you tell someone a story, you tell that story to yourself. Why? Because once fooled, a person will never repeat your story to someone else.

Marketing has become an art. The essence of that art is your ability to use non verbal techniques to make a series of promises you intend to keep. All successful stories are the same. They fulfill the wishes of a consumer's worldview.

- **Competing In The Lying World**

In a competitive world marketing's work should not be so much about selling but more about creating products that don't need selling. Marketing people need the skills to identify opportunities, and develop and implement plans that succeed in the marketplace. Marketing's true role is to drive business strategy.

Marketing today is in a bad shape. Not marketing theory, but marketing practice. Many new products or services that are supported by a marketing plan fail. Philip Kotler tells us about ten deadly sins of marketing:

1. The company is not sufficiently market focused and customer driven
2. The company does not fully understand its target customers
3. The company needs to better define and monitor its competitors
4. The company has not properly managed its relationships with its stakeholders

5. The company is not good at finding new opportunities
6. The company's marketing plans and planning process are deficient
7. The company's product and service policies need tightening
8. The company's brand-building and communications skills are weak
9. The company is not well organized to carry on effective and efficient marketing
10. The company has not made maximum use of or leveraged technology

Success in this world of storytelling is important for marketer. The principles of storytelling are compelling. You cannot succeed if you try to tell your competition's story better than they can. The problem is that once a consumer has bought someone else's story and believes that lie, persuading the consumer to switch is the same as persuading him to admit he was wrong. The nature of people is such that they do not admitting that they're wrong. So what are you supposed to do? You must tell a different story and persuade those listening that your story is more important than the story they currently believe.

What if you are entering a market where there is already successful competition and the consumers have all bought your competition's story? Of course you can not tell the same story to the same people. You will find success by telling a different story to part of the community with a particular worldview that's different from that of the masses.

You succeed by being an extremist in your story telling, then gracefully moving your product or service to the middle so it becomes more palatable to audiences that are persuaded by their friends, not by you.

So...Are All Marketers Liars ?

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