

What's on Your Marketing Plate?

Daily Recommendations for a Healthy Bottom Line

"Some people are headstrong. Some people are heart-strong, and most people, especially salespeople, don't understand that the heart is the filter for decisions. The head is attached to the price; the heart is attached to the wallet. If you jerk the heartstrings, the wallet comes popping out of the back pocket."

-- JEFFREY GITOMER, AUTHOR OF THE LITTLE RED BOOK OF SELLING

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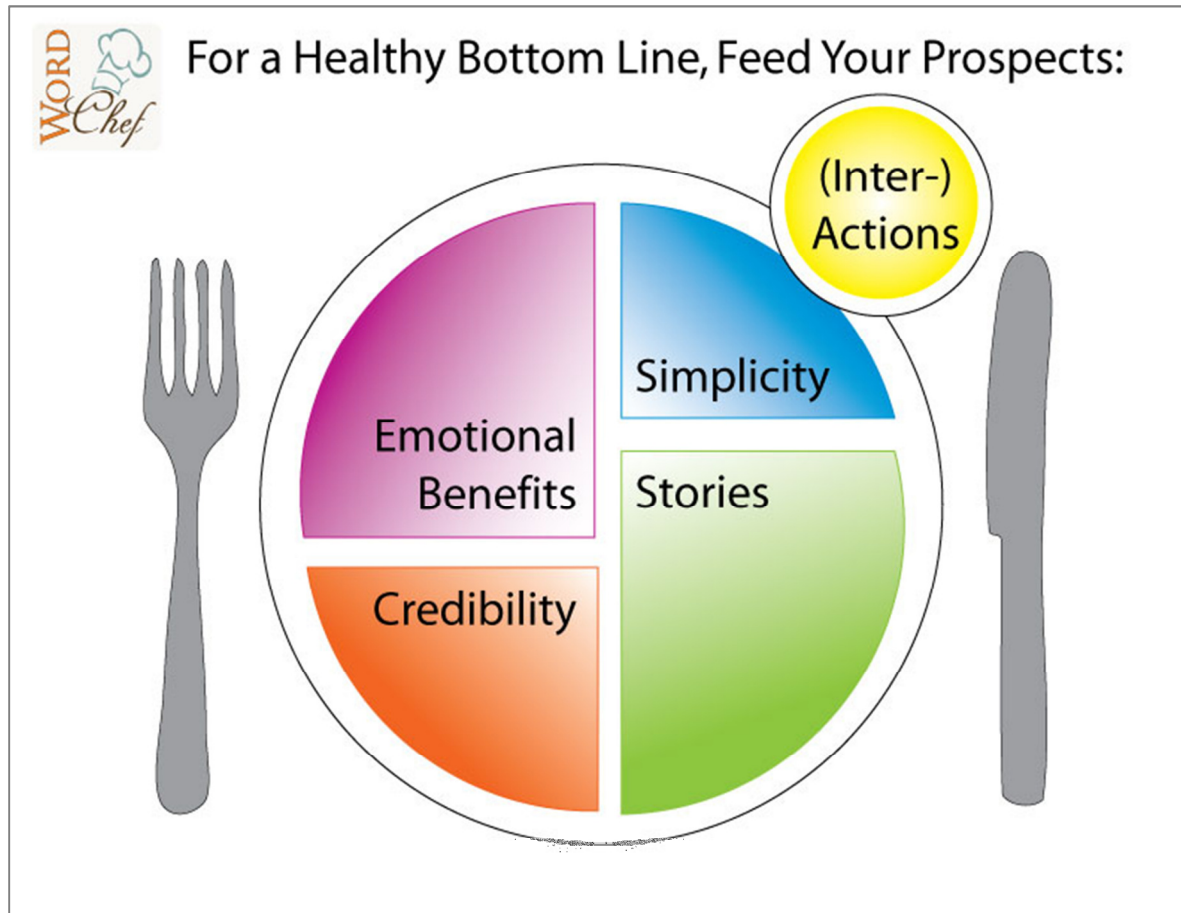
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Eating healthy can be tricky. Especially if you've got a sweet tooth. Or a penchant for all-things-fried. When we don't make good choices, we end up feeling pretty miserable. And not just because we can't see our feet. It really sucks when you can't fit into your favorite jeans!

The same is true for your marketing. Your website (and the other channels you use to promote yourself) need to have just the right balance of nutrients in order to keep a healthy number of customers and prospects at your table.

Here are the 5 Basic Marketing Foods your customers and prospects need from you:



1. **Deep Emotional Benefits.** Contrary to what you may believe, all decisions we make -- including whether or not to buy -- are emotional ones. Make that emotional connection with your prospect.
2. **Stories.** Everybody loves a good drama. Strong characters, engaging plots, and a great storyline make it easy to stay focused on a message. Use a story to illustrate your point.
3. **Simplicity.** Keep your messages simple and straightforward without a lot of jargon and you'll be understood the first time around. Clarity is power!
4. **Credibility.** It's an old maxim, but it's true: People do business with those that they know, like and trust. Make sure your prospects have every opportunity to know, like and trust you.
5. **(Inter)Actions.** Whether it's adding a comment to your Facebook page, or sharing an idea for a new product on your blog, it's vitally important that customers engage with you on a regular basis.

Let's look at each of these in more detail:

Deep Emotional Benefits

You may think that because you've created a spreadsheet to list out the features, functions and prices of several comparable products, that *your* buying decisions are based on logic. But you'd be wrong. In fact, emotions drive 80% of decision-making, and logic only 20%.

Clyde's Story

Clyde was a brilliant business executive, well-respected by all who knew him. While people responded to his warm and caring nature, it was his decision-making ability that truly set him apart. Clyde was precise, systematic and rational. He took great pride in using logic to sort through complex issues to reach conclusions—especially when it came to purchasing decisions. Clyde had a stock expression: "Just give me the facts. There is no room for emotion in business decisions."

Last spring, Clyde was diagnosed with cancer in the right side of his brain. The doctors advised Clyde and his family that the right side controlled his creative abilities—his center for intuitive thinking. The left side, on the other hand, was his center for reading, writing, speech, language and memory—the analytical part of the brain. By all accounts, Clyde's surgery was a success. The tumor was removed, and he was told that he would be able to resume a full and productive life. Clyde could not wait to get back to work.

Upon his return to the office, he was greeted with a hero's welcome. The decisive leader was back—or so people thought. While Clyde looked terrific and spoke eloquently, there was something wrong. Something missing. Clyde's executive assistant and management team soon noticed that he was spending countless hours deciding whom to call, what project to tackle, where to eat lunch and even which pen to use to sign his name. It was evident that Clyde had lost his ability to make decisions. Even the simplest decision seemed impossible for Clyde. He was pathologically indecisive. He had a grave condition: "analysis paralysis." Clyde's remarkable business career had come to a screeching halt.

This story, a composite example based on what the medical community has observed in cases of strokes and brain tumors, illustrates that people make decisions emotionally and support them with logic. This includes even people as systematic and rational as Clyde.

Antonio Damasio, the renowned neurobiologist, studied people who had suffered damage to the right side of the brain where emotions are generated. Damasio concluded that while these people may seem "normal," their ability to make decisions is severely impaired. They can logically describe what they are doing but find it extremely difficult to make decisions. The research showed that emotions are essential for making choices.

Emotions in buying decisions

Although you may be very proud of the "features and benefits" of your offerings, it's crucial that you figure out how to stimulate, and connect to, positive emotions for your customers. To do this, you must deeply engage their emotions in addition to, and even above, their intellect.

For example, if you sell lipstick, the features and functions of this lipstick might include:

- It's color
- It's packaging
- It's ingredients
- How long it lasts
- How soft it makes your lips

But ultimately, your customer is looking for something that will make her feel more attractive, more beautiful. ***The deep emotional benefit you're providing is self-confidence.*** Since you know this, your marketing messages will focus more heavily on how confident and beautiful she will feel when she uses your product, rather than on its packaging or color. Lead with the emotion. It's the most important part.

Start by finding out what keeps your customer up at night – what is their biggest source of pain? Or overwhelming desire? When you understand your customer's passions and struggles, you can then begin to speak to them in a way that will build that emotional connection with your product or service – one that transcends price and logic.

To do this, begin by describing in detail, the vision of your customer's future and how they will feel when they get there (by using your product or service). This creates anticipation and helps strengthen the desire to have what you offer. Also a great segue to the next item on our list: stories.

Everybody loves a good drama

Strong characters, engaging plots, and a great storyline make it easy for us to stay engaged. Since the Stone Age, humans have been telling and re-telling stories about the one that got away, or how they brought down the woolly mammoth.

We use stories to educate others, communicate values, or just plain entertain. Great stories (the ones with passion and emotion) get passed around the campfire AND the Internet. If you want your prospects to turn into customers, you need to tell them stories about what it's like to do business with you.

Use case studies, video, audio or 140 characters, but tell us something interesting about how you solve our problems. Or teach your customers to solve their own. It's even helpful when networking.

Contrast these two different introductions:

“We work with all the leading consumer goods companies. Our six-sigma and lean manufacturing services can save you at least 10% of your operating costs and cut 20% from your lead times”

and

“We recently worked with John, the CEO of BigPack. John’s problem was that he couldn’t respond quickly to the needs of some of his best customers and so he was losing market share hand-over-fist. By working with us using our lean manufacturing and six sigma methodology, he was able to offer the sort of flexibility his customers were crying out for – and as an added bonus, he found that running costs were 10% lower than before.”

The first introduction lacks any sort of emotion and is full of left-brained types of words. The second introduction adds a little flavor to the intro and helps your prospects understand what you might be able to do *for them*.

What you need to have in your cupboard is a set of compelling stories – perhaps 6 or 7 – covering a variety of situations where you, your products or your services have added significant value. You can then select from the stories as needed to fit the particular circumstances you think are going to be relevant and interesting to your prospect. And you can use the same story as an example as part of your introduction, your elevator speech, or in an expanded version when the prospect opens up and talks about a particular issue they have.

To craft the stories, first think about the typical problems your product or service solves. Then think of some recent examples of specific customers where this has happened.

Next, write a short paragraph summarizing the example. A few guidelines should help here:

Make the story personal. Don’t just talk about a company, talk about a named individual who “owned” the problem your product or service solved. Your story will feel much more real – and your prospect will feel much more empathy towards a person rather than a corporation.

Talk first about the challenges the person faced. Again, try to describe them in personal terms so that the prospect builds a connection to your story. Don’t belittle the person – turn them into the hero of the story – they had a problem which (by working with you) they overcame.

Don’t spend a lot of time describing what your product or service actually did. Although this might seem interesting to you – it’s the least interesting aspect to your prospect. They’re much more interested in whether the problem you solved is similar to theirs, and what value or benefits did your solution bring.

Close with the benefits your product or service provided – but underplay this. Almost add it as an afterthought – as if the tremendous value you brought was just part of everyday business for you. Avoid boasting or self-aggrandizing statements.

Write these examples up using natural, conversational language and revise them until they sound right. Then learn and practice their main points so that they don’t sound like a script.

Use These Stories in Internet Marketing

Copywriting: Use those same stories in articles, emails, eZines, sales letters, blogs, web pages, etc. to make and drive home your points. Keep them short (no more than 3 paragraphs) and you will keep your reader engaged. You could also use video or audio to tell your stories – but keep those under 2 minutes, preferably less.

Email marketing: Using personal stories in broadcast emails helps personalize you and the information being given.

Facebook: It's all personal stories, isn't it?

LinkedIn: Status updates are (or can be) short stories. What not to do: While you can tell your personal narrative within your LinkedIn profile, don't make it a fictional resume -- stick with the truth and the facts.

Social Proof/Testimonials: Personal stories told by the individuals themselves, either in text or videos (even better!) which can be used on web pages, sales letters, etc. Just remember to follow the FTC guidelines on Testimonials: <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2009/10/endortest.shtm>.

Twitter: A tweet can be a very short story. Or a series of tweets can tell a story. Hint: If you use hashtags, then people can see the whole story when they search on the hashtag.

Photos: Don't forget – a picture's worth a thousand words! Every story should be accompanied by at least color photo. Humans like and respond to visual stimuli. Use that to your advantage.

Clarity is Power

Don't try to be fancy. Your language should be simple and straightforward without a lot of jargon. When in doubt, read your copy out loud so you can make sure that you're making sense. You'd be surprised how often you can catch weird phrases or run-on sentences this way.

Stay organized. Start with your promise and how you fulfill that promise (your emotional benefits), give proof (your stories and testimonials) and give your customers explicit directions on what to do next. Do you want them to buy something? Enroll? Subscribe? Make a referral? How do they do that? Clear and simple directions make it easier for people to complete a task...and more likely that that task will get completed! Then don't forget to explain the value you're giving them for the price (this is that 20% logic part that helps people justify their actions).

Build Credibility

It's an old maxim, but it's true: *People do business with those that they know, like and trust*. Before someone plunks down their hard earned cash, they need to believe that you are trustworthy, dependable and most importantly, that you're the expert that can solve their problem. What're you doing to help people believe in you? How are you helping them get to know you as a real person?

On your website, it's important that you use your About Us page to its fullest potential. Incorporate photos, personal and professional background, and your portfolio if necessary. Add any news clippings or articles that highlight you and your business. And most of all, don't forget testimonials – this is the social proof that other people already know, like and trust you.

For more tips, see <http://www.toiletpaperentrepreneur.com/getting-clients/how-to-build-credibility-online>.

Interacting for Fun and Profit

Thanks to Facebook, blogging and other social media tools, businesses can now hold actual conversations with their prospects during the marketing process. Engage yours! This helps make them part of your tribe or community. It builds loyalty.

How do you encourage your prospects to take an active role with your company? Actions draw people in. And whether it's adding a comment to your Facebook page, or sharing an idea for a new product on your blog, it's vitally important that they interact with you on a regular basis. It will keep them coming back for more!

Consider these two examples:

Experience A: Prospect receives a monthly newsletter from your company - sometimes it's relevant, mostly not. She usually deletes it after a quick scan. At least she hasn't unsubscribed...right?

Not so fast. Look what might happen by creating a memorable, interactive experience.

Experience B: Prospect is referred to your blog by a link they received via a Google Alert:

She clicks the link, reads the post and visits another page on your website to read a related article you referenced, finding the ideas valuable.

She notices you have an email series on the topic and subscribes.

When she receives the third email in the series of five, the article gives her an idea she can implement right away. It also has links to your Facebook and Twitter pages, and she decides to follow you there.

The prospect “likes” your Facebook Fan Page and submits a question that came up for her after implementing the idea she had previously.

You answer the question as a comment to her post, and include a link to an article that addresses the topic.

The prospect downloads the article, replies with a thank you and Tweets about your article to share it with her network.

And on you both go, moving forward to the next steps in her buying process—together.

Remember that ultimately, marketing to your prospects (and keeping your existing customers), depends wholly on the emotional connections you've created and nurtured.

If you'd like some help on any of the above topics, please contact me for a free 20-minute consultation so we can get to the heart of YOUR customer.