



The One Marketing Technique That Really Works

By Robert Gelinas.

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In the grand and eternal marketing search for “silver bullets,” secrets, tricks, and magical manifestations of cleverness – there does exist one marketing technique that actually achieves the elusive goal of capturing attention, stimulating interest, generating attraction, and compelling action. Read on to find out what it is.

It isn't Freebies or Bribes, Coupons or Discounts, Email Blasts or Direct Mail, Pay-Per-Click Search or Banner Ads, Telemarketing or Cold Calling, TV or Radio broadcasting, Print Pubs or Mobile, Social Networking or Blogs, Infomercials or Webinars, Billboards or Flyers, Humor or Sex, or anything else of the kind. In most instances all of these things are but tools, venues, and mediums – i.e. a means to an end, but not a destination.

No, the problem is that far too many marketing initiatives are simply a variation on a single theme consisting of the message: “I want you to buy something from me” in an intrusive fashion.

What you end up communicating loud and clear to your prospects is: “I, the vendor, have an urgent *need* (for revenue), and am therefore making some form of a *demand* of you, my desirable customer (regardless of how polite or clever), a demand vainly disguised as an offer of some kind, for the expressed goal of extracting money from YOU, and I'll say anything, or make any manner of promise, to get YOU to give it to me.”

Rather off-putting, wouldn't you say?

If not simply ignored, common reactions to “intrusive sales attempts” range from somewhere between amusement at the attempt on the positive side, to outright offense and repulsion on the negative side. Is it then any wonder then why so many Marketing Campaigns have response rates measured in single digits? That's another way of saying over 90% of a target audience *ain't buyin' what you're sellin'*.



And yet, there are some things both Consumers and Businesses line up to buy—from SmartPhones to Handgun Ammunition.





Why?

Why do some products and services “sell like hotcakes” and others languish in relative obscurity, regardless of how loud and long they are promoted by all manner of marketing efforts, venues, and mediums?

The answer is quite simply: **Value**. Or better said...

The **PERCEPTION of Value.**”

Buyers of all kind respond to **Genuine Value**. Hence, most marketing campaigns are ineffective because they are inherently “vendor selfish”, i.e. all about the vendor and vendor’s needs, and not the buyer and the buyer’s needs. Value is a personal perception. Buyers really don’t care about helping you make money.

People line up to buy products and services that they perceive to offer them “Genuine Value.” Consequently, a proper understanding of exactly what that phrase means—*Genuine Value*—is the key to crafting marketing campaigns that really work.

Genuine Value doesn’t simply mean: low price. It’s been aptly said, if you can’t communicate value, then you wouldn’t even be able to sell hundred dollar bills for a dollar each. Most people know if something sounds too good to be true, it usually isn’t true.

Nor is Genuine Value about great features and benefits. Articulating ad nauseum about why you think your offering is really swell means nothing if the audience doesn’t translate that into personally appreciated and applicable value.

The Ying and Yang of Perceived Value

The Perception of Value has two important Core Elements: **Intrinsic Value** and **Experiential Value**. The perception of one or the other has the potential to strike a positive chord within a buyer – but when both are present, the synergy is exponential, not merely cumulative.



For example, Gold, as a precious metal, has intrinsic value. It is bought and sold as a commodity, and in many environs is exchanged as legal tender. Yet for most people, owning it has very little experiential value beyond financial security or a sense of wealth. By itself Gold doesn’t really do anything but sit there and look shiny.

Skydiving, on the other hand, is all about experiential value to its aficionados, without offering a whole lot of intrinsic or lasting value. When the experience is completed—assuming you live to tell the tale—it’s over, save for the memories. To appreciate its value again requires the experience to be repeated, or purchased again.





Now think about an iPhone. It has both intrinsic value as a tangible, physical thing, as well as experiential value in terms of how its user feels when using it. It's both a product and an associated service that enables specific behaviors and experiences.

It isn't worth its weight in Gold, nor is it as exhilarating to use as skydiving. But for around \$200 to purchase a unit, plus buying a monthly service plan causes many people to see that as valuable and worth standing in line for the privilege.

Intrinsic and Experiential Value in B2B Technology Marketing

Now when it comes to marketing products and services like software, computer systems, networking products, security systems, consulting services, and professional services, the same concepts apply: Hawk your wares, no one cares. Provide lasting value and/or experiential improvement, you'll get takers.

The fact is – technology buyers (especially of the big-ticket variety) have two primary “needs” pools for you to appeal to: **business needs** and **personal needs**.

In the Business Needs pool you find things like the need for employees in the business to communicate with one another as efficiently as possible, for work to occur without interruption, for the business to be able to market and deliver its own products and services, to solve problems, to grow, etc. How does the product or service your company offers help to accomplish any of those things? Better yet: How does your marketing “hook” address one of the “Six Fires.”

What are the Six Fires?

The six fires are the eternal business challenges faced by every CIO and VP of IT in any organization of any significant size. They are:

1. **To Lower Costs / Expenses** – they are always being asked to do more with less, and never have enough Time, Money, and People to do everything they're tasked to do
2. **Migration / Evolution** – things become obsolete almost as fast as they can be implemented, and staying up to date is a near-impossible mandate
3. **Integration / Innovation** – there's always a new mousetrap coming out that enables their competitors to do more, better, cheaper, faster, and they constantly have to keep up with what's new to remain competitive
4. **Compliance / Audit / Governance** – there's always an auditor, reviewer, or 3rd party breathing down their necks making sure they have all T's crossed and I's dotted
5. **Security** – there's the constant vigilance that is required to ensure there are no informational breaches, loss of IP, or screw-ups from employees
6. **Performance** – users are constantly demanding more of everything, to do more, and that demand must somehow be satisfied



These six areas are the kinds of puzzles that keep CIOs up at night worrying about how to solve them. If you have the solution to one or more of these things, then you have something of intrinsic value to offer. And chances are, that CIO with these problems might be interested in what you have to say. But if you just “want to sell him something” he honestly doesn’t have time for you—he’s busy trying to solve these problems.



Keep in mind **The 30-Second Rule**, which states: If you happen to call a technology Decision-Maker and manage to get them on the phone for the first time, you have roughly 30-seconds and no more to convince them to give you any more than 30 seconds of their very valuable time.

Therefore, if the technique you employ to try and gain that grant of more than 30 seconds is an offer to help them put out one of those Six Fires burning on their desk, that person just might be inclined to want to hear what you have to say.

Contrast the following two scenarios:

Version 1

Decision-Maker: Hello?

You: Hi there, I'm calling to talk to you about our new Wonder-Widget, that slices and dices and makes thousands of julienne fries. It's on sale this week for 50% off!

Decision-Maker: (annoyed) How'd you get this number? [CLICK...dial tone]

Version 2

Decision-Maker: Hello?

You: Good morning. Thank you for taking my call. I'm calling today regarding an issue with your CRM system deployment.

Decision-Maker: What about it?

You: I'm wondering if you've encountered any integration issues with respect to compatibility of its databases and application interfaces with your ERP and Financial system.

Decision-Maker: Actually, yes. We have been trying to do just that for some time. Our financial system is a legacy system of custom code. Our ERP is an enterprise deployment we're only about 30% of the way in rolling out. And CRM is still in development and customization. It's a mess. We have an integration project planned, but all of that is still in the design phase.



You: Then it's ideal for us to talk about it. I'd like to make you aware of the fact that there's an adaptation layer technology now available specifically designed to bring those three domains together without special customization for seamless integration. Plus, this new technology can also accelerate each subsystem's deployment and user adoption across the entire enterprise. Everyone gets access to everything they're authorized to access in half the time and for a fraction of the customization expense.

Decision-Maker: Really? Tell me about this technology.

See how that works? Perceived Value – i.e. perceived by the *prospect*. The decision-maker's business needs must get the focus not your business needs. Please note in the illustration above, the entire conversation is about solving a business problem, not about selling a product.

Obviously, this principle certainly isn't limited to a phone call. It can be also employed in any marketing communication, medium or venue.

Everything is Personal

Now let's look at the **Personal Needs** side of the equation.

In a separate article entitled, *People by from People*, available on the JPE Inc. Consulting website, which is found at (<http://www.jpeincconsulting.com/JPEDocs/People%20Buy%20from%20People.pdf>) we looked at the human relational aspects of B2B enterprise selling. But there's another aspect of "personal selling" that's relevant to this discussion on effective marketing techniques. It specifically has to do with our definition herein of **value** as it relates to **Experiential Value**.

That is, in the mind of the big-ticket technology Decision-Maker, their personal experience in doing business with you is important, too – not in the sense of "having fun" per se (which isn't a bad thing), but with respect to individualized experiences that are highly desirable for them. These experiences can be very motivational to a Decision-Maker, and also serve to define Perceived Value for them.

Some examples are:

- The Joy of Getting Promoted
- The Relief of Avoiding Getting Reprimanded, Demoted, or Fired
- Enjoying the Respect of Colleagues as an Expert in their Field
- The Satisfaction and Pride of Accomplishment
- The Compliment of having their Opinions and Views taken seriously and acknowledged





Beyond direct compensation, every business leader has an emotional investment in their job. As such, some of these previous examples contribute directly to their level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction and can also affect their career path long-term. What you need to realize is that your products and services can potentially have a significant impact on these areas – if you bother to position it as such.

That same technology that is able to solve a perplexing business problem may also directly contribute to improving the performance of the business as a whole and thereby result in decision-maker recognition, promotions, raises, etc.

Furthermore, more organizations these days are asking their CIOs to become more “strategic” in their thinking and contributions to the organization. Is your business solution a possible strategic advantage for anyone? If so, imagine Ad Copy or messaging that touts how technology business leaders are using what you offer to advance their company’s strategic initiatives and gain market leadership. Subtext: *“This stuff is not only good for your company, but is also good for you personally.”*

If that’s the value that is perceived by a decision-maker – you’ve just found someone who really wants to listen to what you have to say. Isn’t that the primary goal of your marketing efforts?

Hitting the Bull’s-eye

So the next time you’re crafting a new marketing campaign, first set aside all considerations of why you believe your offer is exceptional and your company is so wonderful for having created it. Instead, start by asking yourself questions along these lines:

- What are the specific “fires” burning on the desk of our target market (assuming you’re wise enough to have already defined a target market)?
- How does our solution help extinguish at least one of those fires?
- How do we get our target market to understand that we can do that for them?
- And what’s in it for the buyer, personally, if they choose to do business with us?



This train of thought will help you conceptualize and articulate Intrinsic Value. True Intrinsic Value brings with it the opportunity for Experiential Value elements. The combination of the two is your marketing arrow fired dead-on at the bull’s-eye of the target.

Creating “Perceived Value” is what always works.

That is because the solution that decision-makers are actively looking for is what always captures their attention and stimulates genuine interest; and if the solution is understood to be



conceptually applicable to their needs, it will therefore be perceived as attractive and subsequently compels them to take action to at least investigate its potential.

Is there a better definition for an effective marketing campaign?

If you need help crafting Value Perception Campaigns, please contact JPE Inc. Consulting at info@jpeincconsulting.com.

About the Author

Robert Gelinas is the President and CEO of JPE Inc. Consulting (www.jpeincconsulting.com). He has spent over 20 years in the IT industry as a senior executive and sales and marketing leader, having built many national and international Enterprise IT sales and marketing organizations. He has both an extensive Fortune 500 background as well as a wealth of successful Start-Up experience. He is also a published novelist, writer, publisher (www.archebooks.com) and frequent public speaker on both IT marketing and the writing and publishing industry.