**The State of Marketing 2016**

As we venture into 2016, where are we at in terms of the profession of marketing. Whether we have a view of marketing as a philosophy of business focused on customer satisfaction or as a function among many in the business world, we need a common understanding of what is marketing and what are the activities that define it in the current business environment.

**What is marketing?**

I defer to my own guru, Dr. Phil Kotler of Northwestern University and incorporate some of his meaning wisdom in the following: Marketing is the “creation, communication and delivery of satisfying value to a target customer”. You accomplish this and the result is the long term retention of that customer. Acquire …. Satisfy …. Retain customers.

**Let’s Break It Down!**

**Create Value**

Value is the idea that we balance what we get (benefits) from a transaction and weigh that against what we give up (money; time) to gain the most “value” from a transaction. We gain benefits from the goods and services acquired … and we “value” how these items …

* Improve our lives
* Take care of problems or issues we face
* Address things we need to get done in our lives

When we look to creating value, to accomplish the above, we [can find value in many places](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Innovation%20and%20New%20Products/Ten%20Types%20of%20Innovation%20...%20How%20hot%20is%20Your%20Innovation.gif) including:

* The product or service itself
* The customer experience and community experience
* The brand experience and brand engagement
* Bundling and ecosystem strategies
* Creative business models or profit models (such as pay per view vs bundles as in cable television subscriptions; or ownership vs subscription as in Microsoft Office’s business approach)
* Ease of Use/Ease of access/Ease of Collaboration
* Fulfillment of micro-needs
* Application of “lean” to include cost control; quality improvement; performance improvement; and customization)

These are but a few ways to increase the value of your offering to a target customer. What matters of course is what differentiates and what will wow your customer.

**Communicate Value**

As marketers we strive to create value in creative ways, noted above, and now it is vital to communicate that value to our intended audience. Communications in 2016 will use traditional means such as mass media (television, radio, print, earned public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and so on).

But more and more our channels of communication need to include the electronic world of:

* Email marketing
* [Websites](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Strategy/How-to-Choose-the-Right-Digital-Marketing-Model.pdf)
* Search optimization
* [Digital Media](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Marketing%20Communication/Digital%20Media%202014.docx)
* Search advertising
* [Social media](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Advertising/Social%20Media%20is%20the%20Message.doc) including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more
* Video (YouTube)
* Mobile
* Gamification
* [Paid digital public relations](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Advertising/Shut%20Up%20and%20Listen.docx) (think [www.outbrain.com](http://www.outbrain.com))
* Web content offerings and management
* Web reputation management

Make your message [sharable](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Marketing%20Communication/MAKE%20IT%20SHARE.docx) …. and memorable. Be the [story](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Marketing%20Communication/Stories%20and%20Neuroscience.docx) in 2016!

As you reflect on how you communicate your message, consider too the message itself and the execution of the message, in addition to the channels of communication. What is your message? Consider:

* Your promise
* Your story
* Your difference (features, benefits, value)
* Your persona
* Your values
* Your competitive position

What can make you stand out and be important to the target audience? And how will you execute the message …. Slice of life; factual; fantasy; lifestyle; testimonial/spokesperson ….

**Deliver Value**

The essence of [Porter’s Value Chain and Supply chain](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Strategy/Strategy%2C%20Porter%20and%20Me.pdf) concepts was conceived long ago… long before the internet, but it is as powerful a concept as ever, and even more powerful in the internet era.

Think about the delivery of value in terms of:

* [Digitization](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Strategy/Digital%20Transformation%20at%20Adobe.pdf) of everything
* Streaming
* [Mobile](http://www.mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Advertising/Mobile%20Advertising%202014.docx)
* Instant access and update
* Dynamic pricing
* Dynamic offerings
* Packaging
* Speed of delivery
* Co-marketing and merchandising
* Partnerships
* Collaboration
* Locations

And much more. Value can be added through many of the bulleted concepts here.

It is interesting that some think of marketing today as beginning and ending with social media. Much like forty years ago, many thought of marketing as beginning and ending with mass media, especially with tv advertising. But there is so much more.

Have great marketing year, 2016.

Jeff Heilbrunn, December 31, 2015