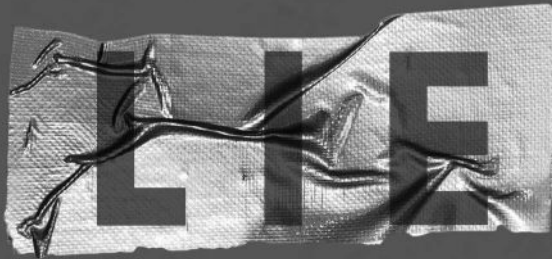


*The*  
**GREAT  
MARKETING**



**6 TRUTHS**

*for*

**BIZ OWNERS & C-SUITERS**

**MIKE SNYDER & BRUCE ROWLEY**



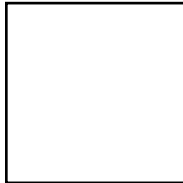
**BRIGHTRAY**  
PUBLISHING®

We help busy professionals write and publish their stories  
to distinguish themselves and their brands.

(407) 287-5700 | Winter Park, FL  
info@BrightRay.com | www.BrightRay.com

ISBN: xxx-x-xxxxxxx-x-x

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,  
or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,  
photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without permission of the author.  
For information regarding permission, please contact the author.



Published in the United States of America.  
BrightRay Publishing ® 2023

# Table of CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION, vii

### What is Marketing Anyway?, 1

- A Bit About Consumer Insight, 3
- Marketing Science Versus Art, 5
- Marketing's Fit within a Company, 7
- Marketing's Goal, 8
- The "Why" Factor, 10
- RSM Marketing's "Why Factor", 11

### The Great Marketing Lie, 13

- The Lie, Exposed, 14
- Marketing is Everything, and Everything is Marketing, 16
- The Six Truths for The Great Marketing Lie, 19

### *Truth* ONE: Achieve Differentiation, 21

- The Problem: Same Ole, Same Ole, 22
- The Solution: Differentiation Using the 4Ps of Marketing, 24
- The "Atomic" Challenge: Order of Magnitude Better, 32
- Case Study: The Quiet Window, 35
- Case Study: National Turkey Brand, 39
- Final Thought: Human Action Theory, 44
- Final FINAL Thought: UBP Versus USP, 46

## *Truth* TWO: Reposition Your Competition, 51

- RSM Marketing's Positioning over the Years, 54
- An Important Twist, 61
- About Ideal Client Analysis, 64
- The Positioning Analysis Tool, 68
- Brand Strategy/Positioning Analysis, 69
- Example: Software for Oilfield Companies, 71
- Example: Wealth Management, 73
- Example: Commercial Insurance, 75
- Example: Investment Banking, 78
- Now a Word about Brand Strategy, 79

## *Truth* THREE: Embrace the "Cheater" Tool for Marketing Strategy, 87

- Don't Forget Your SWOT Analysis, 89
- Case Study: RSM, Sirius XM, and a National Manufacturing Firm, 90
- Case Study: "Easy" as a Cheater Tool for a Digital Sign Distributor, 97
- Case Study: "Easy" as a Cheater Tool for a Large Hospital, 101
- "Easy" as a Cheater Tool for a Parking Lot Company, 106
- Summary, 113

## *Truth* FOUR: Make Choosing Easier, 115

- Start with "Mental Models", 116
- Another Mental Model that Makes Choosing Easier: The 4Cs, 122
- Find Power in the Lowest Common Denominator (LCD), 126

## *Truth* FIVE: Build a Community, 133

- You'll Need to Know How to Tell a Story, 139
- So Have We Ever Achieved Building a Community for Clients?, 141

*Truth* SIX: Stick with It, 145

**CONCLUSION, 153**

**CONTACT INFO FOR MIKE AND BRUCE, 155**

**THE JOURNEY TO THE GREAT MARKETING LIE, 157**

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS, 161**

Mike Snyder, 162

Bruce Rowley, 163

**NOTES, 165**



# *Introduction*

Marketing is one of the most misunderstood yet important functional areas in business. Business owners and C-suiters often find themselves overwhelmed and confused by the myriad of marketing options and obstacles facing their company. The result can be expensive and misguided efforts that yield little-to-no ROI, or worse, a doing-nothing posture. Over time, either reduces a company's strategic growth and increases its strategic risks. The path forward is to simplify your understanding of marketing along with several critical strategic principles, which will allow you and your management team to enact deliberate and meaningful changes in your business.

This book addresses:

- The true definition of marketing, its fit in your business, and who is responsible for it.
- The one-word lie that is routinely perpetuated to business owners along with its harmful consequences.
- How to counter this lie with six key truths along with supporting concepts that can be implemented by you and your management team.
- How to better assess your marketing program and strategic options going forward.
- How to build a competitive moat around your business along with a sustaining Unfair Advantage relative to your competitors.

- How to challenge your management team's thinking with specific questions and tasks that will identify new opportunities and also expedite your managers' individual growth and value.
- Mental models (both within marketing and more broadly within leadership) that will reduce your team's marketing confusion, standardize expectations and execution, and align marketing with your objectives.
- How to build a multi-year marketing roadmap that is clear, achievable, and easy to understand and communicate.



# **What is Marketing Anyway?**



Just as with anything in business, there are right and wrong definitions for the words we use every day. So what is marketing? Ask around. It seems that every marketer has their own definition of marketing. How do we define it? We like this one, which is distilled from several leading concepts:

“Marketing is the business function that identifies what a company should provide that a market will value and buy at a profit to shareholders.”

In layman’s terms: find a *niche* pain point and solve it, gaining the maximum profit at a price point buyers will support. The core word in *marketing* is *market*, as in go-to-market. Companies routinely question their go-to-market strategies. That’s marketing at its core. It’s a pretty simple premise; “How are we going to go to market in such a way that we can sell as much as we can at the greatest profit?”

And it’s this definition of marketing that we address in this book.

*Marketing* is often confused with *marketing communications*. Marketing is the higher level function that determines what to sell. Marketing communications, which technically includes sales, is how you communicate with customers and get rid of your stuff. It’s subordinate to marketing. In the 4Ps, marketing communications is “promotions.” In our definition, marketing starts with the “product” and includes the remaining 3Ps too.

We REALLY like what management consultant Peter Drucker says about marketing:

“The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself.”<sup>1</sup>

This is what Apple does so well. They get to layers five to ten of “understanding the customer,” what is called consumer insight in the marketing industry. We’ve heard Steve Jobs didn’t prefer research. “People don’t know what they want until you show it to them. That’s why I never rely on market research. Our task is to read things that aren’t yet on the page.”<sup>2</sup>

## **A Bit About Consumer Insight**

It sounds pretty straightforward. However, the hard part here, the part we’ll spend some time on in this book, is trying to figure out what consumers want. This is truly where the magic can and should be mined in business. What do customers want in your category? The easy answer will be the obvious answer that will push your pricing down and make your product/service harder to sell in a crowded market. The most obvious answer is: consumers want what they are already buying. This determination allows companies to form and start pretty quickly. But then it’s a selling bloodbath. The marketing advantage can be mined if you can get to the second or third layer of consumer insight.

There's a lot to know about your customers, much more than many companies really understand. Insight into customers is like an onion having many rings. The more rings you penetrate, the more you may be able to modify or augment your products or services to gain marketing advantage.

Consumer insight leads to stellar product and service innovation. It's a common witticism that if Henry Ford had done his market research, he would have learned that the market just wanted a faster horse! Or perhaps he would hear the market complaining about how difficult horses are to feed and stable. They also age, die, and need to be replaced, and that's a hassle. They can also kick you in the head. There are so many negatives to horse transportation that perhaps the market was ready for something new. Well, he provided that, didn't he? He just made transportation so much easier in a brand new way. More on "easy" later.

An insight here is to listen to your customers' complaints, not just about your services, but also their complaints in general as they relate to what you do. This means you have to make time for them and perhaps even measure strategic listening with your management team.

## Marketing Science Versus Art

We also like the definition of marketing by Dr. Philip Kotler, author of textbook *Marketing Management*, from which Mike taught while an MBA instructor.

Marketing is the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, here's someone who states marketing is both a science and an art!

One of our premises in this book is that the science of marketing has been largely lost to the art side of marketing. We talk science in this book. What is science? From Wikipedia:

Science is a systematically organized body of knowledge on a particular subject.

What is art, then? Again, from Wikipedia:

Art is creative skill and imagination.

There you have it. Marketing should start with known conclusions proven through the scientific method, which includes experiments that produce theories that are peer-reviewed and broadly accepted. This means theories in the fields of marketing, psychology, social sciences, and more.

The reality is that, for the middle market, marketing science is largely ignored for lack of understanding and necessity. Instead, marketing is executed within the realm of art, which has few rules and can be done by anybody who considers themselves “creative.” Businesses have real needs for tactics, like a logo, a website, a video, etc. They don’t have an immediate need for higher marketing thinking.

We like to tell a story. We read it somewhere a long time ago: “In the old days when a business owner needed a business solution, he’d seek his rolodex and call one of four people, or perhaps all of them. He’d call his CPA. And his attorney. And his ad man. If none of those worked, he’d call his minister.”

However, over time the “ad man” got dropped from the list. Why? Because marketing has become mostly art. Marketing has become graphic design, websites, videos—all the tactics or “marketing stuff.” Lost is that gritty ad man, the veteran of business. We’re not talking about Don Draper from *Mad Men* here. We’re talking about that marketing veteran who helps you look at your business and its issues through a kaleidoscope, which means reaching conclusions by interlacing information and perspectives you may not even recognize. In this book, we bring back the ad man!

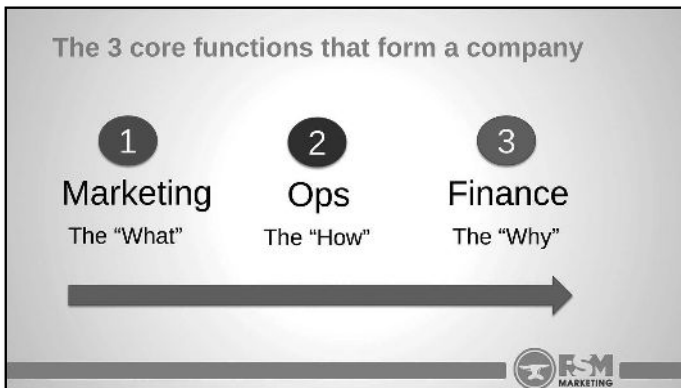
Marketing can be explained in one short phrase: “Let’s deliver value.” The more value you identify and the scarcer that value is in the market, the more successful you’ll be in marketing communications and selling and generating profits. We like the saying, “scarcity breeds value.” This means the scarcer the value, the more people (and people within businesses) will pay for it.

In another section, we’ll cover the infamous 4Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. These days, most people incorrectly equate marketing with promotion. Once you dispel this notion, your business becomes open to more marketing opportunities. The better your marketing, the less promotion you need.

## Marketing’s Fit within a Company

Marketing is one of three core business functions: marketing, operations, and finance, in that order.

1. What is it that we should make (marketing),
2. That we *can* make (operations),
3. And at what profit (finance)?



Most middle-market companies don't have a marketing department. At most, they have people who do marketing communications (the "promotion" piece). It's okay if marketing as a function is distributed across the company. Perhaps the partner team performs the marketing function or the senior management team. Perhaps it's just one stellar engineer with a real nose for the market, always anticipating what it wants.

For those of us in the smaller zone of "middle-market," those running companies with tens or dozens of employees rather than hundreds, we ask: "Who's responsible for marketing within the company?"

Well, ostensibly the responsibility lies with the founder, president, CEO, or managing partner—whichever the leader is. The leader, then, has the responsibility of organizing the management team to produce new marketing decisions and different business outcomes. The good news here is that no one person has to have the answers. The leader's job is to put together the team and feed it new inputs, all to arrive at new destinations.

## **Marketing's Goal**

The ultimate goal of marketing is to create a "moat" around your business. You don't just want to be ahead of your competition, you want to be light years ahead. Okay, we'll settle for at least a few years ahead.



There's a crude assumption we make when doing the thinking part of marketing:

## People are either stupid or lazy.

This is fundamentally an assumption about people, your customers. By "stupid," we mean that they may just be uninformed. They don't know what they want. By "lazy," we mean that people don't prefer doing things the hard way. They want whatever they do in their life to be as easy as possible. Hey, there's that word again. "Easy." Hmmm.

In business, those who start businesses or lead businesses are neither stupid nor lazy.

Or . . . are they?

"Stupid" can also mean being exposed to knowledge but choosing to disregard it. "Lazy" can mean relying tomorrow on whatever produced success for you yesterday. It's likely what worked yesterday won't work as well tomorrow or into the future. Competition is born every day, and companies need to innovate.

### **Challenge questions for you:**

1. Do you have a moat around your business?
2. Do you WANT a moat?
3. Are you willing to work hard and try new things to get one?
4. Or, do you have people in your business who can do that for you?

5. Last, are you willing to make the hard decisions that may be necessary, like replacing mediocre people—even loyal ones—or outsourcing work in order to get that moat?

## The “Why” Factor

The “Why Factor,” established in 2005, is based on Simon Sinek’s observations of successful businesses and his keen understanding of human thinking and behavior. The “Why Factor” involves three parts, in ascending order of importance: What do you do? How do you do it? Why do you do it?

Sinek believes, and we agree, that your customers are keenly interested in *why* you do what you do. “What you do” is the commodity. “How you do it” can introduce differentiation relative to your competitors. However, “Why you do it” can empower preference, loyalty and the building of a fan base, or community, for your company.

When we run clients through a marketing exercise called “Brand Strategy and Positioning Analysis,” we often include this “Why Factor” as part of the analysis. We find that companies either had that factor but forgot it long ago, or they have it but they’re not making it part of their marketing programs.

“Why” statements begin with what you believe. “How” statements operationalize that belief.

# RSM Marketing's "Why Factor"

## Why?

At RSM Marketing, we believe in paving the way for helping clients reach their definition of a new "breakthrough" in their business, as they define it.

## How?

How we do that is by making marketing easy for clients, by providing all the resources necessary to make marketing both affordable and sustainable in their companies.

## What?

What we do is all the "marketing stuff," like websites, design, SEO, PPC, etc.

Most business people might think the "why" for businesses would be to create profits. That's technically correct. But *no*. Any great marketing discussion has to presume that increased sales and profits is a foregone conclusion. When we conduct marketing planning exercises with our clients, we state upfront that there can be no talk around sales. We all know we want to sell more. So, our discussion must focus on their market and clients. Our discussions must focus on customer language, meaning deep customer observations and insights. At a deeper level than we've ever reached, perhaps, what do customers really want and what do they believe in? How can the company evolve to intersect better with these wants and beliefs?

The challenge in this book will be to take the truths we discuss and implement them, exercising “new muscles” and becoming better over time. As long as you’re in business, you’ll need to chase a constantly fluctuating market, so you’ll need to be changing and evolving too. Ideally, you’ll do this ahead of your competition, establishing that desired moat around your business.

# The Great Marketing Lie



There's a saying that "some people just have a head for business." While it has some truth to it, most of us have to work hard to succeed in business. There's no "right" way to succeed. There's no magic bullet. But, there's dodging bullets! Success only accompanies those who take risks and plow forward. The question isn't: "Have I failed?" It's: "Have I failed *enough*?" We got that out of a Harvard Business Review article early on. It really informed our risk-taking profile.

So to succeed in business, we all scramble. We make big strides where we're comfortable, like in sales, operations, or engineering. We read books on marketing, but while they're titillating to our ears, how do you really implement all that marketing jazz? It seems rather *hard*.

## The Lie, Exposed

### Marketing is Hard.

So let's be clear and fair. Marketing is not easy either. Conversely, it's not as hard as most people think and certainly not as hard as the industry might purport.

There's a reason for this. The industry itself is awkward. You can't get two marketing "professionals" to agree on the definition of marketing. You can pay two different consultants \$20,000 each to develop a "marketing strategy" for your company, and they'll produce completely opposite results and will argue why the other's won't work. You may not even understand how to implement what they're saying. The

advertising industry likes to purport themselves as savants creating magic out of thin air. Most agencies and marketing consultants cannot tell you *how* they do what they do. Little else in your company works that way. So marketing tends to have this negative connotation as being beneath other business functions. People say marketing is an art, not a science. But actually, it's both.

Fortune 500 companies, marketing agencies, and even universities feed this idea that marketing is . . . just . . . really . . . hard. For years, Mike taught strategic marketing management in an MBA program. The textbook was exhaustive. Something like 500 pages. It was crushing. There was NO way the students would get anything real and lasting out of the class other than knowing the definitions of hundreds of concepts and concluding that...marketing is really hard! Only a handful of these hundreds of students had a marketing career. Most were in everything else like engineering, HR, operations, management, etc. So Mike developed a simplified curriculum based on truths from the real world, taking some core principles and extracting them from the marketing succotash that most of us are taught or experience. While the students had to read the book and were quizzed on it, there was perpendicular instruction, not parallel.

There's a need for this perpendicular thinking in the market, in your business.

## Marketing is Everything, and Everything is Marketing

A fundamental reason why marketing is not as hard as we might think is we're surrounded by marketing. Look around you right now. Maybe you're at home. Maybe you're at the office, or a coffee shop. Everything around you was "made" because someone somewhere thought it might solve a problem for you, create value for you. Your desk and chair, your pen, the tile on your floor, the roof over your head, the music you may be listening to . . . it all started with marketing.

Marketing, of course, involves a transaction. You paid money for everything around you, or someone did. Monetary transactions—for profit—are the easiest to call out as marketing. But not all transactions involve money.

ANY transaction where there's a seller and buyer involves marketing. Transactions of ideas. Transactions of emotion. Transactions of decisions.

Do you give blood at the Red Cross? That's marketing. The emotional and practical benefit you receive from donating blood motivates your transaction with them. You gave them something, and you received non-monetary value from it. You feel good. You feel like you're helping. Perhaps you buy into the idea that giving blood provides health benefits to you. At some point, marketing messaging caused your first "purchase" or transaction with the Red Cross.

Do you go to church? Do you vote? Then at some point, you made a purchase of what someone else, whether minister or political candidate, was selling. When you sit in



the pew at church, the minister is trying to sell you on the ideas contained within his or her sermon. When you agree with those ideas and, even better, apply them, you've made a transactional purchase for some emotional, practical, or spiritual value . . . or all three.

Married? Do you ever try to convince your spouse to go to a new restaurant? "Aw, I don't want to go. Let's just go to our regular place." You then embark on a small persuasion campaign that either works or doesn't. When it does, your spouse has transacted agreement to your pitch. You've essentially acted as seller/buyer in the realm of decision making. It's the same for management teams and leaders, by the way.

Regardless of how fully you agree that "everything is marketing," the point is simple.

Because we are surrounded by marketing in our personal and business lives, we actually have more marketing acumen than we likely perceive or give ourselves credit for. Being in business, you already have a good start at recognizing, perhaps in a new way after you read this book, the marketing smarts you already have. Like any muscle, marketing acumen gets stronger the more you use it.

A great way to exercise that muscle is to start looking at your everyday transactions and breaking them down a bit. Reverse engineer why you made a purchase. See if you can perceive the "value" a seller tried to create for you. And be careful to avoid the general product/service benefit in retail and B2B. Yes, you buy a chair because you need to sit in it. But why did you buy that brand and that price point?

Yes, you outsource payroll to XYZ provider. Why? Get beyond price too. Even if you think you purchased because of a low price, there are other value points that have been met, based on your set of evaluative criteria.

When you drive to work, start looking at the outdoor boards. It's wonderful marketing training. Regardless of whether you're the actual target of the ad, reverse engineer it. Do you even understand what they're saying? Do you think the message will be compelling to the target? What value does the ad represent? What feelings or thoughts do you have about the brand represented?

Because you have natural if not latent marketing ability, our effort is to provide ways to organize and activate that ability. True, some may get further than others based on background, education, natural abilities, and experience.

We believe that if you are a business owner or manager within the company, you have the ability to understand and loft—alone or with the team—six marketing truths that will make marketing so much easier.

That marketing has to be hard is a lie. Like anything, you just need the right tools.