



**MARKETING
THE
EXPERIENCE**



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defining customer experience



Marketing is a tax you pay for being unremarkable

It was an IT geek - Robert Stephens - who created a bit of a buzz with the above comment.

He also happens to have created one of America's most successful IT support companies - the Geek Squad - which probably means he knows a thing or two about building a remarkable brand. And he makes a good point.

Robert believes that marketing is everything that you do - not merely a set of marketing practices and processes residing in one function. So your people are your brand, your premises are your brand, your vehicles are your brand. For example, the Geek Squad uses rather snazzy cars painted like police squad cars rather than the ubiquitous 'white van'.

To build a brand that stands out, you need to rethink the way you market that brand.

Digital, mobile and web technology have created a bewildering array of possible channels and means of communication - many of which are beyond the control of anyone but the consumer. And these increasingly marketing-savvy customers are not just demanding great products and service, they're also demanding authenticity and more meaningful engagement. Reaching these audiences requires bold thinking...

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Here are some of the things that bold brands do...

They see marketing as part of the experience

Marketing, for them, is primarily a way of engaging and entertaining customers, not a way of persuading them to buy. Chilli Beans for example is not just known for great sunglasses, but also for its great music festivals and events - the 'Chilli Beans World' - which generates vibe and excitement around their brand.

They powerfully communicate the brand promise

How many brands are brave enough to choose 'We'll save your ass' as their brand promise? Well the Geek Squad is. Dismissing the temptation of saccharine slogans, they went for something distinct, which powerfully and honestly communicates what they promise.

They focus on creating fans to drive referral

Most companies measure customer satisfaction. Others, like O2, measure fandom - customers so loyal to the brand that they stick with it through thick and thin. A very high bar to jump!

They see customer involvement in product development as a key part of marketing

When innocent's customers made suggestions for a banana-free smoothie, innocent didn't just add the new smoothie to its range, it sent a personal hand-written thank you note to every single customer who had made suggestions, together with an invitation to try out the new recipe for free. And innocent customers just loved them even more.

They foster customer communities

Many use innovative social marketing techniques. Burberry's website 'Art of the Trench' brings fans together by inviting them to share pictures and stories of their own personal much-loved Trench. The result? An online community of fans that continue to perpetuate the magic of Burberry's iconic coat.

They see their people as a key element of marketing

They obsess about the employee experience as much as the customer experience - knowing that if you exceed the expectations of your employees, they will exceed the expectations of your customers. Ray Davis, CEO of Umpqua Bank, sums this up: *'Culture and brand are the same - and you cannot have one without the other'*.

Robert Stephens goes to enormous lengths to recruit people to fit the brand DNA, train them and lead them.

He believes that his people ARE the brand.

They don't hang around

Whether it is JCB's obsession with the 'urgency of now' or BBH's mantra 'be quicker to embrace change' - they act quickly.

...so is the geek right?

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Yes.

If you focus your entire business on entertaining and engaging your customers - and if you brand the experience they have, then you can reduce the dollars you spend on traditional marketing campaigns trying desperately to persuade people that you are different or better.

You will already have a growing fan base telling everyone how remarkable you are. Accelerating that 'word of mouth' effect is the great opportunity that digital, mobile and social media offers.