

How 'human' is your marketing?



By [Gerhard Jacobs](#)

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Consider for a moment the marketing environment in which you operate. Pause what you're doing. Look at the people, your fellow workers, the company in which you're working for. How much of what you do revolves around the people to whom you're marketing? By this is I mean the actual recipients of the material and communication you push out.

As marketers, we tend to take an introverted view of our work. Before you disagree with this statement, let me explain. We have our stats, we think we know our customers and then we come up with an idea we think is amazing. This is pushed out to a group of individuals who are expected to devour it and hopefully at the end of this process buy into our product.

The problem with this approach, well, one of the problems is that we tend to forget that the people we're communicating to are human and that they have an innate drive towards happiness. So in order to understand better how we can market in a more human way, let's look at three requirements for what is commonly considered "happiness".

Being... Creating... Industrious... (Be acknowledged? Heard? Noticed?)

As humans, we get a sense of satisfaction from the things we accomplish through genuine and acceptable effort. If you look at this in marketing terms then we can say that our actions should inspire people to accomplish something. The products we push out could be something the consumer aspires to and once acquired gives him/her a sense of achievement; either through hard work or, and here's the humdinger, reaching beyond their own boundaries and in doing so bettering themselves, thus achieving a greater sense of purpose in their perpetration.

This could come in the form of a positive campaign for, let's say, recycling. Take for example Adobe's [Adobe in Action](#) campaign. It's a brilliant marketing strategy and many companies make use of it, but not all have been able to truly "humanise" their campaigns.

It's one thing to throw money at a problem, but marketing in a way in which the consumer feels personally involved in the brand/business' outreach creates an all-important sense of achievement.

Belonging

As abstract as this might sound, the sense of belonging is actually quite straightforward. As marketing diversifies onto ever expanding platforms it becomes easier for marketers to generalise their message or campaign and merely adapt it to suit the different delivery methods.

We tend to forget how important it is for people to feel like they belong somewhere. This can be as part of a group, a culture, religion or race. As much as societal trends try and globalise our existence the fact remains - we want to be part of the "Trekkie Society", the "BMW Club" or the "I Love everything that starts with an i" club. So if consumers want to be a part of something why do marketers communicate with them in such a generalised manner?

Being able to specialise marketing material for a specific demographic gives the recipient of your material the sense that they are being spoken to directly. Immediately you have their attention and, even better, their loyalty. Your product stands out among millions of others and your message hits home.

Engagement

One of the biggest mistakes marketers make is talking *at* consumers instead of talking *to* them. Imagine yourself back in the industrialised schooling system of the west. Picture your teacher in the front of the classroom telling you "this is how it is" and there are no two ways about it. Most of us have experienced this at one point or another throughout our life.

Hierarchical communication in terms of marketing to consumers is unsustainable and results in people disconnecting from you and in doing so your message is lost. If you are to deliver truly engaging communications to your target market then you have to be open to an exchange of ideas, opinions and even criticism. Only by allowing this free flow and speaking to consumers will your product find its place among people.

Marketing has very much become a two-sided affair. On the one hand, there are those who understand, to a certain extent, the needs of their target market and relate to them on their terms. However, there is a sea of marketers who rely on traditional means of product placement and communication i.e. *en masse*. The sooner we realise that the industry has evolved into a very different beast, one where the communications cycle has reached a plateau between marketer and consumer, the better we will be able to relate to people on a more human level.

"Marketing is not and cannot remain the silo it's been for decades. Marketing is fast becoming interdisciplinary and the node that links everything organically - everything that helps a business grow, from customer support to sales, technical teams and financial considerations. Yes, stats and data are crucial in order to measure campaigns, especially in the advertising environment and environment and they give us trend indicators - they outline a pattern with regard to user interaction with an application, or highlight what content is downloaded the most from a resource centre. But data without heart will not take you far - as the heart, the values of listening and understanding will lead your business to truly engage, to maintain conversations and to grow your digital biosphere," said Barbara Ulmi, head of marketing at GraphicMail.

ABOUT GERHARD JACOBS

Gerhard's first love is writing and communication in all its forms. He has a degree of affection for food, politics, talking loudly and staring at plants. He currently work as Digital Copywriter & Journalist for GraphicMail, a digital marketing company. He has an innate love for all forms of media and enjoy a marginal obsession with science fiction, hence his love of Eskimos and desolate landscapes. Contact details: website: www.graphicmail.com | Twitter @gjacobs86 | blog gerhardjacobs.tumblr.com

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