

What brand leaders can learn from preachers

By [Silungile Mambo](#)

12 Jul 2007

Let's face it. Preachers have dominion on the one asset that every brand leader prays for: Loyalty. What the marketing books won't tell you is that brand stratagem has existed for centuries long before the word brand came into existence.

One substantiation of this can spring from watching effective preachers at play. Put your brand insights cap on during a sermon and you will gain some key insights that brand leaders consistently miss in their quest for brand devotion.

Preachers:

- **Are natural and convincing storytellers.** Preachers are good at telling stories. Think about the stories of creation; after all it is stories that shape us. Stories make customers feel good about their identity. Companies must start telling stories that are believable about themselves so that customers can make the connection themselves and feel validated by those stories.
- **Understand the power of the word, in short word of mouth.** While richer churches now use above-the-line advertising, by and large the dirty work is still done by the followers. Companies need to create meaningful experiences that propel their customers to spread the word. Isn't this after all the most authentic form of brand devotion?
- **Create lifelong brand ambassadors within their congregations.** It's easier for those who feel they are the chosen ones or belong to a select few to convert others. Companies should invest in making their employees feel like working in their organisations is a calling. The battle is not only about customer acquisition but more so customer conversion. Employees who feel like the chosen few are more likely to spread the brand's evangelism.
- **Use testimonials.** Preachers are not afraid to use their own shortcomings and how those were overcome by their conversion. Particularly in South Africa where there is such a wide knowledge gap, marketers fall in the trap of trying to prove how sophisticated they have become and in the process chase away potential customers. Preachers tell you because they were once like you, you too have a chance. Marketers tell you, "Look at me, I am perfect."
- **Use emotion.** Preachers are not afraid to use a whole range of emotions. Fear, hope, frustration, joy because they understand that it is precisely that emotional hook that retains the members. Marketers get lost in the retail space and forget the emotional hook.
- **Use consistency and familiarity.** Preachers are never late. They will tell and retell the same stories that have been

told for centuries and make it sound new each time. They retell these stories because they understand the power of their appeal. Humans are creatures of habit and are assured by familiarity. Marketers need to thread carefully when doing drastic rebranding activities. Sometimes innovation cuts the connection with the customers because customers do not like to find themselves in unfamiliar ground.

- **Believe in their product.** The preachers' belief in their faith and its teachings are non-negotiable. They have total faith. Marketers have this relative approach to their products. They will quickly start comparing their product to that of the competition and in the process dilute message takeout. They make you believe their product is really not that much different.

It has been said that consumer marketing is the new religion. Perhaps a little faith does go a long way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Silungile Mambo is a brand specialist at a large telecommunications company. Silungile may be contacted on +27 (0)11 324 8206 or email smlambo@cellic.co.za.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>