

Passion: The fifth 'P' of a modern marketing strategy

You hear them everywhere; words spoken without meaning, phrases so redundantly misused that denotation and connotation come together, leaving us asking, "What the hell's the point?"

And, of course, this is never more evident than in today's business world, where the right phrase resonates the bestowing of an expert's advice like a cleric's karmic certainty of return on investment.

Yet so often, quick, cha-ching mantras are simply shallow recitals of something heard, yet never understood.

And such is the case with today's overused business term, strategy, which somehow promises plentiful profit, infinite opulence and the grandeur of never-ending net gains.

This hackneyed and lazy cliché cure-all of business terms is only rivaled by the once tasteless redundancy and promenading pandering of poorly titled pop ballads that clogged the radio airwaves in the late '70s and early '80s.

Such it is with the term strategy. Let me count the ways of overuse: creative strategy, strategic implementation, strategic direction and strategic counsel.

Of course, no one will argue that sound strategy isn't imperative to the successful sale of any product or service.

No matter what marketing lord you give thanks to, strategy is a part of your business building.

Yet, ironically, when you recall the taste of a first kiss or the smell of a new car, your buying decisions had a lot more to do with the feeling of a heart, than the strategy of a mind. Strategy may get you there, but the heart embraces.

Capturing emotion

An associate of mine always asks rhetorically, "What's halfway between your wallet and your brain?"

I reply, "I know. It's my heart, not my brain, that makes the purchase decision."

After all, we are not strategists. We are humans. We feel things deeply, softly and with emotive ambiance. Even the great ones like Shakespeare had a strategy, but superseding this were his plays, those culturally charged theatrical heartbeats that sold and captured human emotion.

So how do feelings fit into marketing's four Ps: product, price, place and promotion?

They do and they don't. Feelings are part of passion, the fifth P. Passion is the sum total of all the others; the ultimate intangible of selling and marketing.

It is a word in definition that stands as an antonym to strategy. It is a word rarely used, yet capable of endless, effortless resource.

Passion thrives in successful brands from the eyes of the chief executive to the mouth of the receptionist. It cannot fail, it is an army of hearts and minds moving with precision and clarity.

Even passion itself has its own four Ps: purpose, pride, persistence and promise.

- Purpose – a company that collectively understands the purpose they pursue with every day aims.

- Pride – a company and its employees feel a deep dignity in what they do.

- Persistence – a company that continues forward, even after its cause is removed.

- Promise – a company with a committed pledge that means something.

One of the first rules of marketing is get-



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ting noticed. It's nearly impossible to ignore great passions. They quietly scream, "This is what I love."

Conversely, you've seen those clinical TV commercials that follow a sound strategy, but are passionless.

You may even resent the products they pitch for raking away 30 seconds of your life.

As philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once stated, "Is not life a hundred times too short for us to bore ourselves?"

Yet Nike on the other hand, lights us on

fire with their impassioned command, "Just Do It."

Passion like this is the cornerstone of every landmark event: the Great Crusades, Armstrong and the Tour De France, and, of course, the 1980 Winter Olympics U.S. hockey team. These were passion campaigns, born with purpose, persevered by promise and fulfilled with pride. Don't we all wish our businesses created such an impact?

Admittedly, many of our client's businesses were passion first, then strategy somewhere down the line.

We all like to think that we constructed a grand scheme, the perfect plan, but the fact often is, we felt it, we did it, it worked. For our clients, it is often strategy we sup-

ply to their existing passion.

So imagine a business where strategy and passion are perfectly married; where purpose and promise hold a unified equity; where perseverance has a price that isn't too costly. And what do you have? Marketing invincibility, or as Field Marshall Ferdinand Foch put it, "The most powerful weapon on earth – the human soul on fire."

Sure the four Ps of marketing are essential, but I'll always take one passionate man (with a little strategy), over a strategist with little passion.

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