

PART II

STRATEGY

CHAPTER THREE

Marketing the Mission to the Consumers

CONSUMERS ARE THE NEW BRAND OWNERS!

Remember 1985's New Coke story? In less than three months, New Coke was withdrawn from the market due to consumer backlash.¹ The backlash was not at all about the new taste. In the mid-1980s, Coca-Cola was already part of the pop culture in the United States. Consumers felt a bond with the brand and its infamous secret formula. The New Coke ruined the bond and thus, consumers rejected the new product launch. In Canada, it was a different case. New Coke was well-accepted because Coca-Cola did not have iconic status there. In the United States, it was a costly flop but Coca-Cola could by then be sure that consumers were guarding the brand.

In the contemporary world of the twenty-first century, the scene repeated. This time, it happened to IKEA, the affordable Scandinavian-design furniture retailer. In 2009, in a cost-saving move, IKEA changed the official font from the stylish custom-Futura to the functional Verdana.² Consumers reacted with outrage and the conversation spread widely on Twitter. Again, consumers tried to guard the brand they had bonded with. Social media helped in spreading the complaints faster and wider.

When the New Coke case happened, many marketing pundits believed that it was a case of product development failure. The Coca-Cola management simply misinterpreted market research findings and therefore misunderstood consumers' needs and wants. However, when a similar situation happened with IKEA, we can see that such backlashes are more than just launch failures. When a brand's mission is successfully implanted in consumers' minds, hearts, and spirits, the brand is owned by the consumers. The real mistake both companies made was that they did not understand their own brand mission as well as their consumers did.

Coca-Cola is a symbol of American happiness. The brand popularized the happy portrayal of Santa Claus in the 1930s. The 1971 song "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing" taught Americans to be happy in turbulent times. The mystery surrounding the original formula was considered the secret of happiness. Coca-Cola later launched the "Open Happiness" campaign in 2009, but in the 1980s it was a well-guarded secret. Coca-Cola was even withdrawn from India in 1977 to guard the secret from the Indian government. For Coca-Cola, New Coke was about creating a new taste to win the cola war against Pepsi. But for consumers, it tampered with the secret behind the icon of their happiness. Good news for Coca-Cola: their consumers strongly believed in the brand mission of happiness.

IKEA, too, is an icon. It is a symbol of a smart, stylish lifestyle. Before IKEA, affordable furniture meant functional furniture with no touch of style. IKEA changed all that. For IKEA, affordability means self-service and self-assemble furniture but with great design. The IKEA brand mission: making stylish furniture affordable for smart consumers. The change to the Verdana font might have improved affordability, but it killed the stylish design factor. Altogether, it was not a good move, especially for consumers who adore the righteous brand mission so much. For IKEA, it was a significant cost savings considering the ubiquity of the Verdana font. For consumers, it was a betrayal of their beliefs and knocked off the

idea that they are really smart buyers. Again, business consideration was misaligned with the brand mission.

These two cases serve as examples of a very important message: in Marketing 3.0, you don't really own your brands once they are successful. Companies embracing Marketing 3.0 have to live with the fact that exerting control over the brand is almost impossible. The brands belong to their consumers. The brand mission is now their mission. What companies can do is align their actions with the brand mission.

GOOD MISSION DEFINED

Brand mission is not as easy as it seems to craft. It is difficult to summarize why your brand should exist in one simple statement, especially if you want it to be both groundbreaking and not wishy-washy. If you have difficulty stating your brand mission, you are not alone. Jack and Suzy Welch conducted an annual two-day seminar for three consecutive years with about 100 CEOs. To their surprise, 60 percent of the CEOs admitted they did not have a corporate mission statement. For the rest who did, their mission statements were mostly drawn from templates and full of meaningless jargon.³

The official web site of Scott Adams' *Dilbert* once had an Automatic Mission Statement Generator that enabled users to craft mission statements by combining random bits of business jargon. Using the generator, you could develop thousands of mission statements that sounded ridiculous. This is one example: "*It is our job to continually foster world-class infrastructures as well as to quickly create principle-centered sources to meet our consumers' needs.*"⁴ The generator is no longer available online but you would not want to use it anyway.

In this book, we will not offer you new templates or a new jargon generator. Our goal is to show you the key characteristics that make a good brand mission (see Figure 3.1). In Marketing 3.0, creating a good mission means introducing a new business perspective that can transform the lives of

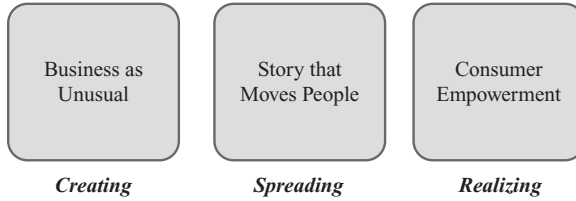


Figure 3.1 Three Characteristics of a Good Mission

consumers. We call it “Business as Unusual,” borrowing the well-known phrase from the late Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop. We also believe there is always a good story behind a good mission. Therefore, spreading the mission to consumers involves a story that moves people. An unusual idea embedded in a mission would have to reach mainstream market adoption to make a significant impact. In other words, realizing the mission requires consumer participation. Thus, consumer empowerment is crucial.

Business as Unusual

To find an original and innovative business idea is the dream of every start-up company. *Harvard Business Review* creates an annual list called the “Breakthrough Ideas” to report innovative ideas circulating around the world. But, what we really need is to find the ideas before they are known to be breakthrough by others. That requires a capability known as *strategic foresight*. This capability is rare and has always been found in the visionary and charismatic leaders who introduced great business ideas over the past decades (see Table 3.1 for a nonexhaustive list of visionary leaders and how they changed the conventional way of doing business). Their personal mission and their brand mission are inseparable and often the same. Visionary leaders are not necessarily innovators and pioneers. In fact, leaders such as Herb Kelleher, Anita Roddick, and even Bill Gates got their inspiration from other companies. But they were the ones who made the idea bigger and more meaningful to human lives.

Table 3.1 Examples of Business as Unusual Practices and Brand Missions of Visionary Leaders

Leader	Brand	Business as Unusual	Original Brand Mission
Ingvar Kamprad	IKEA	Invented the concept of foldable furniture and self-service experiential stores (in the 1960s) that made it possible for the furniture retailer to significantly save costs	Make stylish furniture affordable
Richard Branson	Virgin	Reinvented business with risky and diverse ventures under single brand name since 1970; applied unconventional business practices company-wide; most recently attempted to create commercial spacecraft with Virgin Galactic (2004)	Bring excitement to boring industries
Walt Disney	The Walt Disney Co.	Created successful animated characters and brought them into mainstream business with licensing and theme park experience	Create magical world for families
Herb Kelleher	Southwest Airlines	Although he got his ideas about the low-cost airline model and corporate culture from Pacific Southwest Airlines (established in 1949), Kelleher has brought low-cost airlines into the mainstream since 1971 and inspired worldwide adoption of the business model	Make flying possible for many people
Anita Roddick	The Body Shop	Although she copied the brand name and the idea of recycled packaging from a U.S. company in 1976 and had only accidentally practiced social activism 10 years later, Roddick introduced the idea of creating stories behind cosmetic products	Embed social activism in business

(continued)

Table 3.1 *(Continued)*

Leader	Brand	Business as Unusual	Original Brand Mission
Bill Gates	Microsoft	Although not an early pioneer, Gates has introduced operating systems into the mainstream since 1975 and arguably made software an essential part of computing by taking advantage of the network effect	Realize ubiquitous computing
Steve Jobs	Apple	Transformed the computing, music, and phone industries by introducing the Mac (1984), iPod (2001), and iPhone (2007) with cool counterculture approach; also reinvented animation pictures with Pixar (2006)	Transform how people enjoy technology
Jeff Bezos	Amazon.com	Reinvented retailing of books (and other products) with Amazon.com (1994) and reinvented the book itself with the Kindle (2007)	Provide the biggest selection of knowledge delivered conveniently
Pierre Omidyar	eBay	Connected sellers and buyers with eBay (1995), facilitated transaction and governance with user ratings and inclusion of PayPal as subsidiary (2002)	Create user-governed market space
Larry Page and Sergey Brin	Google	Since 1998, Google has been reinventing the search engine (the word "Google" is in the dictionary defined as a word for searching on the Internet); redefined online advertising by providing search engine-based advertising platform	Make the world's information organized and accessible

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Leader	Brand	Business as Unusual	Original Brand Mission
Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger	Wikipedia	Since 2001, Wikipedia has been redefining the encyclopedia and popularizing the collaborative wiki approach developed by Ward Cunningham (1994)	Create a publicly editable encyclopedia
Mark Zuckerberg	Facebook	Although he did not invent social networking (Friendster was introduced first by Jonathan Abrams in 2002 and MySpace by Chris DeWolfe and Tom Anderson in 2003; Facebook was introduced later in 2004), Zuckerberg expanded the idea by introducing Facebook Platform (2007) and Connect (2008) and expanded social networking to a wider presence	Provide social network as business platform
Reid Hoffman	LinkedIn	LinkedIn introduced online professional networking and new ways of organizing professional contact information; some say it will soon replace the traditional resume for job search	Connect professionals around the world
Jack Dorsey	Twitter	Established in 2006, Twitter pioneered the idea of mini-blogs on the Internet and how people can broadcast their ideas to their network	Provide the tools to track friends and other interests

Those leaders who can make a huge impact from a small idea are the ones who really make a difference. Day and Schoemaker, who did extensive research on 119 global companies, argued that in an interlinked economy, the “butterfly effect” exists.⁵ A small change in one part of the world can make big changes in other parts of the world. A business leader who captures this small change might gain significant advantage. To do this, leaders should not be operational leaders who focus on internal organization. They should be open for discovery and have outside-in mind-sets. Day and Schoemaker called these leaders “vigilant leaders”—the ones who have high levels of awareness, alertness, and willingness to undertake risky action based on small pieces of information. Michael Maccoby called them “narcissistic leaders”: people who have narcissistic personalities that allow them to make bold decisions according to nonconsensus belief.⁶

We also put on our list that the brand missions are authentic and reflect what Peter Drucker argued: Businesses should start from a good mission.⁷ Financial results come second. Amazon.com earned its first profit in 2001, after seven years of online existence.⁸ Twitter has not even finalized its business model and is still not sure how to monetize its service.⁹ Mark Zuckerberg insisted in 2007 that his focus was to build communities and not to exit and find a buyer for Facebook—like many other online start-ups did.¹⁰ Although the financial goal is not their prime interest, they are all admirable brands with authentic missions and investment funds are lined up to support them.

Next, a good mission is always about change, transformation, and making a difference. Marketing 3.0 is about changing the way consumers do things in their lives. When a brand brings transformation, consumers will unconsciously accept the brand as part of their daily lives. This is what human spirit marketing is all about. In their book *The Experience Economy*, Pine and Gilmore argued that once the experience economy matures, it is time for the transformation economy to emerge.¹¹ We believe that the transformation

economy—where a company’s offering is a consumer’s life-transforming experience—is already on its way.

Brand missions do not have to be complicated and sophisticated. In fact, they should be simple to allow for flexible business scoping. Look how visionary leaders pursue different strategies to fulfill their mission. Steve Jobs did it with the Mac, the iPod, and the iPhone, each influencing a different industry. Jeff Bezos launched the Kindle after successfully building Amazon.com. Companies need to continually rethink how to pursue their mission. To do that, they cannot rely on their founders forever. They need leaders at all levels. Some people argue that visionaries tend to be entrepreneurs. However, that should not discourage companies from encouraging intrapreneurs with visionary capabilities. General Electric has always been a benchmark for creating leaders within its organization, according to Noel Tichy.¹² The company launched the four-day Leadership, Innovation, and Growth (LIG) program in 2006 for top executives—specially designed to help GE develop leaders for its business expansion plans. According to GE CEO Jeff Immelt, the program is essential to embed growth in GE’s corporate DNA, that is, its corporate mission.¹³

Story that Moves People

Robert McKee, a famous screenwriter, believes that there are two distinct ways to convince people.¹⁴ The first one is to base your ideas on a set of facts and numbers and engage people in intellectual arguments. An alternative, which he thinks is much more effective, is to write compelling stories around the ideas and engage with people’s emotions instead. When it comes to introducing a new product, Apple’s Steve Jobs always chooses the second route. In fact, we can consider him as one of the master storytellers in business history. He always begins with a story. After the story is delivered, Jobs will then speak about the features and the set of facts regarding the product.

In the fall of 1983, the young Jobs aired the infamous “1984” commercial that would introduce the Macintosh to select audiences. He told a compelling story as to why 1984 was a year of transformation for the computing industry. He described the Macintosh as Apple’s counter to IBM’s attempt to dominate the computing industry. He argued that Apple was the only hope for dealers and consumers to avoid such dominance and enjoy the freedom of choice. In 2001, he engaged in another bit of brilliant storytelling. He introduced the iPod. The reason for being of the iPod was to let people carry the music libraries of their entire lives in their pockets. In 2007, he introduced the iPhone with the promise of transformation. The iPhone was portrayed as a revolutionary, smart, and easy-to-use device that combines music, phone, and the Internet. With his compelling stories, Steve Jobs has delivered the mission of transformation for the computing, music, and phone industries over the past 25 years.

But the stories that Jobs delivered were just the beginning. The complete stories of the Apple brand are the ones that have been continuously shaped in collaboration by multiple writers: the employees, channel partners, and most importantly the consumers. In the horizontal world, a big part of the story surrounding a brand is from collective wisdom. As stories are passed on from one writer to another, the stories are continuously rewritten. Companies can never be sure about the final stories circulating in the market. Hence, telling authentic stories in the beginning is always best.

A brand story, according to Holt, has at least three major components: character, plot, and metaphor.¹⁵ A brand possesses great characters when it becomes the symbol of a movement that addresses the problems in the society and transforms people’s lives. This is Holt’s core theory about cultural branding. Once a brand becomes identified with a cultural movement, it becomes a cultural brand. For example, The Body Shop is the symbol of social activism while Disney is a symbol of family ideals. Wikipedia is the symbol of

collaboration, while eBay is the symbol of user governance. In other words, a brand should promise business as unusual and deliver cultural satisfaction.

To make the characters relevant to people's lives, a good story needs a plot. In *Made to Stick*, Chip and Dan Heath offer three types of good story plots: challenge, connection, and creativity.¹⁶ The story of David and Goliath is a classic example of a challenge plot. In this type of plot, a brand plays the role of a weaker protagonist that takes on the challenge against a stronger opponent or difficult obstacle. The brand, of course, wins at the end. The Body Shop makes a fine example of a challenge plot as it brings the stories of farmers in developing countries who fight for fair trade. Plots you find in the *Chicken Soup* book series are examples of connection plots. In this type of plot, the brand is bridging the gaps that exist in everyday lives: racial, age, gender, and so on. Social media brands like Facebook use the connection plot to spread their stories. The creativity plot, on the other hand, is typical of television's *MacGyver* series, in which MacGyver always finds a way to solve issues with his brilliance. Virgin is well known for using this type of story with Richard Branson playing the MacGyver character.

Most visionary leaders do not make up the stories. They simply spot the available ones floating around in everyday lives. Most stories are out there. That is what makes them sound and feel so relevant. But of course, you need to be sensitive to be able to capture the stories. To help you, Gerald and Lindsay Zaltman offer a process to reveal the deep metaphors.¹⁷ Deep metaphors are encoded unconsciously in every human at a very young age. Using the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET), we can pull out the metaphors to understand how to construct our stories and how consumers are likely to respond to the stories. Zaltman's seven metaphors, which represent 70 percent of all metaphors, are called the Seven Giants. They are *balance, transformation, journey, container, connection, resource, and control*.

In ZMET, consumers are asked to collect pictures and make a collage from those pictures. Through a systematic probing of the collages with the interviewees who collected them, we can interpret the deep metaphors embedded in the collage. For example, people who unconsciously use the balance metaphor, might make an expression about “overweight” when we probe their collage on diet or “equal employment” when we probe their collage on job search. These insights will be useful for companies whose mission it is to improve consumer diet or promote employment diversity. Understanding the sense of transformation that consumers have when switching, for instance, to the environmentally-friendly Prius during the Cash-for-Clunkers program, might be useful to create stories for Toyota. Consumers who use the journey metaphor, might, for instance, comment that “it is going to be an uphill task to survive in crisis.” Understanding this helps companies build brand stories in times of recession.

The container metaphor can symbolize either protection or trap. People in impoverished rural areas see poverty as the trap that seals them off from outside opportunities, while senior employees see pension funds as the protection that guarantees their future survival. Metaphors can help companies understand the context in which consumers live. The connection metaphor is about relationship. Companies can reveal how consumers see other people in their networks. Companies can find the meaning of friendship or being a fan of one brand. Steve Jobs used the resource metaphor when he told the story that the iPhone would enable people to have the power of music, phone, and Internet in one device. The iPhone was positioned as a resource for the consumers. In an age of pandemics, consumers might express that they have no control over the spreading of diseases. What they can control is their own immunity. This is an example of the control metaphor.

Characters are central in a story. They symbolize how the brand is perceived by the human spirit. A plot structure shows how the character navigates among the network

of humans who will rewrite their own version of the story. Metaphors are the unconscious process happening in the human spirit. Stories with compatible metaphors will gain relevancy and be perceived as truths by consumers. Stories that move people have all three of these core components: character, plot, and metaphor. Creating a good mission is a giant step for companies. Spreading it through storytelling is another.

Consumer Empowerment

Every year, *Time* compiles a list of the 100 most influential people in the world. The list never ranks the 100 most famous names, at least not officially. However, *Time* allows online readers to rank the list themselves. In the 2009 list, which includes the likes of Barack Obama and the late Ted Kennedy, the 21-year-old mysterious guy named “moot” is the champ. The creator of 4chan.org, an influential image-based online bulletin board, won the online poll way ahead of the others with over 16 million votes. According to *Time*, his web site gets 13 million page views a day and 5.6 million visitors a month.

In the horizontal world, people like to empower lesser known figures. They see the figure as a symbol of themselves: consumers with less power among the corporate giants. Giving consumers a sense of empowerment is therefore crucial in the pursuit of a brand mission. Show that the mission belongs to the consumers, and it is their responsibility to fulfill the mission. It is not only about getting buy-in but also about making an impact. Although the individual consumer is weak, their collective power will always be bigger than the power of any firm.

The value of consumers' collective power is rooted in the value of a network. The network may develop with one-to-one relationships, one-to-many relationships, or many-to-many relationships. When companies broadcast their brand stories through advertising, in the consumer network, the stories are spread one-to-one from one member to the other. Ethernet

inventor Robert Metcalfe captured this in Metcalfe's Law when he argued that the power of a network of n members in a one-to-one setting is equal to n^2 . However, Metcalfe's Law underestimates the power of networks when the relationship is one-to-many or many-to-many, that is, when consumers are having conversations with other consumers simultaneously. This is captured by Reed's Law, which is often used to explain the social media phenomenon.¹⁸ According to Reed, the power of a network in a many-to-many environment of n members equals 2^n . Whenever n is greater than or equal to 5, the power of the many-to-many network is always bigger than that of the one-to-one network. This simple math is the central concept of consumer empowerment.

A great example of consumer empowerment is Google's Project 10¹⁰⁰. In celebration of its 10th birthday in September 2008, Google asked for ideas from consumers on how to help others in eight categories: community, opportunity, energy, environment, health, education, shelter, and everything else. Google will sort out 100 finalists and ask the public to vote for the best 20 ideas. The 5 best ideas selected by an advisory board will earn a total of \$10 million dollars for implementation. The best idea is the one that can help the most people in the deepest way. Google takes advantage of the power of the network while practicing consumer empowerment. The response was immense and Google is still in the process of selecting the finalists.¹⁹

Even for low-consideration products such as consumer packaged goods, consumer empowerment in realizing a mission is a trend.²⁰ Colgate, a brand with a mission to make people smile, is running a consumer empowerment program called Smile. It encourages consumers to post photos of their smiles and connect with others participating in the program. Tide, a brand with a simple mission to clean clothes, has a program called Loads of Hope that lets people help others affected by disasters. Consumers can help Tide provide free mobile laundromats to disaster sites in multiple ways from making donations to volunteering.

Consumer empowerment is the platform for consumer conversation. Many-to-many conversation is what makes a consumer network so powerful. A brand story has no meaning when consumers are not talking about it. In Marketing 3.0, conversation is the new advertising. At Amazon.com it is common for readers to write reviews of books and recommend them to others. It is also common at eBay where people rate buyers and sellers and leave comments that determine their reputations. There is even a web site dedicated to reviews and recommendations called Yelp, and it is localized to your neighborhood. These are the early efforts to encourage consumer conversations. In a conversation, consumers review and give ratings to your brand and brand stories. Great reviews and ratings will influence the network to accept the stories.

People who are familiar with Amazon.com and eBay know that conversation can also be vicious as people can share their opinions bluntly. Consumers will find loopholes in any brand story. This type of consumer behavior poses a threat to companies that treat brand mission as a public relations tool or sales gimmick. But stories with strong integrity pose no reason for worry. They will earn their credibility in the network. Companies should not try to buy their way into conversation by sponsoring consumers to write bogus reviews. Consumers will consider this manipulation. According to Pine and Gilmore, companies that try to cheat on their consumers will be dubbed phoniness-generating machines.²¹

Conversation is not word-of-mouth or simply a recommendation. Positive word-of-mouth is recommendation given by delighted consumers. Frederick Reichheld offers a practical tool called the Net Promoter Score to measure loyalty based on the willingness of consumers to recommend a brand to their networks.²² Because consumers who give recommendations will risk their own reputations, only strong brands will show high scores. It is a good measure of how active your brand is in the network of consumers. A high score is good news because most consumers rely on recommendation as a reason to buy. But it is not the complete story of conversation. Word

of mouth is only one-to-one dialogue and it follows Metcalfe's Law. Conversation is many-to-many and it follows the more accurate Reed's Law.

Only brand stories that are talked about in the community will take advantage of the full power of the consumer network. A recent study by Wetpaint and the Altimeter Group showed that the most engaged brands in social networks increased their revenue by 18 percent.²³ Conversation is so powerful that brand stories remain strong even when the brand is in trouble. Consider the Saab community. In early 2010, Saab was in debt and its operations were about to be closed by General Motors. However, the stories of the brand such as, "how Saab saved my life," "the ritual of flashing lights to other Saab drivers," and "Snaabery hierarchy" remain topics of conversation.²⁴ Stories about a brand can live longer than the brand itself and create loyalty in consumers who see the brand as an icon.

SUMMARY: PROMISE OF TRANSFORMATION, COMPELLING STORIES, AND CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

To market the company's or product's mission to consumers, companies need to offer a mission of transformation, build compelling stories around it, and involve consumers in accomplishing it. Defining a good mission starts with identifying small ideas that can make a big difference. Remember that mission comes first and financial return comes as a result. The best approach to spread the mission is through storytelling. Telling stories around the mission is about building character and plot based on metaphors. To convince consumers that your stories are authentic, engage them in conversation about your brand. Customer empowerment is the key to making a difference. These are the three principles of marketing the mission to consumers: *business as unusual*, *a story that moves people*, and *customer empowerment*.

NOTES

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