

## 30 Marketing Insights from A to Z

establish high-level committees that collect, evaluate, and choose the best ideas. And they reward those who suggest the best ideas. Alex Osborn, the developer of brainstorming, said: **“Creativity is so delicate a flower that praise tends to make it bloom, while discouragement often nips it in the bud.”**

It is sad that creativity probably peaks at age 5 and then children go to school only to lose it. The educational emphasis on left brain cognitive learning tends to undernuture the creative right brain.

# ustomer Needs

Marketing’s original mantra is to “find needs and fill them.” The company finds needs by listening to or interviewing customers and then prepares an appropriate solution to each need. Today, however, there are few needs that companies don’t know about or address. Pietro Guido, an Italian marketing consultant, wrote a book called *The No-Need Society* to make this point.

But there is another answer to the “no-need society”—that is, to create new needs. Sony’s Akio Morita, in his *Made in Japan*, said: **“We don’t serve markets. We create markets.”** Consumers never thought of videotape recorders, video cameras, fax machines, Palms, and so on, until they were made.

Of course, new needs will emerge even if the old ones are satis-

fied. *Events* can create new needs. The tragedy of September 11, 2001, increased the need for greater security in the air, food supply, and transportation and the country rapidly responded with new security measures. *Trends* can create new needs, such as the interest in “Down-Aging.” As people get older they want to feel and look younger, and this leads to buying sports cars, having plastic surgery, and using exercise equipment. So we can distinguish between existing needs and latent needs. Smart marketers will attempt to anticipate the next need and not only confine their attention to today’s need.

Sometimes a need is obscured because a company has taken too limited a view of customers. Certain dogmas get set in concrete, such as the cosmetics industry dogma that women basically use cosmetics in order to be more attractive to men. Along came Anita Roddick, who started The Body Shop with the assumption that many women want products that will give good care to their skin. She added another value: that many women care about social issues and will patronize a company that cares.<sup>19</sup>

Greg Carpenter and Kent Nakamoto have challenged a core assumption of marketers that buyers initially know what they want.<sup>20</sup> Instead they *learn* what they want. And companies play a strong role in teaching buyers what to want. Different brand competitors add new features to their computers, cameras, and cellular phones that buyers may not have known of or asked for, and in the process, buyers form a better idea of what they want. Such companies are not just *market driven* (by customer needs), but are *market driving* (by innovation). In this sense, competition is less a race to meet consumer needs and more a race to define these needs.

One reason that early market entrants (such as Xerox or Palm) often gain sustained market leadership is because the attributes they initially build into their products define the wants that were otherwise ill-defined. Consumers see the attributes as defining the category. Late-entry competitors are forced to supply the same attributes at a minimum as well as innovate new ones.