



MARKETING MATTERS

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How Do You Want to Be Perceived?

Imagine for a moment that you are a candidate for a senior marketing position with another company. You submit your resume expecting that you'll receive an invitation to interview. After all your credentials are impeccable. You've attended some of the best schools, served as an officer in a marketing club or sorority/fraternity, graduated in the top-10% of your class, worked for fortune "Top-500 companies," have x-years of experience and participated in a key marketing success along the way. Aren't you cool!?!

The question is, "Why should you expect to receive an invite for an interview." The fact of the matter is your resume is virtually identical to nearly every other candidate. You appear to be no different than your competitive set – those vying for the same position. The so-called *literal competitive framework* reveals no real differences much like products in the same category, or class of drug, or medical device. As a result, potential customers will find you "generally acceptable" and genericize you as an entity. If you walk like a duck, quack like a duck then, by golly, you must be a duck. And they're all basically the same.

This is where the *perceptual competitive framework* is so valuable. It's all about how you want to be perceived versus your competitors. What is it about you that makes you so special? It's not about your features but what you represent to those doing the hiring or, in the case of products and services, those that are doing the purchasing, prescribing or using. A statin is a statin. But Lipitor was not just a statin. It was "The Cholesterol Reducer!" At one time, it delivered max reductions in total cholesterol. Crestor was not just a statin. It was the "Cholesterol Regulator." It lowered the bad cholesterol while it boosted the good cholesterol. Now these are not just statins but cholesterol remedies, or even cardiovascular therapies, with a difference. Snickers is not just another confection or candy bar. It's the "Hunger Satisfier" given it's made with caramel, nougat, milk chocolate and nuts.

If you want to stand-out you have to stand for something that is meaningful and differentiated from the competition. What is your perceptual competitive framework? Are you the “Problem Solver?” The “Winning Strategist?” The “BIG Idea” marketer? Who are you and why is that important to me? What is your brand of product or service (perceptual competitive framework) and why is that important to your Target-Customer? If we cannot answer these questions and distinguish ourselves or our brands with a meaningful, differentiated perceptual competitive framework then we cannot expect to be invited to interview, be purchased, prescribed, or used.

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