



MARKETING MATTERS

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ADOPT “INCREMENTALITY”

Athletes strive to perform better than ever before. It’s a function of their competitive nature, dream to create a legacy, desire to remain on the team roster, and extend their athletic careers. They know to beat their competition and/or realize their full potential they must push through their physical and mental boundaries to reach new levels of performance. That’s why Stephen Curry, who plays the guard position for the three-time NBA championship Golden State Warriors and arguably the best shooter in basketball with a true-shooting percentage of 67.5% (combined weight of free throws, field goals and 3-pointers he made during the season divided by all the shots he took), works diligently to further improve his astounding shooting efficiency. His previous year’s percentage was, at the time, an all-time NBA record 66.9%. He bested it in 2017 by +0.6-points.

However, Stephen Curry is not satisfied. He’s not done. According to a Wall Street Journal article, “Stephen Curry Wants to Get Better at Shooting.” He wants to do better than his record shooting percentage and just about what anyone believes possible. His mentality is one of “incrementality,” thinking about how to go beyond what is expected of him, or anyone else, with his shooting performance on the court. He’s working to get there by: first - identifying where he can get more open (uncontested) shots; and second – perfecting his shooting. The WSJ article, 8 October, written by Ben Cohen, reports that Stephen Curry trained for 3-hours a day, 6-days per week, during the off-season. He took 600 – 700 shots during each practice session and 1000 or more on his heavy shooting days. Phenomenal!

Marketers need to think like Stephen Curry if they aspire to perform as stars. We need to adopt “*incrementality*” – thinking about how we might drive incremental demand, over and beyond the expected. Stated another way, we need to continuously seek ways to bolster the productivity of our marketing initiatives. In doing so, we will be generating higher levels of efficiency by being more effective (i.e., delivering more bang from our marketing funding). This is what makes a

marketing star, *incrementality* thinking that pushes the boundaries to drive incremental demand and sales.

I learned *incrementality* thinking while at Procter & Gamble (P&G) Folger's Coffee Division. During my time in sales training I learned to sell end-aisle displays of Vacuum Folger's Coffee in support of retailer feature-pricing (heavily discounted price promotion to consumers – often serving as a loss leader to the retailer in the hopes of driving more store traffic). We, the sales force, were given credit for incremental sales. Namely, if we got a store manager to put-up a side-stack display (i.e., display in the coffee aisle) of 12-cases we got credit for 8-cases (if movement from the shelf was typically only 4-cases). On the other hand, if we convinced that same store manager to allow us to build a 250-case end-aisle display we received credit for 246-cases. We were taught and directed to think and drive incremental sales. By the way, the incremental display cases triggered incremental consumer movement (sales) and the cases moved through the stores.

A key to becoming a star marketer is to:

1. *Adopt incrementality thinking* – Don't be satisfied with the status quo. Focus on doing what it takes to exceed expectations. Category growth and momentum will generate X-level of sales. This is your base level. It's typically the basis for your sales goal. Make it your job to obsessively push performance beyond that level and accept nothing else.
2. *Identify ways to generate incremental growth* - This is about identifying strategies and initiatives that will generate incremental sales growth, exceeding category, competitive and expected base level growth rates. Consider all marketing mix elements. The growth strategies and initiatives may be discovered through an analysis of historical performance, brainstorming and/or hypotheses development based upon marketing research and/or your experiences, among other ways.
3. *Iterate your way to success* – Test your incremental growth strategies and initiatives to demonstrate that they will indeed drive incremental sales growth. Refine as needed to produce the results you desire. When you are satisfied execute more broadly. Then immediately return to the aforementioned point 1.

Adopt “*incrementality*” to make your marketing matter (more)!

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