



## MARKETING MATTERS

By Richard D. Czerniawski  
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### WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR YOUR BRAND TODAY?

Bob Townsend, one of my former bosses at Johnson & Johnson, whom I admire greatly and learned much, would boldly barge into my office every morning, ignoring my closed door (as I would attempt to shut-out distractions to think and plan my day), in sartorial splendor with a custom fitted double-breasted suit, starched white monogrammed shirt with French-cuffs joined by gold cufflinks, a bold tie with matching hanky displayed in his jacket pocket and highly-shined fashionable shoes, and greet-me with a hearty "GOOD MORNING!" He'd immediately launch into saying, "Czerniawski, I don't care what you did for me yesterday, I want to know what you are doing for me today?"

What I was doing for him on that day, and each of the preceding days, was building a brand. At the time that brand was the REACH Toothbrush brand, which we launched nationally from a controlled store test to achieve the number one market share position in our first Nielsen bi-monthly audit, despite only one SKU (shelf keeping unit) and double-digit out-of-stocks at retail. Bob's question, which was more a demand than a question, is an interesting one to ponder for all marketers because it links past decisions with the present, addresses the present, and links present decisions with the future.

- *Link with the past* – Today's impact in the market is largely a function of decisions that were made in the past. Strategies and tactics we created in the prior year bring forth the impact we have in the marketplace today.
- *Address the present* – There's basic housekeeping that we need to attend to every day otherwise problems can arise. And, certainly, there are small fires that spring-up that if go unaddressed become major conflagrations. If we don't deal with these fires as soon as they arise, they can suck the oxygen out of undertaking those critical, non-urgent projects that create impact. Moreover, if ignored or not handled properly, they cause headaches and

distractions for us, as well as our bosses as they too have bosses for whom they are accountable.

- *Link to the future* – Just like past decisions impact the present, present decisions impact the future. While we may not be responsible for actively managing the brand in the future, we should be accountable for its results. As responsible stewards of the brand, that asset which we have been entrusted to grow, we need to ensure it remains healthy and competitive well into the future.

There are two other implications that come to mind regarding Bob’s question:

1. The first is the challenge to personal development and growth. In order to contribute to brand growth, we marketers need to grow. As our former client and colleague Brenda Bence is fond of saying, “If the brand needs to grow by X%, what percent do you and your people need to grow?” This is particularly acute when faced with a reduction in support and/or competitors are out-resourcing us.
2. The second is a reminder not to become complacent. Complacency insinuates itself when we are enjoying success in the here and now. This results in “active inertia,” which, in turn, leads to decline and, at worse, failure. It’s a call to “stay on our toes” and not get caught “flat-footed” by the competition or changes in the market.

So, let me restate Bob’s question and pose it to you, “What have you done for your brand that drives today’s performance and what are you doing for it and yourself today that will positively impact it’s future health and success?”

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