



By Richard D. Czerniawski

GET “UNSTUCK” TO MAKE YOUR MARKETING AND LIFE MATTER MORE

A conference call with a client needed to be rescheduled at the moment of the initially planned call. He stated that he was "stuck in a meeting." It struck me as being mildly amusing. No, not that he couldn't attend the conference call, but the language he used, “stuck” in a meeting!

My mind began to fill with images of being "stuck." We might find ourselves stuck in traffic, or stuck in an elevator, or stuck at home due to an illness. Our car may get stuck in snow or even mud. We business travels often get stuck at some airport due to inclement weather, unplanned aircraft maintenance issues, or air traffic delays. These are situations that once we find ourselves stuck are hard to unstuck.

But stuck in a meeting? What's so hard about excusing oneself and getting unstuck? Obviously, the meeting cannot be essential; otherwise, we wouldn't (or shouldn't) use the word "stuck." I think if the meeting or whatever one claims to be stuck in were critical, then we'd choose to use the word "engaged," "contributing," or, even, "attending" a meeting. But, he said, "stuck!" This choice of words suggests that he'd rather be somewhere else, probably where he might make better use of his time.

We're too often "stuck" in something, whether that be a meeting, work, chore, or activity that fails to add value to our professional and personal lives. We get stuck because something or someone is somehow forcing us into it—a boss' call, a stated requirement, company policy, whatever. Importantly, it holds us captive from doing what matters.

What matters? On the business side, it's doing the strategic thinking and managing those activities that contribute to creating brand loyalty and driving incremental sales. It's preparing to bulletproof the brand from competition long-term. As per our personal lives, it may be providing for and spending quality time with our families, nurturing meaningful relationships, pursuing personal development, and caring for ourselves.

However, I imagine that most marketers are stuck the vast majority of the time. This predicament may be evidenced by calendars filled with meetings that run from the start of the workday to close of business—often spilling over. Many of these meetings lack clear objectives and, as such, produce scant value. We might not be able to get unstuck, but we can ensure that we attend to what really

matters to our brands and lives.

Getting Unstuck

Cut back on meetings! Find out the objectives before you commit to attending a meeting. Determine whether the meeting or your participation is essential. Learn to say "no"—certainly in a nice way. In other words, be "previously occupied and committed" if your presence isn't required. Or, as appropriate, ask one of your staff to attend it in your place. Request notes from the meeting and, if warranted, share your perspectives in writing. If the meeting calls for making important decisions that benefit from your participation, then make sure it starts and ends on time.

There are other practices one might use to get unstuck. Steve Jobs would hold many of his one-on-one meetings with a walk. Try meeting for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. You might even consider standing meetings—that is where everyone stands—it's bound to promote brevity.

Make Your Marketing Matter More

Cutting back on meetings will free-up time for more important matters. However, we need to be clear about how we are going to utilize the time to advance our brands. Back in my days at P&G, our senior managers asked us to identify and commit to three brand-building initiatives that would have a significant incremental impact on growth. Despite the press of meetings, conference calls, and last-minute requests from senior management and support groups, we made it a point to focus on those three brand-building initiatives. It's what made our marketing and will make all marketing matter more.



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