



By Richard D. Czerniawski

TOP 5 ATTRIBUTES OF MARKETERS WHO ARE OPTIMAL PERFORMERS

A few months ago, I wrote about improving the likelihood of marketing success. You can find it here: <http://bdn-intl.com/improve-the-likelihood-of-marketing-successfully> It deals with adopting proven principles, best practices, and quality processes.

While those mentioned above will help improve marketing effectiveness, we need to address another critical ingredient. Does the marketer possess the right attributes?

Skills and attributes are not the same things. However, they complement each other to produce synergy—where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

For example, Special Ops members of the Armed Forces possess "grit." This attribute enables them to perform optimally in VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) situations.

According to Rich Diviney, retired Navy SEAL Commander and author of *THE ATTRIBUTES: 25 Hidden Drivers of Optimal Performance*, grit is not a singular trait but comprised of four attributes. These attributes are courage, perseverance, adaptability, and resilience. One needs some quantity of each to possess grit.

Given their gritty character, they can perform optimally and accomplish what those who lack grit—but have the requisite skills—cannot!

Now to the point of this musing, individual marketing skills—even those that are optimal (which few marketers can claim)—are not enough for optimal performance. What's needed are those essential attributes that drive and fuel the desire to make one's marketing matter more.

What is an "Optimal Performer?"

There are many levels of marketing performance. The top-level, which I hope all marketers strive to achieve, is "optimal performer."

What is an optimal performer? It's like what James Michael Lafferty, CEO, Olympic Coach, and Speaker, refers to as "Waterwalkers." Biblically speaking, s/he's a miracle maker. In our case, it's someone extraordinary. How extraordinary? A rare breed, indeed.

An optimal performer **changes the trajectory of a brand or business**. S/he is in effect a "difference-maker," achieving a level of performance others have not and cannot reach—regardless of the business situation, resources available, or competition.

Top 5 Attributes of “Optimal Performers”

So, beyond the necessary skill set, what are the top 5 attributes of optimal performers? Here’s what I look for in marketers:

1. **Creative Intelligence:** This is the ability to see not just one but multiple options to an opportunity or problem. Options represent the proverbial "shots on goal." The more shots on goal we take, the greater the likelihood of success.

Organizations typically embrace the first solution that is executionally expedient and has consensus. However, it is rarely the correct solution. It's essential to see and entertain many new options. While some of the options may represent nuances, we need to appreciate that they can profoundly impact outcomes.

Imagination, openness to new ideas, and perseverance contribute to creating creative intelligence.

2. **Dissatisfaction with the status quo:** Good enough is never good for optimal performers. Regardless of whether the glass is half-empty or half-full, they are not satisfied until it is full to overflowing.

When optimal performers achieve a new peak, they adopt it as their new baseline. They then work from it to achieve new heights for the brand, their business, their team, and themselves. They are never satisfied but always reaching to do better, different, or more.

Underneath their exterior, they are painfully sensitive to their dissatisfactions and address them—including their assessment of their own performance.

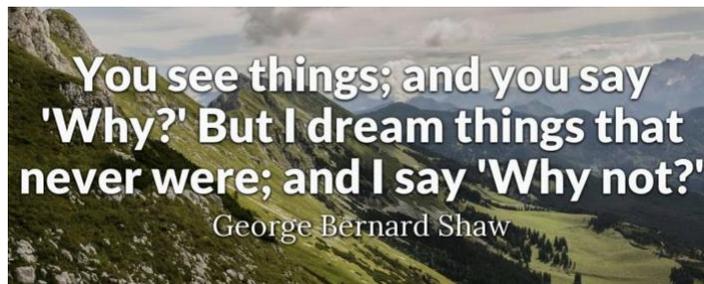
It also takes curiosity, confidence, and courage to address and resolve their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

3. **Imaginative:** Lukasz Murawski, host of the Podcast “Let’s Talk Brands,” asked during his interview with me (Episode 11 <https://youtu.be/yDAG9xAAjPw>) “what is the biggest obstacle to achieving differentiation?”

I think I surprised him with my answer. It had nothing to do with the product, the sameness of competition, or regulations. The key barrier to differentiating their brand’s positioning and marketing from their competitors is “lack of imagination.”

Yes, competition, the sameness of products, and regulatory bodies such as the FDA and FTC represent potential impediments. However, these realities are the same for all sectors and category competitors. Optimal performers find a way using their imagination to reinforce the whole product, create a differentiated brand, and satisfy customer needs—physical or psychological— previously untapped or better than competition.

They march to a drumbeat that manifests a quote from George Bernard Shaw—attributed by many to President John F. Kennedy and his brother, Robert—even if they don’t know it.



Brainy Quotes

Curiosity, creative intelligence, competitiveness, and faith in oneself and team, contribute to actualizing imagination.

4. **Competitive:** Optimal performers want to win and pull out all the stops to achieve victory. They are not merely content to win but want to dominate. (The other side of this sword is that they can be overly demanding!)

This quest for domination reminds me of the late basketball great Kobe Bryant, who, in his own words, wanted to dominate his opponents. He didn't want to merely squeak by the competition but to dominate.

When Kobe Bryant stepped onto the court at the start of each and every game, he intended to make his opposing player (whoever guarded and went one-on-one with him) wish he had never taken up the sport.

Optimal performers are not content unless they are growing faster than their competition, overtaking them, or widening the market share gap in their favor, and generating big strategic wins.

It takes pride, confidence, drive, and sacrifice to be competitive.

5. **Goal-Oriented:** It's not about completing the task but achieving (as Jim Collins: professor, author, and consultant terms) "BIG hairy, audacious goals," and not going where everyone else is going or has gone.

Optimal Performers go far beyond what others expect or believe possible.

Their goals are measured in (significant, incremental) outcomes on the business, not by checking off items on their to-do list. They work to generate stretch business objectives of sales, market share, and profit.

Ambition, drive, accountability, leadership, and collaboration contribute to underpin and realize their goal orientation.

Indeed, there is overlap among the key attributes. They comprise subordinate characteristics that contribute to the commanding attribute. It takes a few or more of these contributing traits to achieve what is in my mind are the critical ones.

Skills are imperative. However, we need to recognize that skills alone do not make for optimal performers. It takes the right attributes coupled with the requisite skills (and operating practices)

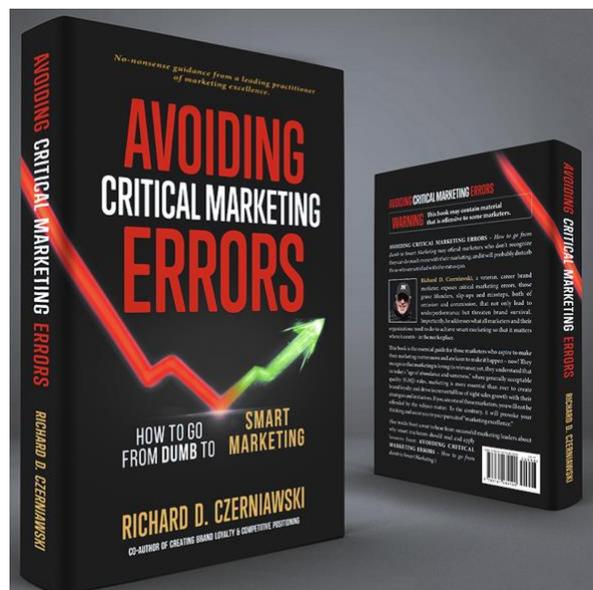
that make the difference between optimal performers and the also-rans.

Questions to Ponder:

- Did I miss more essential attributes? What might they be?
- What do you believe are the top attributes of optimal performers?
- Based upon my 5 top attributes, do you believe you have what it takes to be an optimal performer in making your marketing matter more?

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Don't neglect skill development. Doing the right things in the right ways takes skill development. Please read my most recent book, **AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing**. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>. It will help you avoid critical marketing errors and, importantly, suggest actions you can take to make your marketing matter even more.



Peace and best wishes in making your marketing and you matter more in 2022,

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