



By Richard D. Czerniawski

## **DON'T MAKE THIS MISTAKE TO AVOID LOSING LOYAL CUSTOMERS**

Cadillac has been our automotive brand for nearly forty years, and we've owned and leased them year after year.

Our most recent Caddie was a CT6 luxury sedan. It was roomy enough to carry clients. It was sleek and attractive, prompting compliments from people who saw us driving it. The car was quiet and took to the roads like a magic carpet ride, smooth as silk.



However, we switched last month. Why? Cadillac discontinued the CT6 model due to declining sales. OK, I can understand the economic reason. They stopped production early in 2020, the year of the pandemic.

GM (General Motors) retooled the plant that made the CT6 to make batteries for their fleet of EVs (Electric Vehicles). Rumor has it that the plant retooling also had something to do with labor contracts. Who knows? All I know is that you can't purchase a new CT6 because they're no longer producing them.

There's talk about reintroducing the CT6 in 2024. That's four years—a long time since they discontinued it. Our lease was up. What's one to do in the interim? Wait for the new, improved CT6?

We switched!

We could have chosen the CT5, a smaller, sporty version of the CT6. I sat in the back when my wife took it for a test drive. When she hit a bump, I bumped my head on the roof. No, it was too small. It felt tight. Moreover, it looks like just about every American car on the road—no feeling of prestige.

Or, we could have gone to an SUV. It seems like everyone is driving an SUV these days. However, we don't like an SUV for ourselves. While they are roomy and rather attractive, they shout, "family!" "Suburbia!" A member of the "herd."

I mean no offense to you SUV owners, but I don't want to be a part of the herd. A car is more than transportation to me. I'll come out and say it: it's a part of my identity. (I'm not judging you for your choice. So, please don't judge me.)

I like to feel good in the car I'm driving. Over the years, we've owned a Corvette, two Mercedes, and two Porsches. Indeed, we've owned GM brands other than Cadillac, but Caddy has been our mainstay for, as mentioned, nearly forty years.

Now I feel relatively confident Cadillac would like us to return, even though they have not acknowledged our leaving the brand with a note expressing this sentiment. What marketer wouldn't want a lapsed customer to return?

Perhaps, they'd like us to return to the CT6—if they ever reintroduce it. Or maybe they'd want us to trade up to what they claim is the "eagerly awaited" Celestiq, a large luxury battery-electric sedan slated to replace the CT6.

Cadillac has high hopes for the Celestiq. They hope to take on Rolls-Royce and Bentley, establishing Cadillac as "the standard of the world." It will debut as their most extravagant and expensive model they've ever built.



Cadillac is taking orders for the Celestiq. But as much of a car snob as you may believe me to be, I don't have the dough or inclination to pay its over \$300,000 price tag, nor would I want to take out a lease that approaches a jumbo mortgage size payment.

So, we've defected Cadillac and parent GM and switched to a European brand, which we are quite pleased driving.

This situation of closing out a model and turning off loyal users is not unusual. The same problem occurs to me with running shoes. I find a brand and model that fits and works well and want to stick

with it. A new model year rolls around, and lo and behold, the new model does not work for me—time to find another brand and another model.

Then there's the case of a coronary stent maker. Their smallest stent accounted for less than 5% of sales. It wasn't profitable, so they discontinued it. However, in Europe, which puts out tenders (bids for the business), >80% of them require that specific size to bid for their business. In other words, when the stent manufacturer dropped that size, they shut themselves out of >80% of the market.

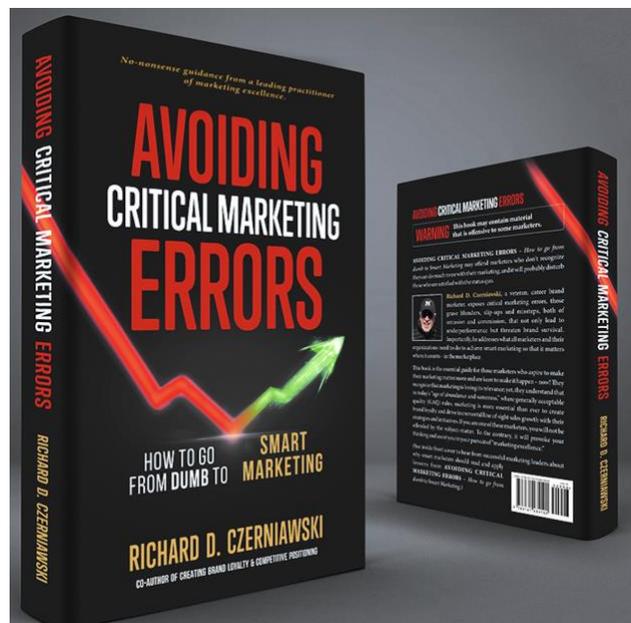
To *make your marketing matter more*, it's essential to:

- Know who your heavy users are and why they choose your brand, and give them more of what they want, not something different they don't want.
- Don't alienate your loyal customer base when you attempt to expand your business. Your likelihood of making up losses is slim to none.
- Have a lifecycle plan that avoids gaps in satisfying your customers' needs and desires.
- If you lose customers learn why they've defected.
- Develop and execute a plan to win them back.

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Also, consider following me on LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/richarddczerniawski/> where I share my perspectives from 50 years of successful worldwide brand marketing experience in my blog THINK ABOUT IT each week.

*Are you interested in making your marketing matter even more?* 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 suggest actions you can take to make your marketing matter even more.



Peace and best wishes,

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