

# **DISPATCHES**<sup>TM</sup>

*Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front*

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## **PLUMBING THE DEPTHS OF EMOTIONS**

We, marketers, can all agree that emotional connections are vitally important in creating brand loyalty. Why will consumers pay a significant price premium (upwards of 50%) for Johnson's Baby Powder (despite its fall from grace for many)? Is it the talc ingredient found in the product? Or is it the product's fragrance?

The fact of the matter is that competitive baby powder products use the same ingredients – talc and fragrance. And, while the rational mind of the consumer chooses to defend the selection of Johnson's Baby Powder with one of these product attributes, the subconscious mind, if plumbed, would undoubtedly reveal an emotional connection. It's the most profound connection that matters in creating brand loyalty.

Dr. Abraham Maslow, a clinical psychologist, suggested the importance of emotions in his theory of the "Hierarchy of Needs." As you will recall from your studies, he postulated that there is a hierarchy of needs progressing from the most basic to the most sophisticated. He likened the order to a ladder we climb one rung at a time. Before we can proceed up the ladder, we must first step onto the lowest rung, which deals with survival (give me food, clothing, shelter). The topmost rung is, yes, you have it, "self-actualization."

Self-actualization is an emotional need. It's in one's head and heart. So he is informing us that emotional needs are the highest-order needs. And remember, needs and benefits are "two sides of the same coin." This suggests, in turn, that emotional benefits are the highest-order benefits.

Ergo we choose Johnson's Baby Powder because it symbolizes the deep and abiding love we share with our baby. We choose Starbucks Coffee for a deserved self-rewarding experience, Rolex watches to affirm our success and status with others, and maybe, Viagra because it helps us feel like a "whole man" again.

Accordingly, our brand positioning should (at some point in our brand lifecycle) cater to an emotional need and pay off that need with an emotional benefit. But as I've stated in past issues of DISPATCHES, many of the emotional benefits we encounter in Brand Positioning and Messaging Strategy statements are just so much malarkey. They either haven't earned it (one rung of the ladder at a time), or it's wishful thinking (that deceives no one but the marketers that have penned it), or it's over the top (in other words, it's

BS!). Many more times the proffered emotional benefit is innocuous. It just doesn't mean anything to prospective target customers.

Part of the problem traces to our somewhat limited vocabulary (do you find this surprising?) when it comes to identifying and expressing emotions. Most often, the emotional benefit in the BPS will read "confidence/trust," "peace of mind," "control," or "feel like a (whatever – you fill in the blank)." It's just shallow. Moreover, it is probably not grounded in the reality of the product, brand equity, customer experiences and/or perceptions. A limited vocabulary will also hamper our ability to identify and/or understand the emotions of our target customer, no less be able to blueprint and establish the connection we hope to build through our marketing initiatives.

It's essential for us, then, to expand our vocabulary when it comes to emotions. "Improving Therapeutic Communications – A Guide for Developing Effective Techniques" by Hammond, Hepworth and Smith provides a good source. It contains a vocabulary of feelings. "Feelings" are, after all, "emotions."

The vocabulary of feelings (which I believe may only be a partial listing) has ten basic feelings (e.g., happy, fearful, lonely, etc.), which, in turn, contain a plethora of feeling states, which are further classified as to being "strong," "moderate" and "mild." The total number of vocabulary words is more than 300. A more precise articulation of someone who is "happy" could be "on cloud nine" (strong), jovial (moderate), or glad (mild).

If you can't find or don't want to purchase the book (which can help with your relationships, an online search will also turn up extensive word listings for emotions and feelings.

We must establish an emotional connection with target customers to create brand loyalty. To do so, we need to plumb the depths of emotions in drawing up our Brand Positioning and Messaging Strategy statements.

To plumb the depths of emotions:

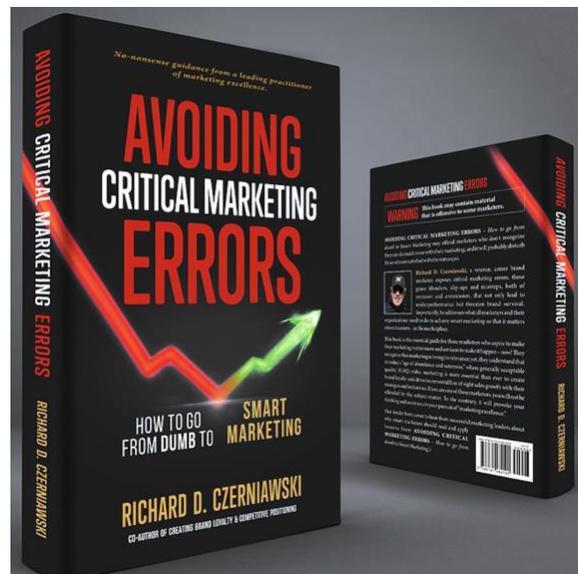
1. ***Expand your vocabulary of emotions.*** This will assist you in identifying target customers' feelings and articulating the emotional connection you want to establish.
2. ***Get real with emotions.*** Don't promise what you can't fulfill. The most valuable emotions are the ones the customer grants you through the customer experience with the brand. It is part of the brand's equity. Harvesting these and reflecting them back to the target customer through your marketing initiatives is important.
3. ***Connect on a subconscious level with customers.*** In other words, don't tell them what they should be feeling; let them feel it through the stimulus (i.e., communications, merchandising, packaging, public relations, etc.) you share with them.

4. ***Be aware of where you are in the product lifecycle.*** While your BPS may point the way to an emotional benefit, be cognizant that it may take time to get there. Don't forget to communicate your product's rational benefit when you have clear superiority over the competition.

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Thanks for your interest.

Peace and best wishes in making your marketing matter (even) more,

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