



By Richard D. Czerniawski

## IN DEFENSE OF (SMART) MARKETING

*This article is an excerpt from my new book, AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing. You can learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>*

Our host kicked-off a brand positioning and communications training program we conducted in Europe by having all the participants introduce themselves. In addition to the standard questions such as name, country, title, and brand, she asked each one to share his or her dream. When it came to my turn, I said, “My dream is to dream the impossible dream.” Perhaps you are familiar with the song “The Impossible Dream,” which comes from the musical “Man of La Mancha” and is based upon the Miguel Cervantes masterpiece *Don Quixote*.

The character Don Quixote is an elderly warrior who, as the expression goes, tilts windmills. He is a knight-errant who goes in search of wrongs to “right” them. At times, I feel that I’m like Don Quixote, fighting an “unwinnable fight.” I try to assist organizations and their marketers in achieving what they claim to seek, and what I believe is essential: evidence-based “marketing excellence.” It is a battle that must be fought on many fronts, among which include the following:

- Management’s failure to understand the role marketing can and must play in the organization to create brand loyalty.
- Marketing being run by non-marketers with little training or aptitude for their role, and the misuse of marketing as “service to sales.” In the long run, this does a disservice to sales personnel and undermines the ability of the organization to compete effectively in the immediate and long-term.
- Absence of a clear line-of-sight link between marketing strategies and initiatives to sales.
- Lack of institutionalization of sound marketing principles, best practices, and quality processes.
- Lack, or misuse, of marketing research and sound business analysis, failing to create a high-impact, evidence-based organization.

I feel I've lived a dream. My life has been a dream. What else is there to dream? Win the lottery? That's genuinely improbable, and indeed, it is neither critical nor essential.

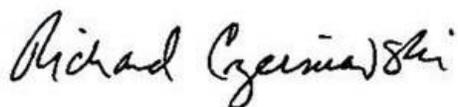
There is one dream left; it is what appears to be the impossible dream. In my professional life, my dream is to help restore marketing to its proper role in the corporation and society, and to empower marketers to create new successes that better satisfy customer needs. When I started marketing, which was more than 47 years ago, the company I began my career with, Procter & Gamble, was up there (so I was informed) with the Harvard B-School in producing the most corporate presidents. Moreover, the P&G folks who made it to the top-level came out of marketing where they were trained to be *presidents of their brands*. Today, marketing does not command the respect it did in those early years of my career. In some sectors, marketing is not perceived to be very important, if important at all, other than to provide support to the sales force. As might be expected, this is particularly acute in non-FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) sectors, such as pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and diagnostics, B2B, and finance, to name just a few. Nor do marketers run their brands. At best, they own finite projects with little interconnectedness to other disciplines, including their own, in building brands. As a result, marketing is underutilized. It's a vast resource going vastly to waste.

Quite frankly, I'm tired of hearing that marketing isn't capable of building sales and market share. I'm sure you are too. I'm tired of hearing senior managers voice their opinion that they are uncertain of the value that marketing brings to the organization, and question whether they should support marketing at all. On what planet do these managers live? Effective marketing has proven itself in every sector. If marketing is not working, or if it is not working to its potential in your company, then it is not the function of marketing that is at fault; the problem is the way marketing is being done. It is a lack of vision, leadership and/or sound management of those who question the value of marketing that fails the marketing team and their ability to produce results. Quite frankly, it's dumb marketing that's at fault. To live without marketing is to conduct a symphony orchestra without the conductor. It's like driving a car without a driver (or AI software). I'd like to know how these managers who question whether marketing is an essential function in the organization ever got to their level.

The role of marketing is to *create brand loyalty*. "Create" is to bring a customer into existence. "Brand" goes beyond the product to encompass a constellation of values that forge a special relationship and bond with customers. "Loyalty" is about earning the customers' unswerving devotion to the brand. Does this sound unimportant? Is this not essential? It's more important than ever given the dynamic force of markets to commoditize products and categories, coupled with growing price sensitivity in an age characterized by abundance and sameness, where GAQ (generally acceptable quality) reigns, particularly when information is so readily available regarding product performance and pricing.

(Smart) Marketing has never been more essential.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard (Gemma) Shi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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