

Getting into the mind of your customer is key to successful marketing

The phrase “Build it and they will come” is a total myth. To attract customers and scale your startup, you need great marketing – and great marketing boils down to creating a message that resonates with your audience.

Products have 3 levels of messaging – *Upwork.com* example:

Benefit: *Build your business with top freelancers*

Capability: *Post a job for free and connect with independent talent today*

Feature: *Project Catalog by Upwork.*

The same feature and capability can deliver very different customer benefits. These benefits are rarely functional, they are emotional and social. As Harvard Business School Professor Theodore Levitt famously said: “People don’t want to buy a quarter-inch drill. They want a quarter-inch hole!”. He was making the point that people are buying a solution (the hole or capability) not a product (the drill, or feature). But what is the ultimate benefit here? The true desired outcome?

Here’s an example for a house proud parent:

You do not buy a drill

But a hole in the wall

To safely hang a heavy mirror

So it doesn't fall and injure the kids running around

(emotional benefit or desired outcome)

So how do you get to that level of understanding and customer centricity?
There are 2 steps:

1. Interview your customers to uncover the four forces at play for them
2. Articulate a messaging house that resonates with your audience

Customer interviews: understanding what is going on in the customer's mind

Bob Moesta et al highlights that there are always four factors at play – Push, Pull, Inertia and Anxiety*.

We need to understand what is pushing customers away from their current solution and what will pull them towards a new solution. You also need to consider what might prevent them from making the change – which is known as inertia – and what anxieties or concerns they have about switching solutions.

Understanding this psychology will guide you in your choice of messaging, so that what you say pulls your audience towards your proposition and minimises any anxieties they might have. As you can already tell, this is not something that one can uncover with a product validation or feedback interview. This is a mindset interview.

To bring this to life, here's an example featuring a nurse who is considering a transition to agency work from her full-time NHS role. These are the forces at work for her:

Using the *The Jobs To Be Done (JTBD) framework* built by Clayton Christensen, we can summarise our findings in a single statement – the job your customer is hiring your product to do.

When I am considering taking a course and require more flexibility with my work patterns (context)

But the NHS employment does not accommodate this, and other employment options seem unreliable or aren't local to me (pain points)

Help me find:

Flexible shift work that works around my calendar

Enough shifts so that I am not left without income (goal)

So I can pursue further education to fulfil my lifelong dream of becoming a counsellor (outcome)

Messaging house: messages that will resonate with your customer's mindset

A messaging house talks to the jobs that your target customer is trying to accomplish. It's the foundation on which your marketing and communications are built.

By starting with your JTBD statements, you can design a messaging "bible" for your entire organisation to use. Getting this right will help you pull new customers in whilst minimising any concerns they may have.

Here's an example of a messaging house for a Marketplace for Nurses Jobs

Can I launch a campaign?

The Messaging House is foundational to any site copy or campaign briefs. Lift the relevant core messages from the messaging house, and then apply the best practices of each channel, funnel stage and customer lifecycle for your campaign. This will help you craft messages that go beyond product features, and address why you are the best solution to solving their problem.

The world is in essence a global village, so you have to be really special to stand out in an ocean of competitors vying for your ideal customers' attention. By creating messaging that makes audiences feel heard and understood and marketing a product that addresses a real-world problem in their lives, you'll be well on your way to marketing success by attracting more customers.

Maya Moufarek, Founder of Growth Advisory MarketingCube.co.

