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Marketing's Greatest Conviction *by Bob Manna & Matt Manna • 6C674909(R04)*

"Marketers will do almost anything to accommodate behavior, except exploit its origin. That's a shame because behavior is subordinate to existing forces called convictions."

We all have convictions. They're the semi-conscious hunches, notions, and gut instincts that set our behavior in motion.

It's difficult to directly observe a conviction, but it's not difficult to observe how a conviction sets our behavior in motion. The following simple experiment will assist.

Your tasks are to click on the mannagroups.com video link referenced below, click the video start button, and then say out loud the color each of a series of words is printed in. Don't say the words, say the color in which each word is printed. Everything will make sense once you get going, so [click this mannagroups.com video link](#) now to get started.

Now you can appreciate the influence convictions wield on behavior. It really didn't matter what you were directed to do, when words were presented on the screen your behavior was to read them. That's because the conviction (the semi-conscious, gut instinct) of literate adults dictates that words must be read before they can be otherwise considered.

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If it were any other way, you would be able to say the color of the words whose letters do not match, as quickly as those whose letters do. What this experiment makes perfectly clear is that convictions are the foundation of behavior.

Sadly, those whose prosperity is most dependent on influencing behavior — marketers tasked with delivering success — are often the least interested in understanding *how* convictions influence (and often control) behavior. Marketers will do almost anything to accommodate behavior once it exists, except exploit its origin.

That's a problem because convictions set the agenda for the very behavior marketers seek to accommodate. Marketing's greatest conviction is simply this: *Success results only when products, services, candidates, causes, **and their attendant messages**, parlay with the basic and invariable convictions held by customers.*

This conviction has been demonstrated time and time again. It explains why White Wave's Silk brand soy milk is a leading seller of chocolate "milk," even though Silk contains no milk. It explains why Starbucks was conceived as a social place to drink coffee, not sell it. It explains why Apple owns the iconic mobile connection device, the iPhone.

It's important to point out that none of the above success stories were brought about through the identification and accommodation of market segments. Knowing the demographic and/or psychographic profile of people who like chocolate milk had no bearing on White Wave's decision to liquefy soy powered, put it in a milk carton, and shelve it in the refrigerator next to cow milk.

Howard Schultz didn't know the ages or IAO (interest, activity, opinion) profile of any of Starbucks' customers when he remade Starbucks, because Starbucks had no customers when Schultz remade it.

In fact Schultz is on record as saying he had no idea how many, or what class, of people would want to visit a Starbucks store. (Watch the 4 minute segment beginning at minute 7:00 of this C-Span Global Innovation Video: www.c-spanvideo.org/program/196209-1)

Consider also that Folgers, Maxwell House, Sanka, et. al spend lots of time and money trying to identify and then accommodate the whims and desires of segmented “target” markets. This differentiation process is required because Folgers, Maxwell House, Sanka, et. al are easily (and therefore often) compared to each other.

Starbucks doesn't have to worry about differentiation because Starbucks doesn't trade on coffee. Starbucks trades on convictions, namely those associated with human connection; a conviction that can be experienced through coffee but not compared to it. Speaking of human connection...

Steve Jobs turned a deaf ear to the “big time” consultants who argued divergence would rule the mobile phone. The explicit purpose of a mobile phone is to connect people. The idea that “divergence” could occasion a sense of connection is nonsensical on the surface — worthy of a very different type of conviction. (Read the following Advertising Age article: <http://adage.com/article/al-ries/iphone-fail/117355/>)

It's tempting to think that White Wave, Starbucks, and Apple are unique, idiosyncratic, unapproachable, one-offs, but that is not the case. White Wave, Starbucks, and Apple are no different than every organization.

There are three elements that effect success, and every organization is in direct control of two of them. The first is the product, service, candidate, cause, etc., on offer. The second element is/are the message(s) used to promote the product, service, candidate, or cause. The third element, public reaction (word of mouth, news, public attitudes, social media buzz, consumer groups' reactions, etc,) is a direct response to the first two.

White Wave, Starbucks, and Apple aren't unique, idiosyncratic, unapproachable, one-offs. White Wave, Starbucks, and Apple use convictions as the raw material to create their products, services, candidates, causes, and messages. That's why they're winners!

Winners understand that it's pointless to tell people not to read when presented with words. Winners understand that convictions are inceptive gut instincts that spark behavior. What winners understand best is marketing's greatest conviction. *Success results when products, services, candidates, causes, and their attendant messages, parlay with the convictions held by customers.*



This document available at:

<http://www.mannagroups.com/marketingsgreatestconviction/>

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Why The iPhone Will Fail
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