

How to Capture Your Customer Imagination

By Alonzie Scott

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HOW TO CAPTURE YOUR CUSTOMERS IMAGINATION?

Here's the perfect human interest story. As a child growing up under my grandmother's tillage, I called her grandmama, she told me a wonderful story about my grand father. I never meet my grandfather because he died one year after I became a planet earth citizen. Grandmama told me my grandfather exuded a passion for living life and even greater compassion for helping his neighbors.

During the American South 20's and 30's, obtaining work or professional employment opportunities bordered on the realm of difficult if not impossible. This fact resonated as common knowledge to people of color. Besides dealing with overt discrimination and segregation, like many rural or agrarian Americans, African Americans had no or little formal education. Unfortunately, many homesteaders, laypersons and unskilled workers could not read or write.

With divine intervention, my grandfather taught himself to read and write. As a goodwill, fellowship and genuine love gesture for his neighbors, he expanded his skill by reading the Chicago Sun Times newspaper every week. What's fascinating about my grandfather is that he shared his value added skill to not only influence his lifestyle, he helped his entire neighborhood. Every Saturday afternoon and Sunday after church, grandfather read and interpreted the Chicago Sun Times newspaper farmer's report for his fellow citizens. He displayed a passion for excellence. He performed a feat that is a great lesson for everyone to learn. He simply captured his neighbors imagination by solving a tremendous community problem. He gave his friends and neighbors a farming marketplace education. He helped people sell their goods for the best prices and provide for their families.

Now here's how you capture the imagination of your target customers. First, never treat every target customer the same. Remember, customers in various market segments have different interest, requirements, wants, needs or desires. Every unique customer responds differently to publicity, marketing and advertising campaigns. Follow this tested management adage, "treat people the way you want to be treated."

A promotional strategy designed for seniors might not work on the Generation Xer's. Your key success component or common factor for every target audience is FANAFI or FAPASI. Here's your translation...Find a need and fill it or find a problem and solve it. Address these statements in a question format and you essentially discover some practical or innovative ways to capture your

customers imagination. For example, is there a quicker, simpler, faster, safer, healthier, or cheaper way to offer a fitness and exercise program? Remove the word fitness and exercise and substitute your own issue. You get the idea.

Secondly, review your policies, procedures, processes, and tools (PPPT) used to create nothing but WOW programs, goods, products, services and facilities. Question whether those PPPT's deliver exceptional customer service. Ask questions like these. Are your PPPT's explicitly geared toward delivering what customers want and need? Are your PPPT's creating customer loyalty and satisfaction? Are PPPT's creating programs, services, goods, products or facilities everyone thinks they must have? Are your PPPT's creating elements people can't imagine living without in America and most of the modern world such as soap, food, fashionable clothing, homes, electricity, fun, air travel, fuel, entertainment, movies, cars, pets, television, water, glass or medical care?

Third, always ask questions about how to make what you do today better for tomorrow. Look for those durable products, programs, services, activities, events, goods and facilities no one wants do without. Home entertainment, amusement, and leisure services are SUPER hot trends revamping the world. Other model examples of change on the horizon include satellite television and internet access, world telephones, solar powered homes, windmills, cars, or hair care products or the gasoline combustion engine though you can count on the latter one changing in the next 20 years. Or why not build upon the best sources of energy the world owns today...The SUN.

Several weeks ago, I attended a meeting held by the Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) leaders and heard a dazzling speech from the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy better known in the Department of Defense vernacular as the "MCPON" pronounced as "MICK PON." His speech inspired me to think about the possibilities instead of the impossibilities. His speech delivery gestures reminded me how my grandmother frequently conveyed her miraculous stories about my grand father. What came after the MCPON's speech and during his intuitive question and answer session, reminded me of the stories I heard as child.

Without hesitation, one of my esteem colleagues asked the MCPON, what could MWR professions do to get sailors involved in what bases offered them. The brawny statured MCPON pondered this questions as the entire room went as silent as an infant sleeping a crib. The MCPON responded, you have to do things that capture sailors imagination. Later, he added a few examples of vacation get-a-way trips the Navy coordinated via a Navy wide contest. Now unlike most leaders in the room, the words, "capture sailors imagination" resonated with me like the great soul music singer James Brown singing his world famous song, " I feel good." GMC now calls JB's music "Fuel for the soul" in its new 2003 marketing and promotional campaign.

Later, I created a cause and effect five part service organizational fishbone chart. In the head section, I labeled "How to Capture Sailors Imagination." The four support vertebrate boxes contained a modified service organization credo for discovering change and innovation from the letters PPPT...procedures, policies, programs/processes and tools. Then, I started asking questions. For example, What policies prevent us from capturing sailors imagination? Are there procedures we can improve, change, rearrange, combine, alter, revamp, revise or eliminate to capture sailors imagination? Can I offer commercial leisure industry programs to capture sailors imagination? What tools prevent us from capturing sailors and their family members imagination?

Now how does all this management pontification impacts the leisure industry? Simple. As society and its abundant time saving tools enter the marketplace, leisure preferences, ideas, interest and participation change. The more people do to become more productive and efficient, the more people will find ways to enjoy leisure in a multitude of new and exciting programs, services, products, goods and facilities beyond our wildest imagination. Innovative leisure concepts will run the gauntlet of both constructive preferences and those society frowns upon.

To capture your customers imagination, the effort demands that you work with people who are innovative change leaders, agents, thinkers, facilitators, experimenters, testers, fascinators, and imitators. You want people who will constantly see the status quo as challenging “humanity’s comfort zones.” These Ponce de Leon’s explorers need to rejuvenate or revamp how people produce, deliver, evaluate and reprocess information. Their miraculous outcome leads to management SMART...specific, measurable, achievable, responsible and timely...actions.

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