

Stop talking about yourself, you lazy marketer

By  Alex Wright

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The most wasted word in marketing today is "we". Often grounded in inherited brand positionings that started with good intentions to inspire thoughts of collaboration and partnering, we-phrasing alienates today's customers.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Its overuse makes marketing fleecy, leaving customers to guess what the value is for them. All they want to know is how a product or service can solve their pressing challenges. What companies are telling them is all about themselves.

Customers care about what matters to them. They have challenges to solve and needs to meet and so, they care most about what can make their lives easier. This makes *what* you do less important to them than *why* you do it. Yes, the reason you're in business is to make money but you do that by solving peoples' wants and needs. Your business is about your customers. Not you.

When you talk "we" in what you do, you're marketing for yourself and not for the people whose needs you are in business to solve.

The concept of customer-centricity has been around since 1954 when author and management consultant Peter Drucker said: "It is the customer who determines what a business is, what it produces, and whether it will prosper".

He was right. Customer-centric companies are, on average, 60% more profitable than those that are not. In sales, customer-centricity is applied through processes and touchpoints designed to put customers and their goals first. These are evident in simple questions like “How can I help you?” and procedures that help customers get to their goals. If a customer wants an out-of-stock item, consider it sourced. If they want a refund, it’s done.



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Insightful salespeople ask intelligent questions to discern ways to better help the people they serve. The better the questions, the more valuable customer experiences become. Doing business is pleasant, placing orders is seamless and making purchases is easier. All this counts in the favour of more sales which helps companies prosper.

Yet marketers are still so egocentric. Much of it can be blamed on a lack of scrutiny and a general lacklustre. Marketers, time-pressed to squeeze out campaigns, rely on readopted positionings and antiquated strategies that worked once, but not now. The market shifts and so do needs.

Demonstrating customer value is probably the last bastion that companies have to discern themselves from competitors in an increasingly emulous marketplace where features and prices are hardly different.

Face the truth. Customers don't care too much about your business goals or strategy unless they have a way of applying them to their lives in a meaningful way. They don't visit your website or click on your adverts because they want to learn more about your company's values. They are there because they want answers to questions like “Why does this matter?” and “What’s in it for me?”.



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Stop talking about yourself and instead, like the smart salesperson, ask: “How can I help?”. Successful customer-centric marketing calls for a deep understanding of why your customers need what your company provides. This can take many forms; from determining why they want to use your product, to understanding how they are using it and what value it brings them.

There are many ways to gather this information, but they all come back to the same thing: listening to your customers to understand what they need from you and how they use and benefit from what you offer.

Don't be afraid to ask for feedback through surveys, interviews, focus groups, or other methods. A lot of brands are. Yet, these powerful insights will help to fuel your switch from “we” marketing to “it’s about you” marketing that speaks to your customers, answers their questions, and leaves no vagueness around the value you offer.



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Know the difference between “features” and “benefits” and how it relates to the words you use to position your brand to prospective customers. If you want to draw in more of them and boost your sales, clearly label the value they can expect.

Don't lose them in semantics.

The difference between “sell your home in a week” and “we have ten years of property sales experience” is a listing. The difference between “power your office for four hours during loadshedding” and “we produce backup energy devices for home offices” is a sale.

So, drop the “we” and scrutinise the language you're using. If it's not articulating your value to your customers, it's just a waste. And it could be costing you customers.

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