

# The best brands solve the simplest problems

 By [Dean Oelschig](#)

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What would a "*thought leadership*" article be without an Einstein quote, so here it goes; "If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions."

Identifying a problem is a liberating and powerful creative springboard. Aimlessly pointing a creative mind in a random direction with the blind hope of finding an idea, solves very little. At best, you'll create a piece of entertainment. And if you're lucky, the entertainment may go viral. But that puts you in the business of brand entertainment, not marketing.

However, solve a problem for someone and you'll create a real bond. And this goes for brands, products and social initiatives. Brands that solve problems do better. It's one of the reasons why cause marketing does so well, especially when the problem being solved is real and people care about it.

## Finding a real problem

The famous marketing quote from Henry Ford states, "If I had asked my customers what they wanted they would have said faster horses". But that is the wrong question. The right question was "what is the problem with the horses and how do we fix it?"

The hardest part is trying to find a real problem your brand or product can solve. A real, tangible, unsolved, makes-the-consumer-stay-up-at-night, sweaty-palms problem. Or not. Sometimes even solving the simplest, short-term problem can make for a great brand positioning.

Think about some of the most exciting brands in the world today. I am not even sure they've done this by design but they all solve problems, big and small.

**Coke** - Open Happiness. For that moment you have a Coke in your hand, or choose to share one, you get to forget about sadness or loneliness. It emotionally makes your world a better place. Even if just for a few minutes. And its communication does that too. Sharing, friendship, happiness, music... Coke is the destroyer of sadness.

**Apple** - Tools for creative people. Before Apple, there was no one piece of technology that made you feel more creative just by holding it. Feeling uncreative is a horrible problem to have. In my view, Apple solves this. Apple is the creative "unblocker".

**Uber** - Uber solves several problems. Trying to find a cab. Drivers struggling to find your address. Hugely variable charges. Needing cash to pay (often, in my case, at 2 in the morning).

**Google** - Bad, irrelevant search results. Solved.

**Tinder** - Meeting people generally only happened on weekends, not seven days a week.

**Dropbox** - Solves the restrictions imposed on emailing large files, and for those with unlimited and fast internet, it solves the issue of storage and access.

If I look at some of the brands we work on - King Price insurance decreases your premium every month, which poses the question: why doesn't everyone else? It clearly solves the problem of real-time vehicle depreciation and valuation matching your insurance premium.

The new Four Seasons Westcliff is another brand I love working with. Whereas most hotels promote themselves, this one is putting a lot of effort into promoting Joburg as an African Urban destination. To be honest, there is very little global marketing for Joburg that stems from a source as credible as the Four Seasons brand, and as a proud resident of Joburg, I think that's a problem definitely worth solving.

## Why is this so powerful?

There is a totally irrational and interesting insight into a gambler who spends his time in the casino. It's called 'loss aversion'. Loss aversion in casinos refers to gamblers who have a greater joy in *not* losing compared to winning. Breaking even and avoiding a loss is more powerful than winning. Sounds bizarre. Most studies into loss aversion theory suggest losses are twice as powerful as gains.

So, how does this relate to brands? Well, if you can solve a problem or loss, your brand has twice the chance of resonating with a customer than if you focus on the gain. By developing a brand proposition, a product USP or an emotional connection that sub-consciously solves a problem; your brand offers a compelling reason to purchase.

So next time you're in a product brainstorm, innovation session, brand strategy meeting or any of the like, work out the biggest or most compelling problem your brand can solve and then spend all your focus doing so.

## ABOUT DEAN OELSCHIG

Dean Oelschig is the founder of Halo, an indie communication design agency that creates ideas for business growth. Halo is setting out to make below-the-line sexy again. Whether it's design, digital or direct, below-the-line communication based on a brave idea can give business incredible returns.

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