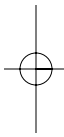
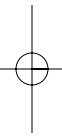


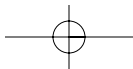
PART I

**The Power of Marketing  
Is Eroding . . . from  
Lack of *Attention***

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## 1

# What's Wrong with Yesterday's Marketing?

**As the immunity [to ad repetition] builds up, it costs more and more to advertise each year. It's like narcotics; it must be taken in ever-increasing doses to achieve the same effect.**

*Howard Gossage, cited in International Journal of Advertising, vol. 18, 1999*

**T**raditionally, marketing communications rules have assumed that we had people's attention and all we needed to do was to persuade. For many years that was a valid assumption. But times have changed. Complexity is increasing in every part of our lives, and decision making has become burdensome.

Let's look at a few examples.<sup>1</sup>

## "Information, Please"

During an average trip to the supermarket each week, we spend about 20 minutes shopping. During that brief time, we have to sort through an average store's 35,000 items for the 18 (average shopping basket) we want to buy.

If we work in an office, we are inundated by messages—mail, express mail, e-mail, voice mail, pager messages, phone message slips, Post-it

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notes, phone calls, cellular calls. On average, we send or receive over 1,000 messages a week. Half of us report six or more interruptions an hour by online messages and other work-related communications.

Even when we get home, we're not insulated from the information blizzard. The average U.S. household sends or receives over 100 messages a week via telephone, mail, e-mail, pager, or fax. Eight of every ten of us are interrupted by an unwanted phone call at home every day, and 12% report receiving more than six. Most of us are spammed (i.e., receive unsolicited commercial e-mail) on a regular basis; over half of us receive unwanted e-mail messages every day, and some report receiving more than 10 unwanted e-mails a day.

Even when we're not checking our messages, we feel we should be. Over 30% of e-mail users are concerned that an important message might remain unattended if they don't check their e-mail frequently.

Our mailboxes are bulging with unwanted letters and solicitations. Advertising executive Peter Eder counted all of his home-delivered mail in 1998. He received 360 pounds of it, averaging 246 pieces a month.

Our technology is becoming increasingly complex. Microsoft Word included over 1,000 commands in the 1997 version—three times as many as the program had in 1992. (I know what 50 of them do, but I'm baffled by the rest.) Almost all of us would agree with Mark Twain's statement, "I'm all for progress, it's change I don't like."

Media are becoming ubiquitous, creeping into every nook of our lives, and we've seen explosive growth in media options. The average U.S. home can receive over 60 TV channels today, compared to just 7 in 1970. There are over 800 million documents posted on the web, and new web sites and magazines are launched every day.

Beyond traditional media forms, we've had new forms to deal with. Media technologies that barely existed 30 years ago (in many cases, hadn't even been invented) are now commonplace—first and foremost, the Internet, but also cable TV, satellite TV, VCRs, cell phones, remote controls, PCs, and so on.

We're bingeing on media. The average U.S. adult spends over 8 hours a day consuming media (10 hours if books, CDs, and VCRs are counted along with traditional broadcast and print media). This is about

double the dose of our midcentury counterparts. Some of us have practically become addicted to rapid-fire media sensations. As with narcotics, we have to take it in increasing doses to achieve the same effect.

This proliferation in media is fragmenting audiences. When the media multiply, audiences divide. Audience levels are dropping for almost all traditional media forms. Broadcast TV ratings are down. And, despite the press to the contrary, cable TV ratings are beginning to erode as well.

Nonprogram clutter is increasing. The amount of time devoted to commercials and other TV program interruptions is at an all-time high. About 16 minutes of every prime-time hour are now devoted to interruptions rather than programming. This figure exceeds 20 minutes during some daytime shows.

Longer television commercial breaks are becoming more prevalent. Compared to the 1960s, commercial breaks are three to four times longer in duration.

Information density is increasing. The average news sound bite today is just 8 seconds, down from 42 seconds in the 1960s.

## The Data Dump

It's gotten to the point that media are being considered pollution. Information is piling up like garbage. David Shenk described it as "data smog." And the irony of our information age is that as we collectively try to rise above the noise, we end up creating more of it.

That has led the media to raise the volume with shock tactics: trash TV, hate radio, shock jocks, publicity stunts, sarcastic rhetoric, violence, and vulgar language. On one major TV network in the summer of 1999, you could watch a man pass a snake through his nostril and cough it up out of his mouth. That's showbiz, folks!

Some point to Hollywood as the culprit. In his insightful book, *Data Smog*, David Shenk blames the increasing vulgarity on information overabundance rather than on the media industry's lack of respect for the family.

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Despite the ever expanding barrage of information, our comprehension of it is decreasing. “More and more, we will know less and less.”<sup>2</sup> The gaps in our lives are filling up with media. We have fewer opportunities to stop and reflect. “Pauses are an essential part of human life, and we are squeezing them out,” reflects James Gleick in his book, *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything*.<sup>3</sup> He continues:

The Sabbath was a pause, a crucial pause, for many humans . . . there was until recently a pause in stock trading at the end of the day. Now the world markets go all the time. There used to be a natural pause in the news cycle between the evening newspapers and the morning news. Now that is gone.

It seems that consumers are feeling out of control. Shoppers are overwhelmed and confused. According to recent Yankelovich Monitor surveys, 61% of shoppers are confused by all the sources of information available to them; 47% say having a large number of brands available for a given product confuses things and makes life more difficult; and 81% of employees feel a need to simplify their lives.

The more complicated life becomes, the more valuable simplicity becomes. Paradoxically, some consumers will pay a premium not to have to choose. In a wonderful essay for *Adweek* magazine, Debra Goldman explained why she was unwilling to switch electric utilities even when not switching meant paying a higher price:

Non-choosers do earn a benefit from the extra money their sloth and disinterest costs—though it’s not better service, a higher quality product or a more meaningful relationship with a brand. Dial tone is dial tone. Electric power is electric power. What we get is the freedom not to think about it.

There’s an old saying that there are two kinds of marketing targets: those who will spend time to save money and those who will spend money to save time. We’re witnessing a population explosion among the latter.

To survive, people’s natural psychological defenses are taking over. Our brains are performing information triage as a survival mechanism. People are blocking reception and narrowing their focus. When we can’t

stand it anymore, we don't slow down, we shut down. We stop responding. We hang up. We delete e-mail messages unopened. We stop paying attention.

## Your Attention, Please

Psychologists have a name for this—they call it *attention deficit disorder*. All of us, to some degree, are succumbing to this information-age disease. We can see the signs in ourselves in these classic symptoms:

- We fail to give close attention to details.
- We make careless mistakes.
- We do not listen when spoken to directly.
- We do not follow through on instructions.
- We do not finish our chores.
- We have difficulty organizing tasks and activities.
- We avoid tasks that require sustained mental effort.
- We are easily distracted.
- We are forgetful.
- We fidget.
- We can't remain seated.
- We feel restless.
- We have difficulty doing things quietly.
- We act as if we're always on the go.
- We talk excessively.
- We blurt out answers before questions have been completed.
- We can't wait our turn.
- We interrupt others.

Our attention spans are collapsing and we feel oppressed by the clock. There's never enough time for anything. We're constantly running late. One-third of online shoppers will abandon a desired purchase if a web page takes longer than eight seconds to load. We look for convenience and time savings everywhere—even in our *One-Minute Bedtime Stories*.

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We have reached our physical limits. We can't slice our attention spans any finer. We can't keep up with the pace of change. We are whip-sawed between distraction and boredom. Increasingly, we feel out of balance and out of control. Echoes Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Our capacity for concentration . . . is being overwhelmed by a tidal wave of inordinate superficial information."<sup>4</sup>

Each of us yearns to achieve some sort of attention equilibrium in our lives. But balance always seems beyond our grasp. *New York Times* columnist William Safire advises us that we have a right to disengage:<sup>5</sup>

[You] have a right to turn off. I say: Resist the 168 hour week. Buy unbugged cars and drive incommunicado. Trade during business hours. On vacation, vacate; on the Sabbath, sabb; on Memorial Day, remember. Treasure those out-of-touch moments. Become a member of the Great Unreached.

I have this vision of Safire madly juggling three or four tasks at once while rushing to finish this manifesto in time to meet his deadline.

When we do manage to disengage, when we're not feeling anxious and hyperactive, we're bored! We seesaw between two extremes—attention overload and boredom, media mania and media depression—with almost no pause in between. Over 20% of us claim to be regularly bored out of our minds. "This is perfect," reads the caption of a cartoon showing a couple lounging on the beach, "I could stay like this for the next five seconds."<sup>6</sup>

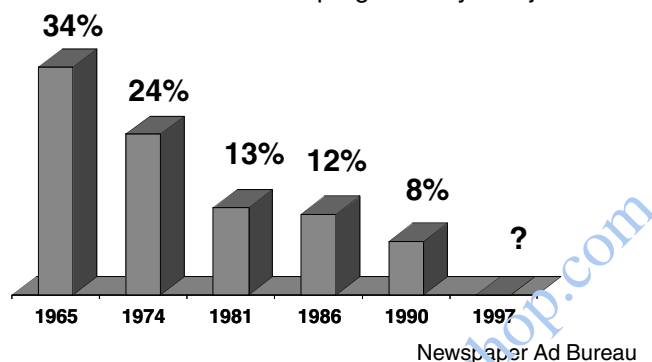
Our news media seize on particular stories—O.J., Monica, Diana—and propagate them into feeding frenzies. When we're not absorbed by the latest sensation, we withdraw—it's just a slow news day. If we are bored for too long, we become jaded and spoiled. Despite the fact that the average home has over 60 TV channels to choose from that provide over 1,000 hours of television programming each day, we complain, "There's nothin' on." Despite the fact that the entertainment industry increases its spending every year for top-notch writing, directing, and acting talent, we opine, "TV shows are a lot worse than they used to be."

It is as absurd as imagining Imelda Marcos opening her closet filled with 2,000 pairs of the most expensive shoes in the world and saying,

Ad recall is declining.

## Fewer people remember ads

Percent of adult viewers who could name one or more brands advertised in a TV program they had just watched:



"I've got *nothing* to wear!" (On second thought, she probably *did* say that a lot.)

We're paying less attention today, including less attention to ads. Fewer people remember ads. In a study conducted by the Newspaper Ad Bureau in 1965, 34% of adult TV viewers could name one or more brands advertised in a TV program they had just watched. The figure had declined to 8% by 1990—the last time the study was repeated. Almost certainly, the percentage today would be in the very low single digits, 3 or 4%.

Author Evan Schwartz has suggested that we are becoming the first society with attention deficit disorder.

## Technology Optimists

The optimists believe that technology will solve all of these problems. Remote controls make it easier for us to screen out TV commercials. And in the future, some argue, new technologies like agents and filters

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will shield us from messages we don't want to receive—which is going to make it even harder for marketers to get our attention.

Glenn Urban, former dean of the Sloan School of Management at MIT, could serve nicely as spokesperson for the technology optimists. In a recent interview with *American Demographics* magazine, Professor Urban explained his vision of a world in which virtual intelligence “advocates” will operate ceaselessly to advance your agenda.

Software agents and bots will roam the Internet hunting for deals tailor-made for you. They'll screen your e-mail and guard your computer's security. They'll remind you when it's time for your dentist appointment and set it up for you (hmmm, maybe this isn't such a good idea after all!). They will act as concierge and consigliere all rolled into one.

The optimists believe that the Internet is good, that it will connect us and deliver finally on the promise of McLuhan's global village. The pessimists see a dark lining in the silver cloud. They see the Net as a mixed blessing. Nets connect, but they also capture. If we're not careful, the Net will capture us, permanently tethering us to it. Today, being in touch 24-7 is almost expected. Tomorrow, choosing to be out of touch, at least occasionally, may become a necessity. We are becoming entwined by electronic communications. More than ever, we need to balance our connectedness with periods of quiet and anonymity.

Until now, new media technologies have been celebrated for giving us more choices and making information more abundant. But some observers are already challenging that notion. One-time director of the Freedom Forum of Columbia University, Eli Noam, observed that “the real issue for future technology is not production of information. Anybody can add information. The difficult question is how to reduce it.”

## **Fragmented Society**

Another reason we're not getting attention is that we're not talking to some people, both literally and figuratively. *Literally* because there's a growing language barrier in our country, with 35 million Americans

speaking a language other than English in their homes. That's more people than the entire population of Canada. But it's *figuratively* true as well, because the population in this country is becoming increasingly fragmented, which makes it more difficult to reach everyone with just two to three ads a year that offer two or three all-purpose persuasive claims and two or three generalized presentation styles.

In 1950, just 10% of the population was represented by ethnic minorities (black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American). In two years, it will be 28%.

Our task is especially tough given the major shift in attitudes we've seen. Only a few decades ago, people wanted to be perceived as part of the mainstream. Guilt and embarrassment were huge ad levers in the 1950s and 1960s, and advertisers did not hesitate to pull them. Typical was Cascade dishwashing detergent. Procter & Gamble promoted this brand by highlighting the shame a woman would feel if neighbors saw her dishes emerge from the dishwasher with water spots.

That was yesterday.

## Today

Today, the world is different. People are more likely to celebrate diversity and individual differences. Today, attention is no longer a given, and we need new approaches. Getting attention is an important new imperative.

There's a story about Albert Einstein that captures the marketer's dilemma perfectly. I can't verify whether it's true, although I've seen it written in several places, but it's a great story!

As a young man, Einstein was monitoring an exam for graduate physics students. Someone pointed out that there was a problem with the test he was handing out—the questions were the same as the previous year's test. Einstein is said to have replied, "That's okay, the answers are different this year."

And that's where we are, too. We have the same marketing questions, but the answers must be different today.

## Persuasion Physics

Over the past 50 years, a set of rules has evolved in the marketing communications industry to guide the efforts of practitioners. Some of these rules are based on empirical evidence derived from testing and experimentation. Some are rules of thumb—generally accepted beliefs and conventional wisdom.

Taken together, these rules form what I call *persuasion physics*. Persuasion physics starts by assuming we already have our audience's attention and all we need to do is persuade them.

Persuasion physics is largely a television-centric enterprise. Brand categories tend to have what I call *baked-in biases* when it comes to media selection. For decades, the baked-in bias (i.e., preferred medium) for most consumer household goods has been television. However, baked-in biases are not all the same. In the high-tech arena, the baked-in bias is print media, with a sprinkle of online seasoning. Persuasion physics and baked-in biases go hand in hand.

Persuasion physics places a premium on *impact*, *tonnage*, *efficiency*, and *effective frequency* (words and phrases that are a dead giveaway that a persuasion physicist is in the room). It treats communications as a series of discrete, carefully constructed, but mostly unconnected commercial units. Some say that the 30-second commercial is the most highly crafted piece of communication in the history of humankind.

Persuasion physics presumes that our job stops once we send this highly burnished, expertly crafted message into the marketplace. It expects that the medium's job is to deliver the message, period. Importantly, it does not anticipate a reply. (My colleague, Mike Samet, sometimes describes this belief as “media as mailman” in contrast to his views on using “media as lobbyist.”)

Persuasion physics offers rigid rules for creating marketing messages. From David Ogilvy,<sup>7</sup> founder of Ogilvy & Mather, these are the steps for creating an effective TV ad:

- Open the first frame with a surprise.
- Use the name within the first 10 seconds.

- Show the package.
- Show the product in use.

And here are his tips for radio ads:

- Identify your brand early in the commercial.
- Identify it often.
- Promise the listener a benefit early in the commercial.
- Repeat it often.

Here are the not dissimilar rules for Procter & Gamble.<sup>8</sup>

- Plan to dominate—invest heavily to achieve leadership.
- Jump-start the commercial with a dramatic verbal statement of a problem (“My family wrote the book on stains!”).
- Show the package in the first eight seconds.
- Demonstrate the benefit with a side-by-side competitive comparison or animated graphic.
- Show what you say, say what you show.
- Put the benefit in the visual.
- Connect the headline to the visual.
- Demonstrate the product in action.
- Wrap it up with a snappy tag line that mentions the brand (“Cascade. So clean it’s virtually spotless!”).

P&G’s meetings with their agencies to review creative development are as rigid as their advertising rules. Here’s an outline of a typical session:<sup>9</sup>

1. Brand Manager opens with a statement about the purpose of the meeting.
2. Assistant Brand Manager reviews the creative objective and strategy.
3. Account Executive describes how the creative development process was synchronized with the strategy.
4. Creative Director then presents the advertising.
5. Silent pause . . . for clients to finish writing notes.

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6. Assistant Brand Manager responds first with an assessment of whether, and to what degree, the commercial followed the strategy.
7. Brand Manager follows by saying if he or she agrees or disagrees with the Assistant Brand Manager. (“I agree with Linda that the storyboard is on strategy. Overall, it clearly conveys that Zest is an effective deodorant soap, no matter what your age, and that it rinses away easily.”)
8. The Brand Manager continues with remarks related to how well the commercial follows the “do’s and don’ts” learned in P&G’s Copy College.
9. The Brand Manager is encouraged to cite three or four positive things about the commercial. (“The way you describe how the man washes his armpit in the shower should be very effective. . . . The tone and interplay between the man and his wife in the opening of the commercial seems to be right on. It enables some tension in their dialogue as to whether or not Zest is the right choice, yet has an engaging charm.”)
10. The Brand Manager might follow with three or four things that don’t work or can be improved. (“I am a little concerned about *what* they are talking about in the opening . . . the double-entendre of the pregnancy test. . . . Double entendres in the opening have not generally been effective. I’m also concerned that the opening takes quite a bit of time. We don’t get to the product until about fifteen seconds into the commercial.”)
11. The Brand Manager summarizes with an overall assessment. (“I hope we can resolve these issues . . .”)
12. The agency is allowed to respond.
13. The Brand Manager responds to the agency’s response.
14. The agency responds again.
15. The Marketing Manager then . . .

You get the idea.

Admittedly, all of these rigors have earned P&G a well-deserved reputation for logical thinking and well-reasoned analysis. Unlike most competitors, P&G has been successful in extending these standards

throughout its entire organization. Procter & Gamble is a prototypical persuasion physicist.

Whenever discussing hard-and-fast marketing rules, it is worth remembering the sage advice of Dr. Venkman (Bill Murray's character), the head mischief-maker in the movie *Ghostbusters*. After pursuing Sigourney Weaver's character throughout the movie, Dr. Venkman finally scores a date with her, only to discover, upon arriving at her door, that the demure violinist has been possessed and replaced by a sultry and seductive vamp. Sensing a good thing, Venkman decides to proceed with the date. He's no match for Weaver's character, however. She wrestles him onto her bed while he meekly resists with the protest that "I make it a rule never to get involved with possessed people." Undaunted, she violently embraces Venkman with a throat-scorching kiss. When he manages to come up for air, the dazzled Venkman admits his resolve has been broken. "It's more of a guideline than a rule." A helpful reminder for all would-be rule makers.

Although P&G's rules and regulations have been successful in the past, they may tend to stifle innovation in the future. And even if they don't, they may tend to slow things down—a side effect that could prove dangerous as the pace of marketing accelerates. If you practice persuasion physics, it's a risk that runs in the family.

Persuasion physicists believe in the concept of *effective reach*—the idea that communications effectiveness can be equated with frequency of ad exposure. Persuasion physicists believe in the concept of *efficiency*. Year after year they demand of their media planners, "Show us how you've improved efficiency!" Persuasion physicists believe in the concept of *targeting*—and their targets are often the size of small countries. They use words like *tonnage*, *impact*, and *target*. If marketing is war, then persuasion physicists are the field generals. They believe that if the weight of the message barrage is right and the creative is above average, then the brand will sell.

It would be tempting to suggest that persuasion physics ought to be discarded. But that would be too easy. Persuasion physics still works for many brands and situations. My view is that persuasion physics has been a valuable tool, but one that is wearing down. It still chugs along, but with

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continued wear it may soon stop working altogether. We need new approaches, not to completely replace our old ones just yet, but to expand the tool set we have available. Therefore, I am not advocating a wholesale abandonment of persuasion physics. The time is not yet right for that. But it is time to reexamine the conventional wisdom. It is time to *doubt*.

## Quantum Mechanics versus Newtonian Physics

Early in this century, some of history's most brilliant thinkers dared to doubt another entrenched model—the science of Newtonian physics. Newtonian physics was (and still is) fine for accurately predicting large-scale phenomena such as the movement of planets, the ballistics of a bullet, and so on. But it breaks down when applied to extremely small-scale phenomena such as the movement of electrons.

Einstein, Bohr, and others gave birth to a new physics: quantum mechanics. Its rules seem strange (for example, you cannot simultaneously know both the position and momentum of a subatomic particle—only one or the other). Yet its rules make accurate predictions possible in the subatomic world.

Over the decades, quantum mechanics has pointed scientists to new technologies that would not have been possible to conceive with a Newtonian mind-set—lasers, computer chips, supercolliders, and so on. Over that same time, engineers have continued to rely on Newtonian physics for other tasks—building bridges and going to the moon, to name just two.

Quantum mechanics has joined Newtonian physics to give scientists and engineers an expanded tool set. In the same way, *attention mechanics* adds new tools to our *persuasion physics* toolbox.

We need both disciplines to restore the effectiveness of marketing communications over time. That is not to say that persuasion physics and attention mechanics are interchangeable or equally applicable. They must be applied as conditions warrant. Increasingly, conditions will warrant attention mechanics.

Quantum mechanics focuses scientists on the most fundamental constituents of nature—subatomic particles. In the same way, attention mechanics will focus marketers on the most fundamental aspect of communications—attention. Quantum mechanics works in a world with a completely different scale—at the level of a single atom. In the same way, attention mechanics will work in a world with a completely different scale of communications noise.

## Push versus Pull

In the past, it was common to view brand marketing, especially in the packaged-goods arena, as a composite of two activities: *push activities*, which were aimed at getting the brand sold into the distribution channel, and *pull activities*, which were aimed at building demand among end consumers. A typical strategy was to push the product onto the trade's shelves with slotting fees and off-invoice allowances, then pull it through with advertising.

This push-pull dichotomy has been dusted off and reintroduced as a way to categorize marketing *communications* activities. In the modern parlance, *push communications* are old-style, intrusive communications. *Pull communications* are new-wave, requested communications.

Push communications interrupt the flow of an intentional viewing or hearing experience. Push messages are thieves, stealing our attention when we're not careful. By contrast, pull communications are messages that we *want* to receive. We willingly activate pull messages. We choose the time and the place to request them. We are in control.

In the black-or-white age we have manufactured, push messages are bad and pull messages are good. Push messages are intrusive and rude. Pull messages are invited guests. Push advertising is out of step with the times. Pull advertising is sexy and alluring.

Some argue that, in the future (specifically, because of the Internet), brands will no longer need push-type attention marketing. Instead, they argue, all marketing communications will evolve toward a pull model:

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People will pull in the brand information they need when they need it. Agents, filters, and other devices will insulate people from noninvited messaging.

This view is directionally right, but wrong in its magnitude. There will always be a place for push marketing communications—unless, that is, manufacturers stop introducing new brands, existing brands stop announcing new features, and low-involvement brands (e.g., chewing gum, soft drinks) stop promoting themselves. For most products and services, push communications will continue to be the most important.

*Low-involvement* products and services are those for which the consumer perceives a low risk in choosing the “wrong” brand. These products and services are typically low-cost, impulse-purchase items. By contrast, *high-involvement* products (e.g., cars and appliances) entail a high risk for the purchaser who makes the wrong choice. Consumers invest a lot of time evaluating high-involvement product options. Even though low-involvement products and services may dabble with pull marketing (game-laden web sites, for example), they cannot survive without push marketing as the mainstay of the communications plan.

Here’s an example of push marketing that won’t die. Ticketmaster and CitySearch recently mined their online consumer profile databases for cross-marketing opportunities. And they found many. For example, they recently sent (pushed) e-mails to customers who purchased tickets to Bruce Springsteen concerts. The e-mails reviewed concert playlists and offered hyperlinks to purchase the relevant Springsteen albums.

Without question, we need to develop *both* skill sets—push and pull—to greater degrees of competency. But if forced to choose between the two, the astute marketer would do well to concentrate on the push side of the equation, where today more vexing challenges are arrayed than ever before.

If only black-or-white answers were required, then marketers could simply choose sides and accept the consequences. But in the real world of growing ambiguity, choosing black or white is not enough. We need a third alternative, a triangulation beyond the two well-worn positions: My attempt to offer marketers a more sophisticated approach is called *attention mechanics*, because attention is the catalyst for all marketing communications. Neither push nor pull would be possible without it.

## Before Attention Mechanics: Classic versus New-Wave Marketers

From the 1950s through the 1980s, persuasion physics came to dominate marketing theory. But in the past decade something new has happened. In just a few years, practitioners in the field of marketing communications have neatly divided into two camps. On one side are the old persuasion physicists, the *classic marketers*—a group anchored by packaged-goods traditionalists. On the other are the *new-wave marketers*—a group dominated by high-tech and dot-com radicals.

Classic marketers trained at our best business schools. They grew up in our finest companies—the companies that *invented* current marketing practice. In these hallowed institutions of capital, they learned the gospel of brand marketing, and they *believe*. From these holy lands, classic marketers spread out across the globe to preach the gospel.

Some characterize the classic gospel as *push marketing*—the idea that a marketing message can achieve its goal if it is intrusively pushed out to consumers with enough force and repetition.

Of course, as with any religion, there are variations. Some classic marketers are literalists. They believe that for every marketing situation there is an optimum formula for success. Success is all but assured, but only if they have faith in the formula and the grace to plug in the right figures (the right case rate, the right share of voice, the right persuasion score, the right efficiency, and so on).

Other classic marketers are “interpretationalists.” They believe that the traditional marketing canon is metaphorically, though not necessarily literally, correct. Classic marketing experiences serve interpretationalists as guidelines to be applied with liberal dollops of judgment.

Whether literalists, or interpretationalists, classic marketers share a common belief in how marketing communications work. As mentioned earlier, I've coined the term *persuasion physics* to describe this concept. Persuasion physics is an engineer's approach to communications planning. Persuasion physics has served classic marketers long and well—especially when it comes to launching new packaged-goods brands. *Persuading* someone to switch from one fast-moving consumer-goods brand to *try* another brand is one of the greatest achievements to which a classic marketer can aspire.

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And then there are the *new-wave marketers*. New-wave marketers don't believe the gospel of classic marketing. For new-wave marketers, the marketing god is dead. New-wave marketers don't act like classic marketers; they don't dress like classic marketers. They generally don't even *like* classic marketers.

New-wave marketers believe that the rules and principles of the classic marketers have calcified over time into an overly rigid and useless code. New-wave marketers believe that the old marketing rules are outmoded. They must be discarded or shed as a snake sheds its skin.

New-wave marketers see a world to which old rules don't apply. A world in which the internet is evolving beyond all previous communications channels. A world in which mass markets have shattered into microscopic tribes. A world in which people actively avoid mere ads.

New-wave marketers don't believe in push marketing. Their faith is instead rooted in the power of *pull marketing*. Pull marketing is the notion that people will pull in the brand information they need when they need it or, even if they don't need it, when they are properly incentivized to pull (i.e., offered some service in return or simply paid off). Push marketing can be resisted, avoided, tuned out, even technologically disabled (through bots, agents, and filters). Push marketing is ad pollution. Pull marketing, they believe, is ad conservation.

Classic marketers honed their skills mostly by succeeding at the *beginning* of the marketing process—by trial and by launching new brands. New-wave marketers focus their talents on the *end* of the marketing process—on loyalty. New-wave marketing yields not just sales, but loyal and committed customers, grateful fans, advocates, even evangelists.

If classic marketers are engineers, new-wave marketers are artists. To return to our religious metaphor, classic marketers are drawn to Genesis. But new-wave marketers leap right to Revelations.

Several new-wave visionaries have done much to expand our view of the role of marketing in the internet age. Seth Godin of Yahoo!, in his book *Permission Marketing*, has written convincingly of the loyalty-building power of pull-oriented, permission-based communications. (See Chapter 16 for more on Godin's concepts.) Don Peppers and Martha Rogers have reenergized the world of marketing communica-

tions with their series of books and lectures on the importance of one-to-one marketing and building loyal customer relationships. (For interested readers, I recommend that you start with their 1997 book, *The One-to-One Future: Building Relationships One Customer at a Time*.)

These new-wave revolutionaries have done much to enrich our view of marketing. They have focused a powerful microscope on what some classic marketers have simplistically dismissed as “repeat sales,” and by doing so they have illuminated an entire new universe of possibilities.

Not surprisingly, the most visionary new-wave thinkers (e.g., Godin, Peppers, and Rogers) have attracted a rapidly growing throng of unquestioning devotees. In their rush to pile onto the new-wave relationship band wagon, some converts have trivialized the insights of the original authors, proclaiming the new-wave doctrine in terms of simplistic “about-isms”:

“It’s not about *persuasion*, it’s about *permission*!”

“It’s not about the *mass market*, it’s about *one-to-one*!”

“It’s not about *profits*, it’s about *relationships*!”

When following the argument of some new-wave proselytes, one is overcome by the nagging sensation that marketing is a story whose plot we have completely misunderstood. (“About-sayers” are allied in a secret compact with “will-sayers”—prognosticators who proffer opinions about the future with rigid certainty, such as “e-commerce sales will overtake brick and mortar sales by 2007.” A disproportionate number of about-sayers and will-sayers live in the San Francisco Bay Area and suffer, understandably, from gourmet coffee-induced dementia.)

## Attention Mechanics: The Third Way

The goal of marketing communications is to move prospects from attention to consideration to purchase and, finally, to loyalty (see the marketing balance diagram in the introduction). Persuasion-based marketing has long staked out the middle of that process—consideration and pur-

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chase. New-wavers have shifted the debate back toward the loyalty end of the spectrum. In contrast, attention mechanics restores the focus on *getting attention*, the spark that ignites the entire process. If classic, persuasion-based marketing represents the first way to market and new-wave, relationship-based marketing represents the second, then attention mechanics represents a new, third way to market.

As different as they are, classic and new-wave marketers generally share one common belief—that a prospect's attention is a *given*, a trifle not to waste time on, that the *really* important marketing activities have to do with what comes *after* (i.e., persuasion for classicists, relationships for revolutionaries). This is where attention mechanics parts company with both groups.

Attention mechanics demands a fundamental change in our mindset regarding how communications work. It is as if we are single-handedly attempting to shift the Very Large Array (the giant deep space dish radio antennas spread out over 27 square miles in the New Mexico desert). We are attempting to reorient the entire apparatus from a decades-long fixation on one part of the sky to a different, more primal region that we'd abandoned long ago as undeserving of scrutiny but that now promises to yield the most exciting secrets of the universe.

Attention mechanics aims to restore the effectiveness of marketing communications by refocusing our efforts on the most basic, the most primal communications' goal of all, the first and most fundamental thing a brand must do—*get attention*.

To be sure, attention is not the *only* thing a brand needs, but getting noticed has to be given a very high priority if we are serious about restoring the power of our brands' communications. What's more, we must get our brands noticed in ways that don't contribute to the problem of getting attention. Persuasion-based marketing or loyalty-based marketing won't do. We need a third approach. We need *attention mechanics*.