

## Color Your Marketing Purple

Huh? I can hear you now. "Coloring" and "purple". He must have lost his mind. But did it catch your attention? And isn't that the role of marketing?

Recently, Seth Godin, of *Permission Marketing* fame, wrote a book entitled "Purple Cow." In a preview in *FastCompany*, Godin explains that purple marketing is about the need for marketers to develop, and offer, "things" worth noticing in their product and/or service." In other words, be different, as commonality in products/services leads to boredom, customer apathy and margin deterioration.

### Marketing's Role

Recently, Channel Marketing Group conducted an online survey to learn your feelings on:

- ◆ What is marketing?
- ◆ What is marketing to you? And,
- ◆ Does it work?

While the results are not scientific (especially since marketing-oriented people visit our site), they are enlightening.

We asked respondents to rate 10 roles of marketing on a scale of 1 to 4 (low to high). The results were:

Role	Score
Promoting/communicating service & product offering(s)	4.47
Creating a favorable image of company	4.31
Provides tools to help sales	4.29
Discovering what customers want & need	4.22
Developing product/services to satisfy customer needs	4.16
Advertising and promotion	3.92
Leading the organization to implement the value-added product & service plan	3.88
Point of sale merchandising	3.80
Pricing	3.43
Selling	3.31

While not unexpected, distributors and manufacturers primarily view marketing as

communications and promotions. Some elevate marketing within their organization and expect that marketing "help develop the strategic direction of the company, understand from the customers what it takes to penetrate the segment(s) and put together collateral, promotions and programs to assist sales develop and implement the tactics to accomplish the goal." And others value the role that marketing plays in learning and interpreting customer needs and integrating that knowledge into their company's product and value-added services.

The complete results of the survey can be found at [www.channelmkt.com](http://www.channelmkt.com).

It is these companies that were successful in 2002 and are poised to take more market share in 2003. At the recent NAED regional meetings we asked many distributors about their 2002 performance. Those that were successful, or who have started 2003 strong, are taking a marketing approach.

### Be Disruptive

Growing companies have found ways to be disruptive to their competition...motivating sales; promoting value-added services; aggressive "traditional" marketing (counter days, joint sales calls, training); and increased communication. Everything from coordinated marketing strategies where the distributor drives the process with the manufacturer to creating strategies to motivate salespeople to convert accounts.

These companies have developed repeatable processes aimed at identifying, screening and shaping strategies that disrupt their competition, capture manufacturer share of mind and generate growth engines. Disruptive marketing leads to increased market share.

### Start Coloring

To create sustained growth it is imperative to continually understand customer needs, be they distributors or end-users. Listening, observing and working with customers helps you identify their unspoken challenges and enables you to develop solutions *for them*.

Part of understanding their needs is also understanding the change in business psyche. Keeping in touch with your customers' perceptions about their business, your company

and the macro environment helps you structure your offerings accordingly.

(insert)

What's Out	What's In
First-mover advantage	First-prover advantage
Revenue growth at all costs	Positive cash flow
Revolutionary offers	Evolutionary offers
Market breadth	Market depth
Geographical coverage	Market Segment expertise
Strategic partners	Value-chain partners
Vendor-centric messaging	Customer-centric messaging

From a macro viewpoint, the definition of value has shifted. *Optimize Magazine*. Nov 2002

### Make it Purple

As long as you are coloring by observing customers, why not do something remarkable, and change the playing field?

Godin defines remarkable as "worth talking about, worth paying attention to." When was the last time that distributors really talked about a manufacturer's new program or product, or customers in your area raved about yours (or a competitor's) service or marketing efforts? Or there was a "must have" tool or product? If you created something unique, would your customers notice?

To achieve "breakthroughs", a company must be marketing-driven. Marketing must be an integral element of your culture and become embedded in customer research, product design/development, packaging, production, service-development and traditional marketing. It must be the voice of the customer and the parent of the product/service.

To drive success, this cycle must be repetitive. Incrementalism enables competition to narrow the difference between companies/products and minimize profit opportunities.

**How do you color yourself purple?** Godin advocates 10 steps:

1. **Differentiate your customers.** Identify groupings and develop strategies for each

group. Cater to the customers you would choose if you could choose your customers.

2. **Pick one** underserved niche market to target and dominate it.
3. Create a group of **inventors** (people who develop new product/service) and **milkers** (people who identify new usages for existing products/services and who prolong a product's life).
4. **Email the top 20%** of your customers who love what you do (remember the 80/20 rule).
5. Remarkable marketing **does not have to be "big" things**, it can be as simple as how the phones get answered.
6. **Explore limits**, and seek to surpass them.
7. **Think small.** Rather than one size fits all, for products and marketing, individualize your efforts.
8. Find things that are **"just not done"** in the industry, and do them. Benchmark from outside the industry.
9. **Ask, "Why not?"** and do not accept "Because."
10. **Communicate internally** and make everyone a marketer and a customer advocate.

### The Color of Profit is Purple

A respondent to our survey commented, "The only source of competitive advantage is superior understanding of the customer." As marketing, becomes more involved in leading your company in implementing value-added product and service plans and developing products/services to satisfy customer needs, new, customer-desired products and services will evolve. Through this process customers will be dazzled, share will increase and profits will rise. Your customer can put the purple crayon in your hand.

**David Gordon** is a principal of **Channel Marketing Group, Inc.** Channel Marketing Group develops market share strategies for manufacturers and distributors. He can be reached via email at [dgordon@channelmkt.com](mailto:dgordon@channelmkt.com). Register for monthly newsletter at [www.channelmkt.com](http://www.channelmkt.com).

Seth Godin's book, *Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Becoming Remarkable*, will be published in May and is available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).