

## WHAT MARKETING WITH MEANING CAN DO FOR YOU

**W**hat if we started over? What if we threw out the textbooks and the flowcharts and rose above the snazzy jingle, the celebrity bribe, the empty sizzle, and the ad accost? What if we stopped trying (and failing) to be all things to all people and instead tried to create something of meaning? What if we stopped interrupting people to tell them how great our products are and actually *did* something to prove our greatness?

I believe that in a world in which consumers can actively choose to avoid marketing, the only way to win is to create marketing that they actively choose to engage with. Akin to the industry-altering significance of direct marketing in the 1950s and permission marketing in the 1990s, marketing with meaning is the next logical step in an evolutionary process. If direct marketing was about approaching strangers individually, and permission marketing was about turning strangers into friends and friends into customers, marketing with meaning is about improving customers' lives *through the marketing itself*.

<b>Direct Marketing</b>	<b>Permission Marketing</b>	<b>Marketing with Meaning</b>
Approach the consumer directly, using targeted information.	Seek consumer approval and input prior to the approach.	Create marketing that invites consumer participation.
“Advertising arrives at my home, whether I like it or not.”	“I can choose whether or not to receive relevant advertising.”	“The marketing itself improves my life, so I will both notice you <i>and</i> give you my business.”
“Tell and sell” monologue	“Give and take” dialogue	“Value-added” benefit
Interruption	Authorization	Service
Focus on medium	Focus on message	Focus on meaning

Direct marketing was widely adopted in the 1950s, thanks to bulk postage rates, cheaper mailing materials, and the use of some of the first computers available to businesses. The concept offered several unique benefits as compared to broadcast media like print and radio: companies could reach out more specifically to the individual households that most interested them, they could include much more information by mail, and they could begin to measure the responsiveness to individual offers, a breakthrough in judging return on marketing investment. For consumers, direct marketing by mail or phone brought some added value—it provided more relevant messages and offers, along with some freedom to ignore the sales pitches altogether. But the industry also abused people’s phone lines and mailboxes at an early stage. No wonder the term *junk mail* was first used in 1954.

Permission marketing, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is the brain-child of marketing maverick Seth Godin, and it succeeded in tilting both the advertising playing field and the relationship between marketers and consumers in the people’s favor. Permission marketing is what created (and continues to drive) the expectation that we shouldn’t, can’t, and won’t simply interrupt people with marketing via e-mail or phone unless we first ask them and are given their permission to do

so. Permission marketing represents a distinct improvement over the traditional “tell and sell” approach to marketing, but in many ways it has made our jobs harder, as it has fueled consumers’ desire and motivation to opt out of marketing altogether.

Marketing with meaning is the antidote to opting out; it adds value to people’s lives independent of purchase—which, as it turns out, is far more likely to win their business. It’s marketing that is often more meaningful than the product it aims to sell. It’s Samsung, providing not 1 but 50 eight-foot electrical charging stations for cell phones and laptops at LAX and JFK (with Dallas–Fort Worth, LaGuardia, and Orlando next in the queue). It’s Charmin, underwriting restrooms in Times Square, providing, shall we say, a much-needed service in exchange for the opportunity to connect the toilet with the tissue in people’s minds. It’s a company that makes matches—a commodity, to be sure—that partners with a grill company and sponsors a “stop, drop, and roll” fire-safety program in elementary schools, creating marketing that is far more meaningful than the simple flame the match produces.

What can marketing with meaning do for you and your business? Our research at Bridge Worldwide and dozens of successful projects for our customers show that the more meaningful people find your marketing, the more they’ll be willing to pay for your stuff, the more of an investment they’ll make in it emotionally, and the more motivated they’ll become to spread the word. This means that you’ll be improving your customers’ lives, your bottom line, and the world at large.

Admittedly, the word *meaning* carries some baggage; some people believe that it narrowly suggests cause marketing or that it calls for the abandonment of conspicuous consumption, neither of which is true in our use of the word. Here, *meaning* translates to “personal value.” What people find meaningful is very personal, and this chapter will demonstrate, in particular, how marketing your brand can be meaningful in different ways, to various degrees.

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Of course, this suggests that meaning can vary from person to person, which is frankly part of the point—your brand probably has a unique target market that’s different from mine. A teenage boy finds a sexy, funny viral video amusing, while the rest of the world turns up its nose. A person with diabetes becomes deeply engaged with articles about how to manage her disease, while the rest of the world has no clue to—nor any interest in—what an A1C is. Although meaning can vary by brand and target, I have found in our work with clients that true marketing with meaning has two consistent traits:

1. *It’s marketing that people choose to engage with.*  
It involves creating something that people find is worthy of their time and attention, rather than continuing to look for ways to cleverly (or not so cleverly) interrupt them.
2. *It’s marketing that itself improves people’s lives.* Many a marketer goes to bed at night, proud to support products and services that add value. Indeed, they may remove tough stains, put a smile on faces, or enable priceless purchases, but we too often utilize the old interruption approach to present these products and services to our customers. Instead, we must create advertising that actually adds value—without necessarily forcing a sale.

An initial fear for some is that the idea of “meaning” is too high level and far away from the dollars and cents that people are most concerned about during this difficult economy. Brands feel pressured to go back to traditional TV commercials with product-benefit and value messaging to connect with price-sensitive buyers. But practicing meaningful marketing is at its heart about understanding consumer needs and delivering value through the marketing itself.

As you will read in the chapters ahead, free samples and offers are strong examples of meaningful marketing, but in today’s economy people are still responding to cause-related campaigns and sustainability messages. The new bottom line for consumers is that they expect more from their brands on many levels—and this model will help your company bring marketing itself into the value equation.

The best way to illustrate the value of meaningful marketing is to look deeply within pioneering brands that are charting a unique but consistent course. Dove, Nike, Burger King, and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America are but four examples of major brands that are executing this new approach in truly significant ways. They have abandoned interruption, created marketing that people choose to engage with, connected with them in a variety of innovative new forums, and successfully launched meaningful campaigns that have positively affected both their numbers and the quality of life of the people they're targeting.

### **Reinventing Beauty Gives a Lift to Dove's Bottom Line**

In 2002, in the face of slow growth, diminishing market share, and eye-opening research that revealed that more than 50 percent of women say that their body “disgusts them,” Dove stopped talking about soap for its own sake, quit perpetuating a beauty myth that was potentially damaging to girls and women, and started a movement to help improve self-esteem.

In lieu of the size-one fashion models who have come to be expected—and ignored—in advertising, Dove's original “Real Beauty” campaign featured real women of all ages, sizes, and ethnicities in print ads, online banners, and Times Square billboards. Its marketing featured people such as a 90-year-old woman, with copy that asked the question: “Wrinkled or wonderful?” In what would later become the “Campaign for Real Beauty,” Dove crashed the stereotypes of beauty product advertising forever, creating a national debate among women about what beauty is and what it means. The initial success of the campaign fueled the brand to go further into the digital realm, creating a Web site and mobile-enabled billboards where consumers could continue the discussion with others and download tools to help moms and mentors talk with girls about accepting and celebrating themselves. Then Dove took the campaign viral.

In 2006, its Canadian agency, Ogilvy Toronto, created a time-spel video to dramatize the process that beauty-product advertisers go through to turn a simple woman into a Photoshopped fashion model, ending with: “No wonder our perception of beauty is distorted. Every

**“Evolution” . . . has achieved over 500 million views—and counting. This cost Dove . . . a mere \$50,000.**

girl deserves to feel beautiful just the way she is.” On October 6, 2006, the agency released the video, called “Evolution,” on YouTube with no other support or fanfare. Traffic began to build, and a week later, *Good Morning America* featured it. Free views and

free press coverage continued unabated for months. According to Maria Mandel, executive director for digital innovation at Ogilvy, the video has achieved over 500 million views—and counting.

This cost Dove little more than the price of the video’s production, a mere \$50,000, in comparison to the \$1.3 million to air a single 30-second ad once during the *American Idol* season finale. Not to mention the fact that a consumer who chooses to engage in meaningful marketing is obviously more open to the message than someone who is likely to use the bathroom, get a snack, or TiVo through a commercial break.

In summer 2007, even the old guard of advertising recognized the campaign with its highest honor, a Cannes Grand Prix. But the Dove Real Beauty advertising campaign did more than win eyeballs and creative awards. It drove the company’s business, resulting in double-digit sales growth for this 54-year-old brand in 2005 and 2006. And it made an impact on society by igniting a debate about our culture’s definition of beauty, shining a spotlight on how the media’s portrayal of it affects the confidence and well-being of our daughters, wives, and sisters. It made real women feel better about themselves and their bodies. And the Dove Self-Esteem Fund is now working to affect the lives of 5 million girls by 2010 by creating articles and videos for girls, moms, and mentors and free workshops (with a discussion guide and DVD) that schools and other organizations (including the Girl Scouts) can use. While Dove’s products work well, the marketing the company created is doing nothing less than improving the world.

### **“Word of Foot” Spikes Sales at Nike**

Unlike Dove, Nike has never really been an underdog in its market. On the contrary, the company practically invented the premium athletic footwear category back in the 1960s, when founders Phil Knight

and Bill Bowerman formed a partnership and later began using waffle irons to fashion high-performance soles for track stars. By 1980, the company owned 50 percent of the athletic shoe market in the United States, mainly thanks to “word of foot.” Its first television ads did not run until 1982, but the medium seemed tailor-made for Nike, with its slick, stylish, celebrity-laden commercials. Over the next two decades, sales soared and periodic threats from competitors such as Adidas, Reebok, and L.A. Gear were easily quashed by millions in ad spending and the creation of innovative product.

By 2005, Nike, Inc., had achieved profits of \$1.2 billion on revenues of \$13.7 billion. But the company faced pressures it never had faced before: Adidas purchased Reebok, creating a \$16 billion combined number two challenger, and the upstart Under Armour brand, with its focus on high-performance technology for high-performance athletes, came out of nowhere to hit \$607 million in revenues. Many people in both the advertising and footwear industries expected Nike to fight back with a flotilla of expensive traditional advertising, and possibly even a return to the Super Bowl, from which it had been absent since 1998. But Nike did something smarter, cheaper, and more meaningful.

Instead of reviving the marketing approach it had used in the 1980s, it went back further, back to its roots, and back to generating “word of foot” by reacquainting itself with its core audience of dedicated athletes. “We’re not in the business of keeping the media companies alive,” Trevor Edwards, the corporate vice president for global brand and category management, says. “We’re in the business of connecting with consumers.”

Nike’s refocus on community and its heavy use of the word *service* suggest that its new approach is a natural outgrowth of the launch of Nike+ in 2006. In a symbiotic partnership of meaningful marketing and technology, Nike joined with Apple to launch a system that combined chip-in-a-shoe and iPod sync software. This allowed for an enhanced experience for serious runners, many of whom depend on music to stay motivated. Every mile, a voice speaks over the music to provide updates on pace and miles run, and to offer words of encouragement. Placing the iPod in its cradle downloads the runner’s performance into tracking software at

nikeplus.com, allowing runners to compare runs, track their progress against goals, and note improvement over time. And while all this may seem tedious to most people, Nike knew that dedicated runners have been doing this for decades using pen-and-paper journals, and that offering a technology that would make this task easier, quicker, and more fun would go a long way with its target audience.

Nike+ goes even further by helping people personally connect in what is essentially the world's largest running club. The service connects runners to others around the globe in more than 13 markets—allowing friends, groups, and even entire nations to share running courses and challenge one another.

The business rationale of Nike+ is best described by Michael Tchao, general manager for Nike Techlab:

Nike+ has been successful because it provides consumers all over the world the tools they need to become better athletes. For many users it has become an indispensable service, giving them a continued deep connection to our brand.

After only six months of sales in December 2006, Nike CEO Mark Parker reported to analysts, “Nike+ is turning out to be huge. . . . Clearly, our confidence in this concept is proving to be accurate.” He credited the company's 8.1 percent rise in second-quarter profit to this line of running shoes.

In addition to boosting profits, there is no doubt that Nike+ has significantly improved the running experience for millions of athletes at all performance levels. Stefan Olander, global director for brand connections, reports that 30 percent of Nike+ users come to the site three or more times per week after an average run time of 35 minutes—and many of them have become so enamored of their Nike+ sensors that if they don't have them with them, they will actually skip running “because they want credit for their achievements.”

By bringing information and entertainment to the relatively monotonous activity of running, Nike has encouraged new runners, brought lapsed runners back into the habit, and squeezed a few more miles and smiles out of those who never stopped. There may not be a

*If we can do something to benefit our consumers and serve the needs of athletes to perform better, they will return to our brand.*

— STEFAN OLANDER, GLOBAL DIRECTOR FOR  
BRAND CONNECTIONS, NIKE

place for Nike+ in the annual Cannes reel, but it is brilliant marketing nonetheless.

Nike is extending this concept of meaningful marketing into other sports as well, placing a breathtaking 2-minute-46-second video of Brazilian soccer star Ronaldino online, instead of on television, resulting in more than 17 million views on YouTube alone. For basketball players, Nike created the Jordan Brand Breakfast Club, an interactive online training tool featuring custom-tailored workouts from pro trainer Tim Grover that can be downloaded to a video iPod. More than 120,000 people registered on the site and spent an average of six minutes logged in.

Runners and ballers love the new marketing approach, and so do Nike's shareholders. The company's global sales have climbed from \$10 billion to \$16 billion in the last four years, and in February 2007, CEO Mark Parker promised Wall Street that he will grow the business another \$8 billion in the next five years. His confidence, in part, comes from the fact that the company seems to have cracked the code of a new marketing model, while its archcompetitor, Adidas, is busy spending millions for the privilege of plastering its logo on Super Bowl and Olympic jerseys.

## **How Burger King Jump-Started Sales by Having More Fun**

In 2002, historic fast-food also-ran Burger King was facing the potentially fatal combination of flat sales and a new corporate parent. Founded in 1954 by James McLamore and David Edgerton, who had visited the original McDonald's restaurant in San Bernardino, California,<sup>1</sup> and saw an opportunity to piggyback on the fast-food franchise model, Burger King's primary goal for almost 50 years had

been to siphon off a few share points from the market leader. Unfortunately, this left the company with a poor sales base, which made it an also-ran for investors as well.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, its new owner, private equity firm TPG Capital, was more interested in reframing the brand as fresh and fun than in holding a fire sale. TPG recognized that a meaningful campaign could reposition Burger King as a brand to know and love. In January 2003, the company hired Miami-based creative agency Crispin Porter + Bogusky, which helped identify and prioritize 18- to 24-year-old males, a heavy fast-food consumer base that also helps to set trends for the rest of the population,<sup>3</sup> as its primary target audience. After a Crispin employee happened to purchase a 1970s oversized Burger King “head” on eBay as a source of brainstorming inspiration, the agency made the bold decision to feature the now-retro “Creepy King” character (who’d been sidelined since the 1980s) both in restaurants and in guerrilla marketing efforts. Within months, the King returned to the forefront of pop culture, as mask-wearing Kings began appearing at Halloween parties and on viral video pranks.

Separately, as part of its mandate, the team at Crispin was specifically charged with helping to increase sales of Burger King’s chicken sandwiches, a task made all the more difficult by the brand’s historic focus on burgers. Whereas most agencies would probably have taken the traditional approach and come up with something straightforward and predictable—say, a 30-second ad showing hungry customers (or maybe a celebrity!) designing their perfect chicken sandwich at a restaurant counter—Crispin capitalized on Burger King’s decades-long reputation for being the restaurant that invited customers to “have it your way” by inviting people to issue customized orders to . . . a chicken.

On April 8, 2004, [www.subservientchicken.com](http://www.subservientchicken.com) went live, resulting in an instant viral hit and the brand’s first major breakthrough. Via a faux Webcam feed, a guy in a chicken suit responds to more than 300 commands typed into a text box, ranging from “peck ground” to “walk like an Egyptian.” Joseph Jaffe, author of *Life After the 30-Second Spot*, reports that more than 14 million people visited [subservientchicken.com](http://subservientchicken.com) in its first year, each of whom spent an average of more than seven minutes on the site. Most important, the campaign moved

meals. Chicken sandwich sales were reportedly up 9 percent in the weeks immediately following the launching of the campaign, and in its October 2004 earnings report, after nine consecutive months of growth, Burger King announced that same-store sales were up 6.4 percent and total company restaurant sales rose 12.3 percent.

In addition to sales growth, Subservient Chicken guaranteed Burger King its place in the annals of pop culture. People began to see the brand as quirky, playful, and distinctive in its own right, rather than as an outdated, eternally subpar runner-up to McDonald's. More than four years later, subservientchicken.com continues to draw traffic and has spawned dozens of spoofs.

Like Dove's, Burger King's successful new marketing approach inspired the company in other meaningful ways as well. While Dove sparked a global conversation about how we should define beauty, Burger King gave its customers permission to have fun again. In late 2004, Burger King partnered with developer Blitz Games to break leadership ground in the video game business, becoming the largest distributor of advertising-related video games ("advergemes"). Its three games for the Xbox—*Pocketbike Racer* (a mini-motorcycle-racing game), *Big Bumpin'* (a bumper car game with pitfalls, such as bottomless pits and ice patches), and *Sneak King* (where players become the King and sneak around neighborhoods and construction sites, surprising people with fresh sandwiches)—sold a staggering 3.2 million copies (at \$3.99 apiece) in just three months, which put it in the top 10 bestselling video games of the year. More important, these games helped to increase Burger King's profits by 40 percent within a year.

As Russ Klein, president of global marketing for Burger King, says, "Interacting with our characters in the games is actually more engaging than just sitting back in your chair and watching a Super Bowl commercial." It's more meaningful, too. When we can convince people to want to interact with our marketing—or, in this case, literally play with our brand—we are onto something big, new, and different.

Burger King continues to carve a new path with advertising, including a mobile-phone-based game starring the King, and, in February 2008, a promotion that celebrated the fiftieth anniversary

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of the Whopper. Called “Whopper Freak-Out,” the campaign featured television ads and online videos that caught, on camera, customers’ reactions to the (completely fabricated) announcement that the Whopper had been discontinued. Visits to WhopperFreakout.com reached 250,000 in the first week. Even better, same-store sales were up 4.2 percent, sales

of Whoppers grew by double-digits,<sup>4</sup> and the firm’s stock price was up 5.8 percent, thanks to this campaign.<sup>5</sup>

In December 2008, the brand launched a men’s fragrance called Flame that has “the scent of seduction with a hint of flame-broiled meat”—a perfect stocking-stuffer for \$3.99. And the King got into Facebook in January 2009 with a promotion to support its new, spicy “Angry Whopper.” Burger King offered Facebook members a free Whopper coupon if they chose to un-friend 10 people on the service. In less than a week, over 200,000 connections were severed in the name of a \$3 sandwich.

Burger King proves that engaging, fun, meaningful marketing can drive a complete brand turnaround. In addition to a successful IPO in 2006, Burger King has enjoyed 20 consecutive quarters of growth in same-store sales and a 32 percent increase in its stock price in 2007. Clearly, its marketing has been meaningful for consumers and investors alike.

## **Partnering with Parents for a Drug-Free America**

Unlike Dove and Nike, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America (PDFA) is hardly a household name. You probably remember its famous “this is your brain on drugs” egg-in-the-frying pan ads, which *USA Today* recently named as the eleventh most-recalled ad from the past 25 years. But “recall,” as you probably know, does not always mean results, and in its move toward meaningful marketing, even the Partnership for a Drug-Free America has made the decision to stop

scaring parents via its 30-second TV ads and instead start offering valuable educational resources on its Web site.

In the last 20 years, the PDFA's strategy has been to utilize its *one million dollars' worth of free media placement per day* to expose children and parents to antidrug messages via television and print advertising. But after years of creating memorable, award-winning ads, the PDFA decided to change course for two reasons: its mass television advertising campaign was missing its target, and its Web site, [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org), was garnering a surprising amount of traffic (about a million new visitors each month).

The meaningful new path that the PDFA is taking is epitomized by its most recent work, an initiative called "Time to Talk" ([www.timetotalk.org](http://www.timetotalk.org)). In contrast to an interruptive scare tactic, Time to Talk is a "resource for parents seeking to understand drug and alcohol abuse with their children." Today's Gen X parents grew up with that very brain-frying daily dose of antidrug messages, and they saw the results (or lack thereof) on their streets, in their friends, and in themselves. Now, as parents, they are proactively seeking real solutions, and they are open to engaging with an entity such as the PDFA if it's offering genuine value-added services (which it appears to be, in such features as its Parent Talk Kit: "Top 10 Ways Teens Trick Their Parents," "How to Tell If Your Teen Is Drinking or Using Drugs," and "Answering the Question: 'Did You Do Drugs?'" ).

The PDFA has also partnered with Yahoo! Answers to create a destination where parents can chat directly to help one another handle the tough questions. An e-mail campaign keeps the conversation going, with regular columns such as "Teachable Moments" and Q&A from radio and TV personality Dr. Drew. A Facebook page features an active cause campaign. There is even a parent-run blog called "The Decoder" ([decoder.drugfree.org](http://decoder.drugfree.org)), which is "breaking down teen culture, substance abuse, and parenting." While most brand managers have not personally read a blog or created a Facebook page, parents of teens have had to learn about these new technologies quickly in order to keep pace with what their kids are getting into. And now parents are using these tools to better educate themselves and one another.

The PDFA is also doing more to reach out into individual communities. Its Meth360 community mobilization program trains

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**—STEVE PASIERB**

substance abuse treatment professionals and law enforcement officials to speak at schools and town halls, and to parent groups and other civic organizations. In 2008 this program reached 12,000 individuals, and according to its recent fund-raising letter, “This powerful program was so meaningful that even after six

months, over 86% of participants were still taking action and talking about the presentation to friends and families.”

While this shift in marketing approach has yet to result in an Effie award, the change in what the PDFA is spending on marketing suggests that it is working; digital spending has gone from almost nothing to 10 percent of the media budget in 2007, and is expected to hit 31 percent by 2010. Its personal, grassroots programs reached 75,000 parents and teens. The PDFA still runs television ads, thanks to free media placement, but only about half as many (worth \$175 million, down from \$365 million). According to Steve Pasierb, president and CEO: “Our spend is down, but our effective reach is up. I would rather be able to reach 100,000 parents well, the way they want to be reached, than [try to] reach 10 million with a generic message.”

By actively engaging with its target audience, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America is doing more than helping us keep our kids off drugs; it is serving as a role model to help us marketers kick the habit of destructive marketing.

## **Marketing with Meaning: The Model**

To create meaningful marketing, you must first determine what makes people tick—what’s genuinely important to them and what they aspire to. Specifically, you need to uncover which of their needs remain unmet—not just in the laundry room or at the grocery store, but in their larger lives. These are what I call “higher-level” needs. If we’re honest, we all know that the detergents and deodorants we are buying now get the job done just fine. So what do people really want?

Richer experiences and deeper social connections—ways to improve themselves and to make a positive impact on the world.

People will spend \$5 a cup to enjoy a Starbucks experience, \$20 to personalize a Heinz ketchup bottle, and hundreds of dollars for personal carbon offset credits. A good online banking service can instill confidence in one's financial choices, even if the terms of the account and the interest rate are exactly the same as those at the bank next door. Hybrid cars offer a relatively minor improvement in gas mileage and take decades to recapture their incremental cost—yet sales of hybrids are up 500 percent in the past year alone because people *perceive* that they are better for the environment. These are the kinds of higher-level benefits that many brands aspire to provide, yet they can do so only by intimately understanding how not just their products and services but their *marketing* satisfies potential customers' unfulfilled needs and fits into the overall experience of their lives.

As a road map to help marketers meet these higher-level needs, I have created a new marketing model, the Hierarchy of Meaningful Marketing, which is the product of more than two years of research and my nearly two decades of experience both as a brand manager at Procter & Gamble and as chief marketing strategist at Bridge Worldwide.

The hierarchy presents the three tiers of meaningful marketing—*Solution*, *Connection*, and *Achievement*—as a tool that will help you accurately identify your customers' needs and begin thinking about how your marketing can fulfill these needs at the corresponding levels:

- Survival needs (food, shelter, safety, and clothing) = meaningful solutions
- Attachment needs (love, belonging, friendship, family) = meaningful connections
- Esteem needs (confidence, creativity, problem solving, respect for and by others) = meaningful achievements

The Hierarchy of Meaningful Marketing uniquely aligns and combines Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a brilliant 60-year-old sociological snapshot of consumers' higher-level needs, with the

brand equity hierarchy, a familiar tool that marketers use every day to determine where their brand stands in the hearts and minds of consumers.

In case Maslow's theory is not top of mind, in the 1940s, the American psychologist spent time studying the healthiest 1 percent of the college population as well as exemplary figures such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, and Frederick Douglass. He discovered two important things. First, people are programmed to continually create new needs and strive to satisfy them. This programming is what keeps us going even after we have won a Nobel Prize or made a million dollars, and it is responsible for much of the remarkable progress in the world. Second, he found that there is a common and predictable progression of these needs among all people, starting with survival and safety and moving toward higher-level social, esteem, and achievement needs as the more basic needs are met.

In Marketing 101, we learned that strong brands stand for something more than product features and benefits. Brands like Coca-Cola and BMW are worth far more than the factories that produce them and the raw materials used to make them; their real value exists in what they stand for in the hearts and minds of consumers. Like Maslow's model, the brand equity hierarchy begins with a base level of benefits and attributes that describe what the product is and the problem it solves. It gradually ladders up to higher levels of meaning to include values, character, and a single, powerful equity statement. The pyramid shape of both models helps to connect basic needs with benefits, and so on (see Figure 2.1).

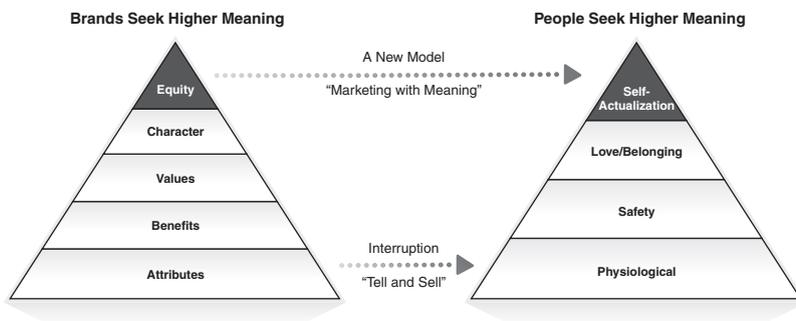


Figure 2.1 **Both Brands and People Seek Higher Meaning**

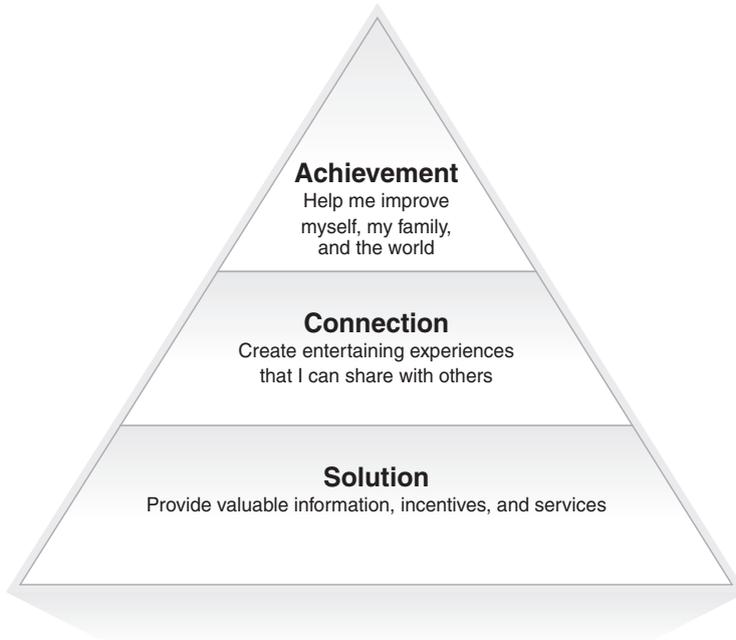


Figure 2.2 **The Hierarchy of Meaningful Marketing**

The Hierarchy of Meaningful Marketing (see Figure 2.2) marries consumers' higher-level needs with the corresponding brand features, resulting in three tiers of marketing that are increasingly meaningful to consumers:

- *Solution marketing*. Like the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, solution marketing covers basic household needs and benefits, for example, helpful offers, money savings, and hard rewards for purchase.
- *Connection marketing*. This represents a significant step toward building a bonding relationship between people and brands. It matches closely with Maslow's love/belonging category, providing benefits beyond the basics of information and relevance to include something that is of deeper importance in the consumer's mind, i.e., social outlets and creative expression.

- *Achievement marketing.* This corresponds to Maslow’s pinnacle of self-actualization by allowing people to significantly improve their lives, realize a dream, or positively change their community and their world.

Once people can feed and clothe themselves, they can focus on forging healthy relationships, and then on changing the world, because they aren’t worried about where their next meal is coming from. Similarly, when you as a consumer aren’t as motivated by a 50-cents-off coupon—mainly because 50 cents won’t make or break you—you become more responsive to marketing that aligns itself with your goals of connecting with like-minded people, expressing yourself creatively, and/or positively influencing the community around you.

The higher the level of marketing (with achievement being the highest), the higher the need it satisfies (esteem needs being the highest), and conversely, the higher the need, the higher the level of marketing it requires. This is not to say that marketers of basic goods and services are exempt from creating marketing with meaning. For them, the opportunities to create marketing whose meaning transcends what they’re selling are limitless.

The description of each of the three tiers typify the ways in which these needs tend to manifest in people and are the focus of the next three chapters (Chapter 3, “Meaningful Solutions”; Chapter 4, “Meaningful Connections”; and Chapter 5, “Meaningful Achievements”), each of which contains dozens of real-world case studies from name brands that have made great strides in their journey toward marketing with meaning—often to significantly increased sales and shareholder satisfaction.

## What Meaningful Marketers Know

1. Meaningful marketers never push. They *invite* prospective customers in by creating marketing that appeals to the higher unmet needs in their overall lives.
2. Meaningful marketers know that most of our basic needs are satisfied by the products and services we already buy.

But that is not to say that the marketers of these basic products are exempt from creating marketing with meaning—on the contrary. If you sell a commodity, the need and opportunities for you to create marketing whose meaning transcends your product are limitless.

3. Marketing itself must improve consumers' lives and accomplish something of intrinsic value, independent of the product or service it aims to sell, whether or not people actually ever purchase it.
4. More meaning = more money. (The longer equation is more meaning = more loyalty = higher prices = increased sales, but the net result is the same.)



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