

COLUMNS

Finding unexpected value in unprecedented times

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There has always been an element of showmanship in marketing and selling. This proclivity needs to be transformed to become a meaningful exchange between you and your clients. Few of us enjoy being sold to, but most of us respect those who provide insight as it relates to us.

We are in a world where personalization and customization reign supreme.

Let me reference Daniel Day-Lewis, whom I consider to be a fine actor, to illustrate my point.

The dedication he brings to his craft is exceptional on many levels, within his roles and beyond. Learning lines, applying makeup and costumes would be superfluous without his level of commitment.

To fully access his character, to understand his psyche soul, heart and mind and that which drives them, informs Mr. Day-Lewis' ability to deliver his riveting performances. His discipline does not stop at a mere role, or character it extends and is authentically enriched by his personal interests and passions.

We may not always see or make a direct connection, but that is the substance we must provide to our clients to be of value. Everything basic they can find through research. They do not need help with this, but they will sit up and take note when a different and relevant way to see the world, their world, is presented.

As Viktor E. Frankel said, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."

Act 1: Exposition, survival

We have collectively entered an unprecedented time where we have no clear visibility to our future, personally, professionally and within the myriad of communities which we inhabit, ranging from family, work, community and global spheres.

Fear is serving as a crippling agent to some, while others choose to see possibilities. It is a choice to see decidedly different than before, but still they see the art of possibility, and the theatre of opportunity.

I trust we are all doing our part in this overwhelming COVID-19 play. If so, the final act need not be the curtain falling, but rather the curtain rising for accolades in honor of sacrifice and courage. This will end and the question we need to be asking ourselves now is this: what our contribution should and could be during this daunting period to help preserve morale, build hope and design or redesign our futures.

Institutions are using technology to bring data and information forward. These are wonderful and generous measures we all can enjoy. Businesses are retooling to support the dire needs of the medical community.

We are and need to continue to be involved in some manner of gifting. There are many nonprofits that struggle to stay whole in the best of times, pets that need a loving home, and cultural institutions that rely heavily on donors.

Let us not forget business. When we pull out of this dark script, and we will, we will be hungry to get back to work, settle into our new routines and be productive once again.

The pandemic is a game changer, indeed a game challenger. Are you properly prepared? Do you have the bandwidth, the right resources, an actionable plan A, B, C and D? We can never go back, only forward.

We need to think, act and show up differently.

Enter stage right: value. Authentic value, that which we find in ourselves and provide to our clients.

Act 2: Rising action, unsolicited value

So, how do we begin to organize these various plans? They must be approached mentally and contextually in the world in which we live.

We know communication is vital, always has been, always will be. The critical questions are: what are you communicating, how are you communicating, and is it truly relevant to each client individually.

I am not suggesting selling. Quite the opposite. Now is not the time to be concerned with new business development, but is it not the critical time to provide "value" to your client base?

What am I advocating, and how do we start?

Begin by making a conscious decision to honor and invest in the brand that clients have the greatest interest in: their own. Become a valuable resource to support them in this endeavor.

Your support must provide awareness, insight and access to a plethora of subjects customized to meet their interests and desires. There will be no singular solution or formula to meet each client's needs.

Most of us have seen our businesses fall off at record speed and at daunting volumes. What can you do to protect yourself and the future of your business? Add unsolicited value.

Select fiscally manageable and tightly focused communications that are unexpected, and that will be met with anticipation and have residual value.

Find a resource that will present you in a favorable light one that speaks to your appreciation of them not only as clients, but as individuals with diversified cultural lives.

Act 3: Denouement, resolution and purpose

Does this work? Yes, it does. I have practiced this my entire career and have built enduring relationships as a result.

My career trajectory has evolved from fine jewelry, to rewards and recognition, to HR, organizational design and development, Big Box, interior design, product development, leading a global heritage brand and several successful turnarounds.

As a result, in each phase of my career I have been able to bring my clients along to my next adventure through my personalized and unorthodox sales and marketing initiatives.

The win for me was not just financial. It also opened my eyes to numerous unique resources and experiences I might not otherwise have explored.

My clients fed my insatiable intellectual curiosity and we enjoyed the journey together.

Many have become dear friends and serve as my referral system. You cannot buy or market your way into this loyalty you must earn it.

WHY WAS this written as if it were the synopsis of a play?

To illustrate how to approach communicating through a different lens, weaving your message throughout unanticipated and interesting relationships.

THE END

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No, I am not Daniel Day-Lewis' wife. That is the other Rebecca Miller.

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