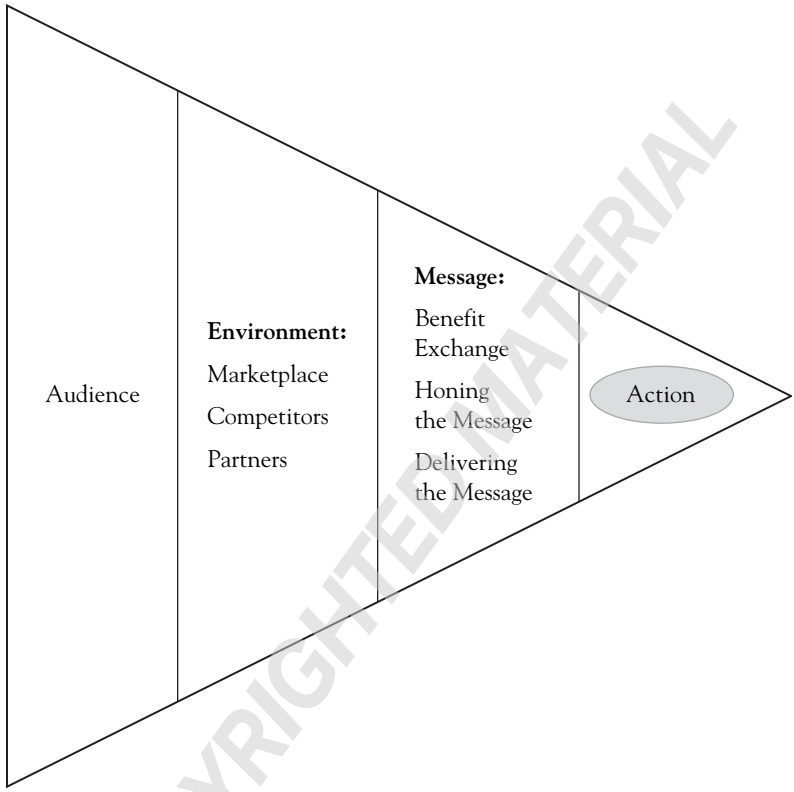

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The Heart of Robin Hood Marketing

Focus on Getting People to Do Something Specific

WHAT THIS CHAPTER SAYS

- The key to marketing is to focus on our audiences and not just on our mission and our organization.
- Marketers set goals according to what they want people to do and then work backward into how to make that action happen. They use a specific audience as their starting point.
- In reaching out to audiences, think of them as customers rather than potential converts. We don't need to strive for a shared worldview; we need to have people take a specific action that advances our mission. They don't have to know everything; they simply need the information that is immediately relevant to them.
- To apply the principles in this chapter: Determine what we are trying to accomplish, define an action for each audience that will help us meet our goals, and then test those actions to ensure they are sufficiently specific, feasible, and free of barriers.

JUST DO IT.

In three words, Nike marketed one of the best-known brands through one of the most oft-repeated slogans in marketing history. "Just do it" instantly fills our heads with images of the Nike swoosh, the grace of Michael Jordan, and the grit and glory of a can-do attitude to stretching our own limits. We feel inspired—perhaps not to go work up a serious sweat right this minute, but certainly to buy the shoes that imply we are the kind of person who could. The marketing campaign, launched in 1988, helped Nike sprint past competitor Reebok and establish itself as the market leader at a time when the jogging and fitness craze was taking off and athletic shoes were increasingly fashionable. The campaign has since earned a place in the Smithsonian Institution and is viewed as a gold standard of marketing.

So what makes those three words so powerful and the campaign so successful? "Just do it" focuses less on the product and more on us. Nike often quotes cofounder Bill Bowerman as saying, "If you have a body, you are an athlete."[1] And if you're an athlete, you are a potential Nike customer. The athlete-customer is the centerpiece of "just do it." Adman Dan Weiden, who created the campaign, explicitly and elegantly focused on us and what Nike wants us to do: to see ourselves as athletes, to desire a determined self-image, and to buy Nike shoes.[2]

The key to marketing is to focus on our audiences and not ourselves. Nike succeeds by focusing on the people who buy the shoes, not just the shoes. We must focus on the people we need to take action, not just our mission and organization.

I'm not saying we should put our audiences before our mission. Every organization, including Nike, has a mission. It explains why we exist and guides our work. But to achieve that mission we need marketing. And to do marketing, we need more than just a mission

statement; we need a clear idea of which people need to take which actions in order for us to achieve our mission.

Robin Hood Rule 1

Go beyond the big-picture mission and focus on getting people to take specific action.

For example, Nike's mission is to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world (which by Nike's definition is every person). The mission statement sounds nice, and it probably helps guide Nike's corporate sensibility, but it doesn't get to the marketing end point of selling Nike shoes. What action does Nike want people to take so they will feel inspired? Nike wants us to buy Nike shoes. We "just do it" because Nike's marketing strategy is to show us that buying its shoes makes us inspired, cool, athletic, and part of the world where Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods play. Nike is asking us to do something specific, and that specific thing is doable. Nike doesn't ask us to run ten miles. Nike tells us to buy the shoes that other people wear when they run ten miles, or to buy the shoes that may inspire us to run ten miles. Nike doesn't market with its mission. Its marketing is a means to get to its mission.

We need to make that same distinction by speaking in terms that resonate with our audience and asking for actions that are feasible. To apply the running metaphor to good causes, we should not assume everyone loves running (or our mission) as much as we do, and we should avoid asking people to go cover a quick ten miles right now because it's good for them. Although we need a mission, our audiences don't need to fully understand or embrace our mission in order for us to advance it. Rule 1 reminds us that we may get further by convincing people to take a walk around the block rather than to run ten miles.

GETTING STARTED BY GOING IN REVERSE

Marketers set goals according to the action they want people to take and then work backward to make that happen. This process reverses the way most of us work. Traditionally, good causes attack a social problem by starting with a mission and planning forward, putting the focus on the organization. Marketing planning, by contrast, uses a specific audience as its starting point.

In traditional planning, a nonprofit organization or volunteer committee goes on retreat, wrestles to get consensus on a mission statement, analyzes various options, and then devises a "strategic plan" or "strategic vision" based on a staff-driven understanding of the cause and its goals. Sound familiar? The exercise emphasizes collective reasoning, shared decision making, and group consensus. The group wants everyone to agree on a direction, and so the direction is determined by the perspective of the group. The marketing plan is then an outgrowth of that process.

This process is important to an organization, but it's ultimately an inwardly turned exercise. By contrast, marketing is outwardly turned. Because marketing starts with an end result for a specific audience, it challenges us to dwell in the world of our audiences and their marketplace. Audience actions, not our own ideas, are its focus. To do marketing planning, we have to get beyond our far-off mission (like helping people overcome poverty, increasing consumer access to affordable health care, or strengthening schools) and zero in on specific audience actions that are tangible, achievable, and measurable. Then we plan backward from there. We ask, what needs to happen so an audience will take an incremental step? How will we convince them to act? That is the work of marketing, and we'll tackle the answers in this book.

JUST DO WHAT?

In trying to convince our audience to act, we are typically tempted to do two things: convert people to our cause and impart vast amounts of information about it. By reversing our planning process, we begin to see these two approaches are unnecessary and, worse, are unlikely to work.

Think in terms of customers, not converts. For our customers, a shared worldview is not a prerequisite to action.

To get people to take action—which is the whole point of marketing—we don't need an army of "mini-me's" or true believers. Although we may want to create fundraiser clones or health nuts or environmental crusaders with a profound understanding of our cause, doing so is unnecessary, as well as nearly impossible, for accomplishing good. We simply want to get people to take a specific action: give $50 online, eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, or tell their town-council members to vote against an environmentally damaging development. These people may not be experts on our issue, and that's fine. The reasons people take these actions may be entirely different from our own, and that's OK too. It's important only that they take action. They need only jog around the block and thus take a small step toward advancing our mission, whether they are fully aware of our mission or not.

We don't need to impart massive amounts of information, tempting though that may be. For example, when I buy a computer, I ask whether it has Intel inside. I have no idea how a Pentium processor works, and I don't want to know. There is not that much time in the day. I "just do it"—buy the Pentium—without ever becoming a computer expert or knowing Intel's mission statement. Similarly, we should not saddle people with the burden of becoming an expert on our topic before asking them to do something about it.

A little information goes a long way, and too much can be counterproductive and unconvincing. The brilliant social psychologist Elliot Aronson has written about the dilution effect, which describes how neutral or irrelevant information can weaken people's opinions or impressions. He cites an experiment by Henry Zukier in which two students were described to the research subjects as studying thirty-one hours per week outside of class. For the first student, that was the only information provided. For the second, additional, irrelevant information was added about the number of siblings the student had, how often the student visited his grandparents, and other facts. The study found that people believed the first student was smarter.[3] The additional information seemed to dilute the main point, which was the number of hours the student studied. If we have a good point to make, it can get lost if we provide too much information around it.

People don't need to know everything; they simply want to know what is immediately relevant to them.

Here is a story from a good cause that vividly illustrates these concepts. Just a few weeks after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and the anthrax attacks that followed, a group of public health professionals gathered to talk about their efforts to restore the crumbling U.S. public health system. The field had been trying to modernize its facilities and operations for many years, but it had struggled to get attention and investment. Before September 2001, no one had much cared. But now an unfathomable terror attack and anthrax-laced mail had changed everything. Suddenly, the ability of the United States to protect the health of its people was of paramount importance. You could not turn on the television or pick up a newspaper without learning terrifying facts about bioterrorism—or about the long-neglected and woefully weak line of defense available from the underfunded public health system. The country had

started caring about public health. People were listening. They wanted to be safe, and they wanted to know what had to be done to restore the protective system that public health provides.

Despite my severe post-9/11 trepidation about flying, I boarded my flight out West for the public health conference with a sense of optimism. Like many Americans, I wanted to do something to help our country, and I was eager to spend time with the vitally important, committed people who worked day in and day out to protect my health. For too long, they'd been ignored, taken for granted, and targeted for budget cuts. But now was a chance to change that perception, and, as a consultant, I was there to help them do it.

At the opening night of the conference, a funder interested in helping the cause of public health gave a speech, then asked the attendees to reflect on how September 11 and the anthrax attacks had changed life for them as professionals. I pulled out pencil and paper in anticipation of the front-line information that could be taken back to spur action among other funders, policymakers, and the public. I'd heard stories of public health officials having to go home at night to send their work e-mails because they had no Internet access at the office. I knew the public health system lacked the equipment and staff necessary to quickly identify and report an outbreak of a dangerous disease.

A microphone was passed. The first person spoke. "This anthrax situation—it's terrible but it's such a distraction," she said. "Smoking is a far greater threat to public health than this, and yet all anyone wants to talk about is anthrax." Another person spoke up. "We have to get people focused on the broader work of public health. This isn't just about terrorism; it's about so much more." Vigorous applause followed. And so it went. One by one, these caring, devoted people talked about how the public's attention was misdirected. They asked, why couldn't the public understand public health in all its dimensions? Why weren't they paying attention to the many other aspects of the field? Why wasn't anyone talking about obesity or smoking?

The session ended on that note, and I grumpily returned to my hotel room. I opened the minibar and turned on the television—like everyone, I spent a great deal of time watching the news then. The first image on the screen was an advertisement. General Motors was telling viewers to buy a vehicle (at zero percent financing) to "keep America rolling." I stared at the television and its fitting commentary on the evening. Someone was seizing this moment of collective concern over the future of our country to urge action, but it was carmakers, not the public health professionals in the ballroom downstairs. Public concern was being harnessed to sell cars, not protect people's health. My goal was getting people to rally around the public health cause, but instead four-wheel-drive vehicles were speeding into the sunset in the name of patriotism.

If funders, policymakers, and the U.S. public finally wanted to invest in public health because terrorism had gotten their attention, why didn't the vital protectors in the ballroom downstairs see that as an opportunity? The answer was that they were focused more on what people thought of their field than on the actions people needed to take to strengthen the field's infrastructure. They didn't have an immediate, concrete "just do it" idea, such as having people demand additional government funding. They wanted people to see public health the way the profession saw it, to embrace a healthier lifestyle, and then, and only then, advocate for adequate funding for the field based on a full appreciation of the spectrum of services it provides. In essence, they wanted their audiences to become experts and change their worldview before taking action. Unfortunately, that is the equivalent of demanding of the U.S. public an instantaneous love of running and sending everyone out for a ten-mile sprint.

People are never going to see our cause exactly as we see it because they have their own view of the world. That leaves us two choices: either we can try in vain to get them to see the world the same way we do, or we can work from their perspective. Working from their perspective means asking them to do something realis-

tic. I am not saying that "keep America rolling" is the right approach or that every good cause should wrap itself in the flag and capitalize on tragedy in the name of crass self-interest. Rather, instead of pleading with people to think like us, we should ask them to take concrete action based on the values that already matter to them. We don't ignore our mission, but we choose the most expeditious route to accomplishing that mission by appealing to our audience's perspective.

Let's step back into the hotel ballroom in the wake of 9/11. Public attention is focused like a laser beam on bioterrorism. Our cause (public health, in this case) addresses that concern. This is an opportunity to link our cause to our audiences' priorities, to win their support, and to ask them to take specific action. What do we want those people to do? If I'm a public health advocate in 2001, my immediate concern is my field's crumbling infrastructure. I need money to fix it. I want donors to give money for computers, communication systems, and training. I want my political representatives to earmark government funding for my cause. And I want the public to pressure lawmakers to do so. To get all that to happen, I don't need people to love the public health field or to understand its nuances. I don't need them to turn over a new leaf and quit smoking, eat better, and exercise more. Right now, I just need them to fund my project, pass my bill, or call a member of Congress and ask for money to protect the health of the country. If people give money, pass a bill, or make that call because they get a sense of safety from improved infrastructure, then that is success by my estimation. I get the investment that will help me to address their concerns as well as to fulfill the whole gamut of the public health system's responsibilities. People may not care about that larger good, and they don't need to. But they will get the benefit of it.

Fortunately, this story has a happy ending—or at least as happy as it gets in this day and age. Leaders in the public health field, including a few people in that ballroom, successfully showed their work's relevance to Americans in the post-9/11 world. They made

these links. A survey at the time showed the result: a whopping 80 percent of Americans supported public health infrastructure investment—defined as funding for local and state health departments. The message got through. We may question whether the funding was sufficient or properly allocated in the end, but Americans and their political representatives "just did it" for public health.

We must make complex issues understandable, or we can't market them.

Some people would say this is oversimplification. I would call it effective communication. People are bombarded with thousands of messages a day. They don't have time to become specialists in our cause, whether it is Social Security, public health infrastructure, stem-cell research, or local greenways. Social psychologists like Elliot Aronson and Robert Cialdini have documented this phenomenon of information overload extensively and describe how people seek to conserve their mental energy, screen out data, and rely on cognitive shortcuts.[4] For good causes, if we don't make an issue as clear as possible and the call to action as simple as we can, we will lose our audience.

Once people get one clear idea and take one small action, we can ask them to take another. It's a process. Momentum starts with one action and then takes time to build. Over time, some members of our audience may develop a greater understanding of our cause or a larger commitment to its aims. They may even want additional information or become converts. But we can't assume they will, and we can't start with that goal as a first step. That's the ten-mile run, and that's too far, even if we're wearing Nikes.

EXAMPLES OF CLEAR ACTIONS

Let's look at a couple of hypothetical examples of good causes and the specific actions they might seek. Suppose we're an antismoking group that wants to increase consumer access to and use of low-cost

programs that help smokers quit. Who are our audiences? Obviously, smokers would be one. What are we asking them to do? We aren't asking them to quit smoking. That's not specific or feasible enough. What if we asked them to call a toll-free number to sign up for a program providing nicotine-replacement therapy and phone counseling to help them quit smoking? That's better. What might our action for our audience of donors be? We would want them to provide funds to run our campaign to enroll people in the program. How about other financial players, like insurers? We could ask them to pay for antismoking programs. Or we could be specific and ask them to provide a health benefit to all members that includes nicotine-replacement therapy and phone counseling.

We might want still more audiences to act. We might ask businesses to ask for quit-smoking benefits for their employees in their health-insurance package. We might ask policymakers to pass a law restricting smoking in public places, including offices. We might ask researchers to let us publicize evidence that nicotine-replacement therapy combined with phone counseling significantly increases success in quitting smoking and ask them agree to media interviews arranged by our cause. We might also have a specific action for sympathetic causes, such as including information on the program in their newsletters and other outreach vehicles. In all cases, the actions are tailored to the audience, specific, and feasible.

Now let's try another example. Suppose we organize a small neighborhood association to improve the quality of life and safety in the neighborhood. We want both to increase communication and cooperation between neighbors through meetings and a neighborhood-watch program and to lobby the town council on issues of importance to the neighborhood. If we are action-oriented, how do we communicate with our neighbors? Instead of simply telling them about the association, we might specifically ask them to join it, to come to neighborhood meetings, to speak in support of neighborhood initiatives at town-council meetings, and to participate in the neighborhood-watch program. The town council might be another audience. We might want its members to recognize the top problems of the neighborhood,

approve speed bumps, and vote against a proposed zoning change that would allow higher density and commercial development. The police might be another audience; we might, for example, want them to respond to neighborhood-watch reports.

As these examples show, the actions chosen should reflect the many forces and players that contribute to a problem and solutions to that problem. My favorite example of this kind of thinking was a program to reduce the number of orphans in Crimea. Many newborn infants were being abandoned there, and, when placed in orphanages, they had little chance of being adopted. It was a tragic problem. The Crimean Charity Fund, a grantee of the Vermont-based Institute for Sustainable Communities, identified a web of problems contributing to the situation: village teenage girls were becoming pregnant at high rates, and many abandoned their children; some disadvantaged mothers were forced to leave their children at maternity wards if they could not pay hospital charges levied by corrupt administrators; and many families who wanted to adopt children did not try because the adoption process was perceived as complicated and expensive.

The organization decided it needed a range of audiences to take action in order to improve this situation. To tackle the problem of teen pregnancy, which had increased in many villages more than tenfold in the previous decade, the Fund targeted the most influential group for teen girls: boys. They were asked to attend a Fatherhood School, which prepared more than a thousand teenagers in several villages for the realities of family life and acted as a deterrent to risky sex. The result: in the project villages the following year, there were no new instances of HIV among teenagers and no unwanted pregnancies. When it discovered 15 percent of new mothers were forced to abandon their newborn babies until they could pay extortionate rates for hospital linens under a scheme devised by unscrupulous folk preying on the poor, the Fund successfully lobbied the mayor's office to stop the practice and provide public money to fund the service for low-income women. They got previous charges refunded to other disadvantaged women.

The Fund also launched a large-scale public-information campaign that successfully addressed the major barriers to adoption: it communicated to parents that adoption was not as legally difficult as they perceived and that the Fund could provide free legal counsel. The campaign was covered in more than one hundred local media, and local newspapers further supported the effort by publishing photos of orphans with disabilities. Posters in infertility clinics also generated interest. Thanks to these efforts, adoption rates increased sevenfold overall in Crimea and fourfold for disabled children. Calls to the adoption-consultation center increased tenfold. The Fund even got the regional administration to create a program promoting adoption, and that project works with a diverse group of lawyers, doctors, like-minded organizations, and local government officials to build on all the campaigns' successes by seeking to address adoption delays caused by problematic waiting-period legislation.

HOW TO USE ROBIN HOOD RULE 1

Here are six steps we can take to apply "just do it" thinking in our organizations.

1. Determine Marketing Goals

Here's a test I often use: I state what I think I want to accomplish with marketing, then repeatedly pose the follow-up question "To what end?" This exercise helps me hone in on the audiences and actions that are most important. For example, I once conducted training for a group of advocates for Social Security reform. They told me their marketing goal was to increase people's understanding of the Social Security program, its solvency, and its challenges. To me, that sounded more like a mission statement than a marketing goal or a rallying cry. I asked them, "To what end?" They said they wanted people to be fully informed so they would "make sound decisions" about their position on the issues. But the question remained: "To

what end?" Why did people need to be experts on actuarial approaches to projecting surplus levels or progressive price indexing? What specifically did they want people to do? What kind of "sound decision" did people need to make? What policy did they want people to support, and how should people express that support?

A few people ultimately decided they wanted their audience to be against privatization and personal accounts and to express that opposition by actions such as e-mailing their congressional representatives. Others decided they wanted people to express support for other policy changes. But all pinpointed a specific idea and action. Those decisions changed their audience focus, the actions they were asking their audiences to take, and the amount and type of information they needed to impart. By the end of the training, the action was no longer "understand these complicated issues," but rather "protect Social Security by calling this number."

Many of us will find ourselves answering the "to what end" question with a statement such as "I want people to be more aware of my issue" or "I want people to understand what's good for them." If that's the case, go a step further. Why do our audiences need awareness or understanding? To what end? What action are we really after?

2. Identify All the Audiences That Need to Take Action

To achieve a mission, most good causes need numerous audiences to take action. As our earlier examples showed, social change requires action by people on many levels, from those directly affected by the problem to those in a position to address its root causes. Our audiences may include the people we are trying to help, as well as the people who influence or control access to them, like opinion leaders or gatekeepers. For many causes, donors and potential donors are important audiences, as are competitors and partners. We also may need certain actions from board members, media, businesses, policymakers, regulators, and the research or scientific com-

munities to achieve our goals. Make an inclusive list of all types of audiences.

Each audience should be reasonably specific. "Everyone" or the "general public" are not audiences. Examples of clear audiences are eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old males, members of a neighborhood association, health reporters at large newspapers, or wives of men who need to get screened for prostate cancer. We want well-defined groups that likely share some characteristics and need to take similar actions. Each will require a different marketing approach. We'll be examining those audiences closely, refining them and grouping them—as well as defining the marketing approach for each—in the following chapters.

3. Define a Specific Action for Each Audience

Make the action as active as possible. Asking for concrete action is always better than telling people to think a certain way. For example, asking parents to read to their children for fifteen minutes every night is a better action than asking them to be supportive of reading readiness. Make sure the action stipulates who should do what, when, how much, and how often. Once we know our audience better, we may end up modifying the action, but we need a starting point.

The more specific the action the better for two reasons. First, in defining specific actions, we are forced to focus on the realistic and the explicit. Everyone working for our good cause will understand what marketing aims to do, and we will uncover any differences of opinion among our colleagues at the start of our efforts. We thus avoid misunderstanding, confusion, or stagnation down the road. The second reason concerns our audience: specific actions are easier to do and harder to decline than nonspecific requests. If I asked you to join the fight against cancer, how would you react? You'd probably say yes. But what would you do? Probably nothing. It's hard to know how you're supposed to "join the fight." You'd

probably simply think, "Yes, cancer is terrible and I'm against it," and then go on with your day. Now imagine I asked you to go online and buy a Lance Armstrong Foundation Live Strong wristband to raise awareness of cancer and generate funds for the Foundation's work of providing cancer patients with information and tools. How would you react? You might buy the wristband because doing so is easy and hard to decline. It also gives you a nice benefit of taking action (that popular yellow wristband), a concept we explore further in later chapters.

A good test of whether our action is simple and specific enough is to ask if it would be possible to film the audience taking the action we desire. If we don't have a simple visual, our audience certainly won't. Even if they want to do what we request or buy what we are selling, they won't know how. Make it easy for them by being clear. If we are asking people to donate money, how will they do it? By calling a phone number? Going to a Web site? Writing a check? All of the above? If we are asking people to practice good hygiene, what are we really saying? Wash their hands? When, how often, and how long?

4. Test the Actions for Feasibility

Next, consider how easy the action we're asking of our audiences is. We may need to focus on a few simple steps an audience can take toward making a difference, rather than a grand goal. I feel overwhelmed by being asked to "reduce-reuse-recycle" or to "save the earth," but when my city gave me a new recycling bin with wheels and told me to throw in paper and boxes and newspapers and push it to the curb on Tuesdays, I did it. Tackling unemployment is not feasible for me; donating my business clothes to former welfare recipients looking for jobs is something I can do.

For most people, if the action doesn't seem doable, they won't do it. People want to do easy things, and they want to be able to

test whether they like an action by taking small, reversible steps. They want to get out of a commitment if they don't like it, so a modest commitment is better than a large one. Most people like saving the earth and solving unemployment in theory, but those issues aren't going anywhere. Meanwhile, daily life calls. Our audience may need to drop their children at day care, walk to the bus stop, and get to work by 9:00 A.M., and they won't see how it's possible to fit enormous undertakings into their lives.

Asking for only small acts may seem like a cop-out, but in fact, small steps are more likely to add up to a big change than are ambitious calls to action. Cialdini cites ample research showing that if a person makes a trivial initial commitment, like signing a petition, that person is far more likely than those who didn't sign to make larger commitments later.[5] This is even more the case if the commitment was public in some way, like signing a petition or making a pledge. This "momentum of compliance" or "foot-in-the-door technique" works in part because people begin to change their self-image. Even a small act can start to convince them they are health-conscious people or active citizens. People seek to rationalize their actions and effort (especially if they perceive the effort as significant) and reassure themselves they made a wise decision. Once they perceive they were right to take action and experience some of the rewards associated with the action, they are more likely than those who don't act to take further actions reinforcing their initial commitment and self-image.

5. Identify and Remove Barriers to Taking Action

If someone has to travel, invest time, or search for services in order to take our action, then we need to remove those barriers. Line up transportation, reduce the amount of time required to take the action, or provide a list of places to get service to increase the chances the action will be taken. If we discover we have significant obstacles

we cannot overcome, we need to change the call to action. It's worse for someone to try to take action and have a negative experience than for that person to have not taken action at all.

Think through each step from our audience's perspective. Say we ask our audiences to get their children vaccinated. Will they know where to go to do that? And when they try to get shots for the baby, will they get prompt attention? Are there enough places they can do it, sufficient supplies, and enough staff to administer the shots? Ask what will happen if we generate interest and demand for a service and then are unable to meet that need. For example, we might tell women to get mammograms. Yet waiting times for appointments have gotten long because demand exceeds capacity; it can take months to get an appointment in some areas. The government and several foundations and good causes are trying to address the problem, but meanwhile we may have worried women who have been directed to get a test that is hard to schedule. Maybe those bottlenecks are OK if our strategy is to create unmet public demand that creates pressure for change. In the case of mammograms, this problem has prompted the government and several foundations and good causes to devote funds and effort to increasing women's access to mammograms through initiatives such as mobile mammography vans.

6. Be Flexible and Willing to Change the Action over Time

In the coming chapters, we will learn how to gain insight into our audiences and marketplaces, and this information may change our thinking about the actions we seek and our marketing goals. We need to retain some flexibility so we can adjust our calls to action based on the valuable intelligence we gather. We also should be willing to set new goals when many people take action. Recognize when a goal has been met, declare success, and move on to the next step.

CONCLUSION

Marketing guru Philip Kotler summed up the essence of marketing well when he said it is less about pursuing a sale than about creating a customer.[6] Nike created customers by focusing on the people who buy the shoes, not on the shoes. When we have a clear call to action for each of our audiences, we have established a customer focus.

We will succeed if we can transform ourselves from missionaries into marketers with a mission.

What do I mean by that statement? People with a cause are passionate, committed, and driven to make a difference. (We may even feel compelled to write an entire book to express our views.) As a result, we can be insufferably focused on our cause, despite the fact that most of the world does not care about the issue that burns in our hearts. Whether we are part of an organization or a single volunteer, we have much to gain by breaking free of this nonprofit narcissism and reaching out to our audiences from their perspective. Our customer focus will save money, time, and effort, and our audiences will be more inclined than before to pay attention, listen, and act. This result is important because most of us face great public scrutiny and pressure to spend our limited resources wisely.

We're going to retain our audience focus for the next nine chapters until we've reached the point of our arrow and our audiences are taking the desired actions. We'll reach that goal by getting to know our audiences, tapping into their values, cutting through the clutter of the marketplace, identifying competitors and collaborators, and creating and delivering a winning message. Each of these elements is a part of the arrowhead we must fashion for each audience, and together they create a marketing strategy that will motivate people to take the actions we want. The goal is to build a relationship with those audiences, so they will take additional actions over time.

Let's turn now to getting those audiences to "just do it."

Interview 1
Selling Soap and Good Causes

William Novelli's career has been the living, breathing answer to Gerhart Wiebe's question "Can brotherhood be sold like soap?" Novelli started his career at Unilever, where he marketed laundry-detergent products. After several years of selling soap, he went to work for the ad agency Wells, Rich, Green. There, he first was confronted with the question of how soap related to good causes. "I had come from Unilever and was working on the same kind of product—packaged goods. I was marketing laundry detergent, cat food, dog food, kids' cereals, whatever," he recalls. "Then they gave me another account, which was public broadcasting. This was the first time public broadcasting had hired an advertising agency to build its audience. The first thing I did was to go to a press conference run by the woman who had created Sesame Street, Joan Ganz Cooney. And she was applying what I thought of as marketing to Sesame Street, which is education. So I thought to myself, you can do more with this thing. You can apply it to education or perhaps other issues, other ideas, other sectors. And that got me going."

Novelli, an engaging, quietly intense man with a good sense of humor, had found his calling. He went on to direct marketing efforts for another good cause: the Peace Corps. He then founded his own public-relations firm with Jack Porter in Washington, D.C. He built Porter Novelli into one of the largest public-relations firms in the world, and in the process pioneered the application of private sector savvy to social causes. "In the early days, I liked to call us a bunch of soap salesmen who were trying to work on high blood pressure and cancer. Then I discovered the academic literature. I read the seminal paper on social marketing by Phil Kotler and Gerald Zaltman. I thought to myself, these guys are framing this very nicely. I'm using my lessons

from laundry detergent, and they're framing it better. I need to marry the academic and the practical. That's how I started, bringing in theory, bringing in the academic perspective, and saying, boy this helps me to do my thing."

Novelli went on to apply that thinking as executive vice president of the international relief and development agency CARE, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and in his current position as chief executive officer for the AARP (formerly known as the American Association for Retired People). In each role, he has paired his dedication to good causes with business sensibility and convinced the rest of us that yes, we can indeed sell brotherhood like soap.

Q: What is the goal in marketing good causes?

A: I think a lot of programs make the mistake of stopping at attitude change—in other words, getting people to believe as you believe. They think, well, what can I do about teen pregnancy? Well, I'll get these kids to understand X. There's a difference between understanding and doing. We need to understand we are in the persuasion business, not the information-dissemination business. When people tell me "It's not our job or our place to tell people what to think or do," I think we might as well be shoveling pamphlets out of airplanes. If you really want to get someone to do something, close the sale. If we want to communicate to people that the world's oceans are in trouble, ask what you want the consumer and the audience to do. Do you want them to drown themselves or write a letter to a congressional representative?

Q: Is brotherhood just like soap?

A: A company looks to potential market demand when developing a product. People say, "If you build a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to your door," but that is not marketing. Marketers start with the consumer, not the mousetrap. Do the people with the mice in their homes want to get rid of the mice? How satisfied or dissatisfied are they with current mouse-removal

systems? How much would they pay to remove mice? Nonprofits are by contrast product-driven, not market-driven. That makes it more challenging.

Q: So how do we know what will close the sale?

A: I really like the idea of positive deviance. Don't study the people who aren't doing it, study the people who are and see what motivated them. One of the tenets of marketing is that your best prospects are people like your customers. You want to sell laundry detergent, see who's buying it now. These people are predisposed. If we're thinking about smoking cessation, people who have tried to quit smoking twice are more likely to try a third time than people who've never tried at all. If we're thinking about physical activity, people who already own a pair of walking shoes are more disposed to get back into it than those who have never gotten off the couch. If we're thinking about social change, I think it's a mistake to focus only on individuals. People are swimming in a larger sea. They're influenced by the media, by normative behaviors. If you look at a neighborhood where all the kids smoke, that's what you see. It doesn't matter if your parents are telling you to quit. If we could make physical activity normative behavior, if everybody was doing it—movie stars, your neighbor, Oprah—it would help. If the media and policymakers are behind it, that is part of it too. Then there is private policy change, through corporations and organizations.

Q: How can good causes manage all these audiences?

A: Nonprofits have so many more stakeholders than a corporation has. We've got this many-layered onion. Maybe at the core is the board of directors, and we have to inform, educate, and persuade our board. The next layer is staff. They tend to be socially oriented, mission-driven. They need to be involved. Beyond that, you might have volunteers, members, and the general public. You have to work with all of them in sequence. If you have the board, you have a better chance of getting the outer layers.

Interview 2
Spurring Citizen Action

Leslie McCuaig is a businesswoman in foreign-assistance clothes. Those who know her say she uses the combination to great effect. She holds within her a highly productive creative tension that she has used to bring innovation and effectiveness to a variety of good causes. A hard worker who is both lively and composed, McCuaig got her start in international aid and development in Russia. There she applied both her background in Russian studies and her M.B.A. training to the design and funding of groundbreaking programs that fostered small and micro enterprises. She then tackled rule-of-law issues for a U.S. consortium working in the former Soviet Union before joining the Institute for Sustainable Communities to head the U.S. Agency for International Development's flagship civil-society project in Ukraine. That project, the Ukraine Citizen Action Network (UCAN), helps Ukrainian organizations and citizens become actively engaged in setting the country's economic, political, and social agenda. I worked with McCuaig to apply marketing to those efforts, and all the Ukrainian examples in this book come from grantees of the UCAN project.

McCuaig is now vice president of program development for the Institute for Sustainable Communities in Vermont. Here she talks about how she conceived the UCAN project by focusing on specific actions that would advance Ukraine's small but growing civil society.

Q: How do you tackle huge, amorphous issues like civil society?

A: I think you have to break it down. As mission-driven organizations, we tend to have global, idealistic notions. It's great if we want to stop hunger in the world, but you can't easily design an intervention to reach that goal, much less market to it. We need to get to a realistic level where we define what we can actually influence and what we can accomplish and then design an intervention according to that concrete perspective.

Q: How did you focus your approach in Ukraine?

A: With UCAN, we tried to avoid the more political definitions of civil society—which are those that stress democracy and human rights. Because building democracy is fairly abstract, people tend to fall back on tangible things like elections and building representative institutions, which assumes that these in and of themselves constitute democracy. Instead, we asked the question What does civil society mean to the average citizen? And the answer was that democracy is not just about voting once in four years, it is about playing an active role every day. It's not just about citizen participation in the political process but about people interacting with each other on a regular basis to address problems in their society. When we looked at civil society at that level, we realized that we needed to design interventions to remove the barriers to having people participate in that process. One of those barriers was that people didn't believe they were allowed to participate. They didn't realize how much laws had changed since Soviet times. They also thought their participation would not make a difference. Many people lacked the confidence to take action because they simply had never been involved before.

So the project introduced a focus on changing those mentalities. We wanted to overcome passivity, make people feel empowered, and help them see what could happen if they began organizing to address community problems. We worked to strengthen Ukrainian advocacy groups that already existed, especially to encourage them to reach out and involve more people. The project was designed to include as many people as possible in experiencing the rewards of civic participation firsthand. That influenced the way the people understood their role in society. And that, in my view, is the essence of democracy.

Q: What's an example of someone heeding that call to action?

A: In Ukraine, I was lucky to witness firsthand an incredible example. In 2004, presidential elections were held, and they were

extremely corrupt. Right down the street from my office in Kiev, citizens from every walk of life took to the streets and stood in the snow and freezing temperature for days on end to protest the false vote count. They were participating in democracy very directly, and they were doing so because they felt their dignity as citizens had been disregarded—a sign of just how much mentalities had changed in Ukraine since the passive days of the Soviet Union. The "orange revolution" showed how change happens because of the acts of individuals. It's people, not institutions, that make a civil society.