

# Silicon Strategies Marketing

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## Got Message?

by Guy Smith

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## The message is the medium

“My customers just don’t get it,” bemoaned a prospective client of mine. “We list our features, describe the technology, work with their engineers. Everything. But they just don’t understand what we offer.”

I wasn’t sure if this gent needed the professional services of a marketing consultant or psychotherapist. His demented condition was all too common with entrepreneurs in technology markets. He did not suffer from any psychosis, but he did have an incredible inability to communicate that showed him to be a few bits short of a byte.

When customers don’t “get it” it is because the entrepreneurs are not telling the customers anything. And most often it is because the entrepreneur does not understand:

- Who their real customers are
- What their real customers pay attention to
- Why their real customers should care

In other words, you can lead an entrepreneur to a market, but you can’t make him think.

## Drilling your customers

The first and most fatal issue is that technology entrepreneurs don’t understand who their customers really are. Most technology entrepreneurs are technologists, and thus tend to think like technologists. They perceive their product to be a collection of features and specifications that together perform a *function*.

It is at this very starting point that the communication process from vendor to buyer breaks down. Technology entrepreneurs often do not understand who their buyers are, how many buyers they actually sell to, how these buyers think differently from one another, or what motivates them. Nor do they understand that sales can be blocked by failing to address each buying decision maker (at Silicon Strategies, we refer to different buyers within an organization, with different motivations, as buyer *genotypes*). And none of the genotypes I have encountered are interested in buying a set of functions or features – not even the techies.

However, all of them are interested in buying outcomes.

## How come an outcome?

An *outcome* is the expected results of some sort of action. For example, when a fat and balding middle-aged man buys a bright, new, shiny red Ferrari, he is not buying 0-60 MPH in nanoseconds. Nor is he buying a specific number of pounds of metal, glass, leather and rubber. He is buying a final dying grasp on his youth, the wild freedom it represents, and the chance of landing a trophy wife (there may be other motivations, but this is a PG-13 whitepaper).

Likewise, when a CIO invests in a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software package, he is not buying workflow management, web assistance, or customer database functions. He is buying happier customers. He is buying greater customer intimacy. He is buying a barrier to his competitors who won't go that extra mile in knowing and nurturing their customers.

## The touchy-feely side of logic

So, we have different genotypes (buyers within an organization), and each had different expected outcomes for a product. Pretty complicated, eh? Well Bucky, it gets worse.

Each genotype has a brain composed of two halves. The left half of their brain looks at your products and services in a linear fashion – what does it do, how does it do it, what is the cost? The right half of their brain deals with abstract and emotional issues – who am I, why am I important, is red the best color for my new Ferrari?

Left Brain	Right Brain
Linear	Creative
Yin	Yang
Dark	Light
Tangible	Abstract
Logical	Intuitive
Incremental	Transformational
Rigid	Random
Process Theory	Chaos Theory
Mathematics	Art
Function	Form
Control	Influence
Vanilla	Chunky Monkey
Microsoft	Apple

The problem herein is that you must appeal to both halves of the brain inside of each customer skull. If you fail to do so, so cannot inspire a customer to action. It is like dating a beautiful woman or hansom man who cannot keep up their end of the conversation – you may like them, but mentally you have already crossed them off your list of marriage candidates.

## Guy, this is getting complicated!

Confused? Good. If this seems complicated and unwieldy then I have painted an accurate picture of the problems of market message development. For clarity sake, let's recap these issues.

- Within any customer organization, you have more than one genotype of buyer – many people determine if your technology gets purchased

- Each has a different set of expected outcomes from acquiring your technology
- Each genotype has a different set of motivators and demotivators, both personal and professional
- Each genotype has both logical and emotive thought processes
- If you are selling a product into different market segments, then the messages may be different for each segment as well

The bad news is that you have to work in order to classify and create messages for each genotype. The process can be challenging and requires the participation of a good team to distill everything you know or can learn about your market and the genotypes therein.

The good news is that through this process you will also discover similar threads. Some of the motivators will be the same across market segments and genotypes. These common threads become the core of your primary market message, elevator pitch and tag line.

## **There is madness to my messaging**

Some of you are likely shaking your heads, groaning with dismay about how complicated message development can be (and having conducted numerous group processes to facilitate core market message creation, I can attest that it is like leading a herd of cats through a maze of mice). But keep the benefits in mind because they are significant. When you sculpt your core market messages and educate your entire company on these messages, you achieve many wonderful things including:

- Faster acquisition of qualified leads
- Shorter sales cycles
- Higher sales within individual accounts
- A consistent message to the market echoed throughout your organization
- A consistent message to the market echoed by press and analysts
- Fast market traction and market dominance
- Some really dismayed competitors left chocking on your dust
- Oh, and a big bonus check – one big enough to buy that new Ferrari

*Guy Smith heads Silicon Strategies Marketing, a marketing consultancy devoted to helping high-technology vendors dominate their markets. He has consulted with technology firms in such diverse fields as high-availability software, interactive television, wireless messaging middleware, pure e-commerce plays, and Collaborative Software Development suites. Smith focuses on guiding his clients through the rigors of developing precise market strategies and educating his clients on both the theory and tactical necessities of their strategic implementations. His marketing expertise is matched by more than 20 years as a technologist specializing in high-availability IT processing.*