



Don't You Want to Do
Real Marketing?

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This is For You

This is written for all the people I've met who would like to do real marketing, but have been constrained by "accepted guidelines" or "this is the only way to do it" mythology.

This is a new era. The world has changed.

The consumer is now firmly in control of the marketing agenda.

You need to change how you think and help others around you change.

I want to share five proven steps to help you re-think how you and your company market your products and services. The five steps are based on my recently published book, *Voice of the Customer Marketing: A Revolutionary Five-Step Process to Create Customers Who Care, Spend and Stay*. If you want to check out the detailed case studies and "how-to" tips, please go to erdm.com. This manifesto does not replicate the book. The passion driving what I am asking you to consider is based on knowing the quality of marketing that is possible and that *has* been achieved. What follows is based on 37 years in the marketing trenches, guiding clients such as Microsoft, IBM, NBC Universal and many growth and start-up companies.

What is *Real* Marketing?

I define *real* marketing as follows: treating customers and prospects the way we want to be treated, and earning the sale and the long term relationship through the value we provide.

Traditional marketing based on “Spray and Pray” blasts of mail, email, phone calls, and so on, not only doesn’t work, but is also *obscenely wasteful*.

Traditional measures of “success”, (i.e. a 1% or 2% response rate) are simply not sustainable. In what other parts of your company is a 99% waste rate tolerated, let alone considered “success”?

Real marketing is based on a vision and set of practices that are intuitive. These practices show how the art and science of marketing should be pursued in the 21st century to meet or exceed our financial objectives as marketers by *doing right by our customers and prospects*.

The vision is that in doing right by the customer, in using socially responsible marketing, marketers pay no price, but instead achieve what Microsoft described as “unprecedented response rates.” More specifically, instead of paltry single-digit response rates, we achieve consistent double-digit increases in response and revenue.

The vision is called Voice of Customer-driven marketing, or VOC.

The results: *double-digit* increases in revenue and response for clients such as NBC Universal, Microsoft, IBM and growth companies including HMS National, Life Line Screening, MSC Industrial Direct, and Palms Trading. The case studies, details, and response rates are in our book.

The 5-Step VOC-Driven Process

STEP 1 > How to Use Voice of Customer Research (VOC) to Drive Your Relationship Strategies

Voice of the Customer research is specialized in-depth research designed to help marketers understand, in today's unique economic and social media environment:

- Needs/expectations of customers and prospects.
- Their decision making process.
- Willingness to Opt-In and provide detailed information that will drive more targeted and relevant communications.
- Expectations of the optimal experience the company should provide via web, social media/community, email, offline media and customer service call centers.

In other words, the VOC research provides the objective, in-depth “wisdom of the customer” information marketers must have in order to understand your customer’s preferences and expectations.

Marketing in today’s new world without Voice of the Customer guidance is like flying blind without navigational instruments.

The VOC research insights and guidance are used to drive development of Relationship Strategies and Action Plans. These will benefit every aspect of your organization.

By the way, we obtain these in-depth insights through hour-long telephone interviews which are conducted one-on-one.



*5-Step VOC-Driven
Marketing Process*

We stopped using focus groups years ago because we found that it was too easy for a dominant research participant to influence others in the room. This generated distorted data.

Remember that the goal of the Voice of Customer Relationship Research (VOC) is to enable development of customer-driven Relationship Marketing Strategies and Action Plans.

Key tips:

As you consider the potential of the VOC research to increase sales and repeat purchases, think about using the VOC to accomplish the following:

- Generate an in-depth understanding of the value customers expect from your company, throughout the major points in their life cycle of experience with you.
- Identify gaps between the customer's brand expectations and their actual experience with your organization.
- Understand how to establish and maintain relevance across your multiple channels and points of contact.
- Determine the effectiveness of your media mix. Are customers getting too many communications, and with not enough relevance?
- Identify how you can better personalize the customer experience, whether online, in person, or over the phone.

Life Line Screening Case Study Results:

- 40% increase in returning customers, based on implementing VOC-driven Relationship and Retention strategies.

STEP 2 > Create VOC-Driven Opt-In Relationship Strategies

Opt-In Engagement is a VOC-driven process for engaging customers/prospects to Opt-In and *self-profile their preferences*, thus creating uniquely accurate Opt-In databases.

Key tips:

Opt-in is about engaging customers to take an active role in defining the relationship per their needs. This enables you to understand how you can be relevant to them at an individual level: right message, right offer, sent to the right people, at the right time, and via the media mix of their choice.

This information will then form your uniquely powerful and accurate opt-in preference database.

- Make sure the value of opting in to a relationship with your organization is obvious and differentiated.
- Personalize the experience according to the unique self-profiling information of the customer.
- Find ways to remind the user how you are customizing his or her experience.
- Don't promise value during the opt-in process that you can't deliver. The penalty for not delivering once you have raised expectations can be huge.
- Keep the customer engaged after the initial contact; otherwise, the data you have collected will quickly become irrelevant, and the relationship will deteriorate.

Microsoft VOC-driven Opt-In Program Results:

- Opt-in rates up to 95%.
- Open rates greater than 50%.
- Response rates performing in the double-digits.
- Revenue from those in the VOC-driven Opt-In program generates 2X greater volume license revenue.

STEP 3 > Create A VOC-Driven Multichannel Mix

Preference Driven Multichannel Marketing is the VOC-driven process for deployment of the social and traditional multichannel media mix, per individual media preferences.

Why is gathering opt-in media preferences so important? Think about it this way: isn't the tendency now to Opt-Out of receiving unwanted emails, phone calls, etc?

Consider:

- More than 76% of US adults have registered for the National Do-Not-Call (DNC) Registry (Harris Interactive).
- 50% more U.S. adults register for the DNC than vote in Presidential elections.
- Over 191 million phone numbers are listed on the DNC.

Key tips:

Implement these six multichannel requirements:

- 1 The optimal deployment of media should be driven by VOC learnings to ensure both relevance and effectiveness.
2. Key elements of the multichannel mix must be deployed per the individual opt-in preferences of customers and prospects.
3. The multichannel mix must provide customers and prospects with choices so they can communicate with the marketer via the media mix of their choice.
4. The channel mix must perform items 1 through 3 above in accordance with the timing and frequency determined by that individual's opt-in preferences.

5. The channel mix must offer a completely integrated experience. All the elements must complement each other, support each other, and send coordinated messages to customers and prospects.
6. The channel mix must be responsive. If the organization alienates or abuses a consumer, you can expect to hear about it in a public forum if you do not resolve it privately.

HMS National VOC-driven Multichannel Renewal Results:

- 20% increase in average renewal rates.
- 75% lift in certain segments.

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STEP 4 > Create A Voc-Driven Social Media Presence

The focus of social media marketing is always on creating and supporting conversations with engaged members of your audience—a vastly different goal than just “selling” prospects your products and services. Social media enables you to *build loyalty through engagement*. People who participate in an effective online community return to a site 9 times as often and 5 times as long.

Forget about the hard sell. Focus instead on connection and conversation.

Key tips:

- Use VOC research to understand how customers and prospects define a deeper, ongoing relationship with your company and how that should be experienced via social media.
- Find out where your customers and prospects are going to discuss your company and other related firms. Listen, learn, and participate in the dialogue if appropriate.
- Personalize your message, and keep it authentic.
- Make it easy for people to leave their mark.
- Weed out the impersonal, transactional, or generic customer experiences so they don't make it hard for people to connect with your organization, express preferences, and enjoy the promised brand experience.
- Harness the power of narrative. Tell a story about your organization or someone.
- Personalize, personalize, personalize: strive to provide prospects and customers information and resources that are directly relevant to their lives.

- Synchronize PR and social media. Send the same core message through all channels.
- Remember that social media has turned customer response time expectations into minutes and hours, not days or weeks.
- Give your people access to the social media tools they need to do the job.
- View SEO and SEM as a numbers-driven science that allows you to target consumers effectively and to capture the Voice of the Customer in real time.
- Use social media to demonstrate transparency, accountability, and mission commitment to your critical stakeholders—and everyone else.

Forget about the hard sell.
Focus instead on connection and conversation.

STEP 5 > Invest In An Excellent Customer Service Experience

The way customers feel they have been treated by your company is the critical test of whether your organization has in fact committed to the Voice of the Customer.

Do not think of Customer Service as an expense item.

Do not consider Customer Service to be the responsibility of Operations.

Service is critical to customer retention and should be viewed as a marketing responsibility and a revenue contributor. Service is a competitive advantage that creates “customer stickiness”, reinforcing your company’s value proposition and generating customer loyalty. All that voice of customer-driven engagement and trust will go up in smoke if your company is not responsive when customers have a service need! High quality service is indispensable to the success of marketing.

Key tips:

- Create “end-to-end” customer scorecard metrics that tie the call centers, the Internet, mobile, distribution centers, quality assurance, and merchandising together with the overall accountability for improving product ratings and reviews, product satisfaction and quality.
- Prove the case that excellent service correlates statistically to repeat business.
- Remember: Superior customer service can significantly change the game-both with an individual customer and within the market as a whole.

- Share compelling customer stories with top management to win attention to areas where your organization needs to improve. At the end of the day, companies don't change because of data. They change because of VOC stories.
- Use Twitter and other methods to keep track of what customers and prospects are saying about your organization online.
- Get your people to believe that their goal is not to “close a sale” but to win an ongoing relationship with the customer.
- Ask yourself: Is your service good enough to create a desire to do business with your organization again?
- Make sure everyone in your organization knows the answer to the question “Whom do you serve?”

In Summary

Here are four major takeaways:

1. The customer is at the center of your universe. You have to keep earning the right to remain in his or her orbit of relevance.
2. You will not understand how customers define relevance and value until and unless you ask them!

It is arrogant to presume that you know what is relevant because you know what they bought, what some data overlay indicates, and so on. Making these assumptions is a poor replacement for understanding how you can engage meaningfully with your customers.

Remember, if assumptions about what you think you know about customers were sufficient, you would already be achieving double-digit response rates.

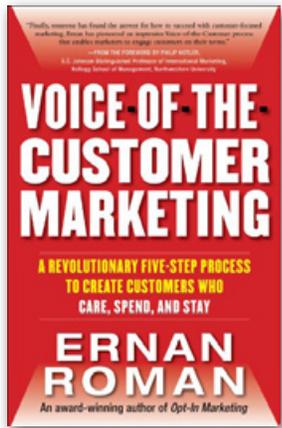
3. Learn, trust, and follow the Five-Step VOC-Driven Process.

It has been refined over the course of decades. It is a proven process, one that is both repeatable and scalable.

4. Trust the Golden Rule.

In the end, you will find that if you treat your customer with the same respect you yourself would want to experience as a customer of your organization, you will get all the guidance you need.

Good luck with your marketing innovation! **Trust your customer to show you the way.** 📌



BUY THE BOOK

Get more details or buy a copy of Ernan Roman's *Voice-of-the-Customer Marketing*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ernan Roman is President of the marketing consultancy, [Ernan Roman Direct Marketing](#), recognized as an industry pioneer that created three transformational methodologies: Integrated Direct Marketing, Opt-In Marketing, and Voice-of-Customer Relationship Research. Clients include innovative Fortune and Growth companies such as Microsoft, NBC Universal, Walt Disney, Reliant Energy, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, MSC Industrial Direct, and Songza Media, Inc. Ernan was named as one of the “100 most influential people” in Business Marketing by Crain's *B to B Magazine*. His latest book on marketing is *Voice of the Customer Marketing: A Proven 5-Step Process to Create Customers Who Care, Spend, and Stay*.

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This document was created on December 8, 2010 and is based on the best information available at that time.

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