



## Marketing Messages

### MARY CHARLESON

#### *Measuring the impact of the tablet on your business*

Take one tablet daily and call your doctor if your condition doesn't improve. That's the advice we're accustomed to receiving when taking medication. But it would seem that both consumers and businesses are in a quest for help with what ails them these days, judging by the uptake of the tablet - also known as the **Apple iPad**, **Blackberry Playbook**, **HP Slate** and the **Google Android Tablet**.

What's with the sudden revolution and the apparent need for a hybrid between your smart phone and your laptop? Lots it would seem. This isn't a tech column, so I'm not going to go into comparing features and benefits, but let's assume for the time being that this is not a fad. It's a trend.

Consider:

- Apple's iPad sales hit 2 million in 59 days after the April release in Canada. Sales are expected to hit 9.7 million worldwide for 2010.
- HP and Google jump on board the tablet bandwagon in summer 2010. Todd Bradley, HP's Executive VP for Personal Systems Group estimates tablets will become a \$40 billion market over the next few years.
- RIM, the maker of Blackberry, announce the Playbook in fall 2010, with a market launch in early 2011

Clearly tablets are the new frontier. All the major players are lining up to battle for market share.

This could be a game-changing trend. And trends are critically different than fads when it comes to evaluating the impact on your marketing strategy. So what does this all mean to you?

I'd suggest you step back from the day-to-day busy work, and consider possible impacts on your business. Take the 10,000-meter view if you will. Think big picture and think what this looks like 5 years from now. Brainstorm some possible effects on your business. Look at the threats as well as the opportunities. Now consider what you should be doing today to mitigate those threats or take advantage of those opportunities.

Let's look at an example to get you considering the process:

Suppose you are a book retailer or are in the publishing industry. You've barely recovered from the consolidation of the industry with big box retail, the increasing competitiveness from online retailers, and now e-books are on the horizon. In July Amazon sold 180 e-books for every 100 hardcover books. They of course push their own reader, the Kindle, but sell books that can be read on any tablet device. Chapters/Indigo have a robust offering of online e-books and their own competitively priced reader, the Kobo. There's also the Sony Reader and the Barnes and Noble Nook. Supported by a wide variety of readers and tablets, electronic books are going mainstream.

This trend will be further fueled by the explosive growth and run for market share in the tablet market led by Apple's iPad. Expect the e-book to be under the Christmas tree this year. At first blush, it's not hard to see the threat if you're in the business of selling tangible books. How do you position and price your offerings? Will this change your target market and segmentation? Are there new niche opportunities? How might the inevitable consolidation of the publishing industry, and entrance of new "entertainment company" publishers affect your future? The e-book is bound to attract a more tech-savvy publishing model that supports video and interactive content in addition to the written word. Where might the opportunities lie in that?

Prior to the launch of the iPad, Steve Jobs is rumored to have said, "This is the most important thing I've ever done." Upon its launch, Disney CEP Bob Iger called it "a game changer." Hyperbole or fact? Only time will tell. But if history repeats itself, the iPad could do to the book industry what the iPod did to the music industry. The product, distribution system, pricing and promotion all changed. Industry titans were toppled or became shadows of their former self and new players emerged.

The lesson here? No industry will be left untouched by the potential impact of the tablet. Time to get out your crystal ball so you can mitigate those threats and be the first to jump at the new opportunities.

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