



Marketing Messages

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Four 'currencies' add up to better business results

Savvy marketers recognize that customers are influenced by several currencies beyond money.

A currency is anything of value to the customer: money, time, security and feeling special. There are many ways to compete for loyalty when your marketing strategy views customers from this perspective. To create value you must deliver on as many of these four currencies as you can. Value can be delivered at the financial, functional or emotional level.

Let's look at how to leverage each currency and see how some local businesses have built a successful strategy doing it.

1. Money: We're all familiar with the currency of money. There are two ways to create monetary value; either offer the customer the best price or make them believe the price they are paying is a fair exchange for superior value. To use this currency effectively you must understand the emotional and functional values of your target customers.

Dayton Boot Co. successfully sells superior value at a premium price. Since 1946 they have made handcrafted and custom order work, casual and motorcycle boots in Vancouver. Boasting Hollywood stars as some of their loyal customers, people who buy their boots place value in quality and craftsmanship and they're willing to pay for it. The premium price is justified in the mind of the customer.

Local discount bookseller, **Book Warehouse** offers customers cheap prices on books. The best price position is a trade off for less depth in subject selections. Saving money on book purchases is the primary motivator in the mind of their customer.

2. Time: For some time is more valuable than money. Others will willingly exchange their time to save money. To use time effectively you must understand the value trade off your customers is willing to place on it. As with the currency of money, the value of time for individual customers will vary for different products and services. The challenge is to recognize when it can be leveraged to your advantage.

Ikea has built a successful strategy based on the concept that some consumers are willing to exchange their time to save money. Most furnishings are mass-produced and packed flat for delivery and assembly by customers. The time to assemble and deliver goods has been transferred to the consumer, which allows a labour cost savings reflected in the price of goods.

If you've ever spent time searching a dazzling array of paint chips and collecting sample tins in a quest for the perfect colour, you'll appreciate the simplicity and time saving approach presented at **Restoration Hardware**. They sell only 11 colours of paint. Each is selected based on current design trends and all colours work together. A complicated time consuming process has been made simple and quick. For their target consumer, the premium paid for colour pre-selection is worth the time saved.

3. Security: Security is all about feeling safe. This is where buying behaviour is influenced by perceptions. To use this currency effectively you must understand the values and motivations of your target customers. Although physical security can be a primary motivator for the purchase of such items as alarm systems, or cell phones, the desire to feel safe has a much greater reach. It is an influence, which can be used to justify or take chances on a purchase. Everyone wants to feel that they've done the right thing. The more your business can reward the feeling of being safe, the more successful your strategy. Businesses with a no questions asked return policy, free trials or a price guarantee all offer security.

Capers Community Markets offer customers a money back guarantee on anything in their store. Because many items they sell are things their customers may not have tried before, they want people to feel comfortable experimenting. The guarantee offers purchase security.

4. Feeling special: By creating that special connection with the customer, making them feel valued, good about themselves or happy that your business solved a problem for them you will make them feel special. Customers needs and wants are heavily influenced by the desire to feel special. To use this currency effectively you should strive to fully understand your customer on many levels and then use this knowledge to deliver products and services, which cause them to form an emotional bond with your business. Deliver on this one and there'll be a lot more money currency coming your way.

When **Rocky Mountaineer** guests disembark the train for the night and take the motor coach to their hotel, they find their luggage waiting in their room upon arrival. Anticipating customer needs and having a desire to exceed expectations, the company delivers the luggage in advance by truck. This expedited service costs them \$200,000/year but contributes to a memorable experience. Guests feel special.

Any one of the four currencies - money, time, security and feeling special can be the dominant motivation for your customers. The remaining three will play a supporting role in justifying their buying decision. Your marketing strategy should address all your customers' currencies to truly deliver value and allow you to be perceived as superior to your competitors.

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