



Marketing Messages

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Stress-busting ideas pay off for Starbucks, Bose and your business

Are you feeling stressed? There's a good chance you responded yes. That means your customers are likely stressed too. **Statistics Canada** reports that half of all Canadians aged 25-44 years felt stressed in their daily routine. 1/4 of married men and more than 1/3 of married women employed full time with children at home reported high levels of stress. 1/4 of Canadian employees care for an elderly family member and 15% of Canadian employees care for both children and an older adult. Couple these statistics with increased workplace demands, travel, long hours, interpersonal office relations, the fear of job loss, a record year for investment losses and a general unease about world politics, and it makes for a stressful environment. Do you really want your customer's experience with you to increase their stress level? A savvy marketer makes their customers stress go away by anticipating their needs, respecting their time, exceeding their expectations, and connecting with them on an emotional level. If you think like your customer they will have reason to be loyal to you.

Here are some good examples of eliminating customer stress, which make great marketing sense. Consuming coffee should be stress free shouldn't it? Getting a good cup of Java in this town is not too difficult, but enjoying one with an infant in tow can be a challenge. **Starbucks** looks at the whole customer experience when designing their stores. They design their locations as a gathering place. That philosophy means they look at the community where they are located and provide customers with what they need. In areas with young families that might mean change tables in the washrooms and enough room for strollers. Parents are stressed enough; they don't need to figure out how to change a baby beside the sink or on the floor. In neighbourhoods with high levels of students they provide large tables for homework or group meetings. Curiously many competing coffee shops in the same areas do not specialize these features. Starbucks has anticipated the needs of its customers. One less stress, one more cup of coffee sold.

What industry could seem more complex than consumer electronics? For many consumers, advances in technology have made it difficult to understand how to make an informed decision. And once purchased, frequently the set up and running of many computers, home theatre and sound systems is seldom a relaxing event. Amid a dazzling array of high-end and high tech home theatre competitors, **Bose** differentiates itself as the simple low stress alternative. Their product is easy to set up, unobtrusive to look at, beautiful to listen to, and reasonably priced. They eliminate the fear of obsolete technology by sending customers a CD annually to upgrade their system. In an industry known for complexity, Bose has zeroed in on eliminating the stress associated with a home theatre purchase.

When was the last time you thought of your bank as lowering your stress? **CIBC** has the no fee bank account. A novel concept which seems so obvious, simple and desirable. Hasn't anyone else figured out that customers don't want to pay service charges on all their transactions, or worse yet, pay the bank a monthly flat fee to protect them from individual charges? CIBC has kept it simple. No stress about which monthly package to choose, or worries about the number of transactions you've made.

Your suppliers should lower your stress. As a supplier of bearings and drives to the heavy equipment industry, **BC Bearing Engineers** has an integrated inventory and auto order system with their major clients. It helps the company carry less inventory, but ensures stock replenishment and availability when customers need it. This saves customers the possibility of costly downtime when parts are needed. It's just one less thing for their customers to worry about. That means less stress, more loyalty and more sales.

The last couple of years have made investors a stressed out bunch. **Vancity** is currently offering a no risk, good return of 3% on a 90 day term deposit. Although John Casper might argue that 3% is nothing to cheer about, in a year where many people have lost 15-20% on their portfolios, 3% starts to sound pretty good. It's safe. It's secure. And, it's low stress.

Judging by the number of spas in town, we're definitely looking for stress relief! Make sure your company isn't adding to it. Take a look at how your customers experience your business. Think like them. Identify the stress points and then work to eliminate them. It's not only savvy marketing; it's good business.

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