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How to make brilliant stuff that people love and make big money out of it

Introduction

As its title suggests, this book is about how to make brilliant stuff that people love and make big money out of it. The approach outlined here is based on my experience as design and marketing consultant. I have used it with clients all over the world in a wide variety of industries. Traditional industries such as cars and electronics. Modern industries like the dot.coms and the telecoms. Medical and professional services. Fast-moving goods, fashion, financial services, domestic appliances, even charities. Clients in all these sectors have used this method and found it to be effective in providing customers with great products and services that they love. Of course my clients have loved these products and services too! They have been profitable and given a healthy boost to the bottom line.

Three Steps to Success

The approach outlined in this book isn't rocket science. It's really very simple. Just do three things – understand the consumer, know what they want, give it to them. Do those three things and you've got a pretty good chance of having a winning product on your hands. Yet the sad reality is that very few companies do these things. They don't realize they

should be doing them, or they can't be bothered to do them, or they don't think they can afford them, or they don't know how to do them, or they don't have the skills to do them properly. Reading this book won't give you the skills to do them. But if you're in design or marketing or have some half-decent designers or marketers in your organization, then you've already got those skills. It is going to tell you why you need to use them and how to use them. It will explain how you can use the approach on any budget. Obviously the more you can spend the more thorough you can be, but you can still gain a huge advantage on even the smallest of budgets. Hopefully the motivation will come when the advantages become clear!

The start point is getting to know your customers. *Really* getting to know them – respecting them, putting yourself in their shoes. What's important to them? What motivates them? What are their hopes, fears, dreams, aspirations? How do the products and services that they buy and use reflect these aspirations? It's about providing pleasure to people through the stuff we create for them. Both through the design of the product and the way that the product is marketed. What does the product or service do for them? How do they feel when they are using it? How does it make them feel about themselves? Respect for the customer is a philosophy that underpins every aspect of this approach. It is not a quick fix for tricking people into buying tat. It is about establishing a bond between producer and customer. A mutually beneficial relationship with trust on both sides. Or, in market speak,

sustainable competitive advantage through enhancing the quality of our customers' lives.

This book is about pleasure. What is it? How do we deliver it? We will start with a little bit of theory, delving into the worlds of anthropology and philosophy to build a simple framework for looking at what makes people feel great. We'll use this as a start point for understanding the kinds of questions that we need to be asking ourselves about our consumers. We'll look at how to create a persona – a fictitious person who acts as our customers' representative in the design process. The persona is the central figure in our quest to make great stuff. We need to keep focussed on this person, determined to understand their every need. Once we've done that we can get an understanding of the role that our product or service will play in their life and the kinds of benefits that it can deliver to them. The third and final step is to go make a product or service that delivers those benefits. We analyze the various elements that go into the design and marketing of stuff and see how we can use them to make a game plan for delivering the benefits that our customers want. A game plan that we can use to deliver a wonderful experience for our customers – products that are not only useful and usable, but also a genuine joy to own and use.

In Search of Pleasure

Since the beginning of time, humans have sought pleasure. We have gained pleasure from the natural environment.

From the beauty of flowers or the feeling of the sun on our skin. From bathing in soothing waters or the refreshment of a cool breeze. We have actively sought pleasure, creating activities and pastimes to stretch our mental and physical capabilities or to express our creative capabilities. Cave-dwellers wrestled to test their strength and expressed themselves through painting on the walls of their dwellings. Today we 'pump iron' in the gymnasium and decorate our homes with selections of paintings and posters.

Another source of pleasure has been the artifacts and services with which we have surrounded ourselves. For centuries humans have sought to create functional and decorative artifacts, which have increased the quality of life and brought pleasure to the owners and users. Originally, these objects would have been clumsily bashed out from stone, bronze or iron by unskilled people who simply wanted to make something for their own use. As systems of trade and barter were developed, specialist craftspeople became prevalent, creating artifacts for use by others in the community. Today, most of the artifacts that we surround ourselves with were created by industry. Services have seen a similar evolution from benefits exchanged within primitive communities to multinational on-line trading services.

Pleasure

What is pleasure? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as 'the condition of consciousness or sensation induced by the

enjoyment or anticipation of what is felt or viewed as good or desirable; enjoyment, delight, gratification. The opposite of pain.*'*

In the context of making brilliant stuff that people love, we can define pleasure as:

The emotional, hedonic and practical benefits associated with products and services.

Practical benefits are those that result from the outcomes of tasks for which the product of service is used. For example, in the context of a word-processing package, a practical benefit could be the effective and efficient production of neat, well-presented documents. Meanwhile a washing machine, for example, delivers the practical benefit of clean, fresh clothes.

Emotional benefits come from how stuff affects a person's mood. Using a product or service might be, for example, exciting, interesting, fun, satisfying or confidence-enhancing. A computer game, for example, might be exciting and fun to use, while a stylish new gown may give the wearer a feeling of self-confidence.

Hedonic benefits, meanwhile, refer to the sensory and aesthetic pleasures associated with products. For example, a person might recognize a product as an object of beauty or might enjoy the physical sensation of touching or holding a particular product. A well-designed chair may be physically comfortable to sit on and may also be an 'objet d'art' worthy of aesthetic appreciation. Meanwhile, a shaver might give pleasant tactile feedback, both in the hand and against the face.

In a sense, this definition is a 'catch all'. Indeed it is intended as such. In order to create brilliant stuff that people love it is important to start by considering *all* of the potential benefits that a product or service can deliver.

The Four Pleasures: A Framework for Considering Pleasure with Products

Given that pleasure with products is defined so broadly, it is useful to find a way of structuring our thoughts on the issue. Here we can look to the academic discipline of anthropology for some help. Anthropology is the study of human cultures and communities. One of the world's leading anthropologists is Professor Lionel Tiger from Rutgers University in New Jersey. He has spent much of his career studying pleasure and human motivation and has devised four categories, which between them span the different types of pleasure that humans can experience. Here they are. (You can read about them in more depth in Tiger's book, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*).

Physio-pleasure
Physio-pleasure is to do with the body and with pleasures derived from the sensory organs. They include pleasures connected with touch, taste and smell as well as feelings of sensual pleasure. In the context of products, physio-pleasure would cover, for example, tactile and olfactory properties. Tactile pleasures concern holding and touching a product during interaction. This might be relevant, for example, in

the context of a telephone handset or a remote control. Olfactory pleasures concern the smell of the new product. For example, the smell inside a new car may be a factor that effects how pleasurable it is for the owner.

Socio-pleasure

This is the enjoyment derived from relationships with others. This might mean relationships with friends and loved ones, with colleagues or with like-minded people. However, it might also include a person's relationship with society as a whole – issues such as status and image may play a role here.

Product and services can facilitate social interaction in a number of ways. E-mail and mobile phones, for example, facilitate communication between people. Other products may facilitate social interaction by being talking points in themselves. For example, a special piece of jewelry may attract comment, as may an interesting household product, such as an unusually styled TV set. Indeed, mobile phones are also an example of a product whose styling is likely to influence people's perceptions of the owner. Association with other types of products may indicate belonging in a social group – Porsches for 'yuppies', Doc Marten's boots for skinheads. Here, the person's association with stuff forms part of their social identity.

Psycho-pleasure

Psycho-pleasure comes from people's mental and emotional reactions. In the case of products, this includes issues

relating to the cognitive demands of using the product or service and the emotional reactions engendered through the experience of using it. For example, it might be expected that a word processor that facilitated quick and easy accomplishment of, say, formatting tasks would provide a higher level of psycho-pleasure than one with which the user was likely to make many errors. The former word processor should enable the user to complete the task more easily than they would with the latter. The outcome may also be more emotionally satisfying and less stressful.

Ideo-pleasure

Ideo-pleasure is about people's tastes, values and aspirations. On the most basic level, a taste might mean preferring one color over another or preferring a particular type of styling. Stuff that is aesthetically pleasing to the consumer can be a source of ideo-pleasure through appealing to the consumer's tastes. Values could be philosophical or religious or may relate to some particular issue such as the environment or a political movement. Such values can be embodied in stuff; for example, a product made from biodegradable materials might be seen as embodying the value of environmental responsibility.

Aspirations are about how people want to see themselves and what they hope to become – what we aspire to be like as people. Maybe career and financial success is a priority; perhaps the family comes first; perhaps being cool and

trendy is important. Whatever our aspirations, the stuff that we own and use can be a source of pleasure through helping to affirm our self-image. For example, if we aspire to being sophisticated and having good taste, then maybe we can have this self-image reinforced through owning furniture that is tastefully and elegantly styled. Meanwhile if we like to think of ourselves as energetic and exciting we may have this self-image affirmed through driving a high-performance car.

In the context of making brilliant stuff that people love, the four pleasure framework is a useful tool for taking a structured approach to design and marketing. It is perhaps best to think of it as a practical tool and not to worry too much about exactly where the borders are between each of the four pleasures. From experience of using this approach I have found that the boundaries between each category can sometimes be a little fuzzy. But that doesn't matter. The key issue is that using the framework can help to make us more thorough and methodical in our approach than would be the case if we tried to approach the whole thing in an unstructured way.

Need Pleasures and Pleasures of Appreciation

Another helpful mentor in understanding the nature and meaning of pleasure is the Christian writer and philosopher C.S. Lewis. In his treatise *The Four Loves*, Lewis includes an essay on what he describes as likings and loves for the sub-

human. Within this essay he considers natural entities, such as plants and animals, but he also looks at products and services. Lewis classifies the pleasures that can be derived from such entities as being either 'need pleasures' or 'pleasures of appreciation'.

Broadly, need pleasure can be seen as the pleasure that is gained from the removal or discomfort or some other kind of negative state. Drinking a glass of water would give a need pleasure to someone who was thirsty. Pleasures of appreciation, meanwhile, are those that are pleasurable in and of themselves. They are pleasurable even if we were perfectly contented in the first place. For example, a person might enjoy a fine wine for its taste and bouquet and for the pleasant feeling of intoxication that it delivers. They may have been perfectly happy and comfortable in the first place, but will feel even more so when they are drinking the wine. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that someone would wish to drink a glass of water unless they were already thirsty.

The key insight that we can gain from Lewis's approach is that products can be pleasurable either because they help to facilitate positively joyful feelings and experiences or because they help us to eliminate negative situations or feelings. When making brilliant stuff that people love, we should bear both of these things in mind.