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Word Study: LISTEN

It is said that when Xerox instituted an active listening program among its salespeople about 40 years ago, the results were so remarkable that versions of the program were instituted on a company wide basis.

What does Scripture have to say about listening? “He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame,” admonishes Proverbs 18:13, while James 1:19 advises, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” As Christians, if we exercise the discipline of listening carefully in our prayer life and as a manager, the results will also be remarkable. The Bible exhorts us in this, and business practice supports the result of listening. “He who has ears, let him hear” (Mt 11:15). ◇

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SELLING PURPLE COWS

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Seth Godin, a contributing editor to Fast Company and author of numerous articles and the best selling marketing books *Permission Marketing*, *The Red Fez*, and *Unleashing the IdeaVirus* is considered one of today's foremost marketing thinkers and practitioners. His latest book, *In Praise of the Purple Cow*, promises to be just as popular as his other three books.

While his first books focused primarily on how businesses can gain awareness and user acceptance on the web, this book is about what it takes to create and sell something remarkable. It is for marketers “who want to make a difference at their company by helping create products and services that are worth marketing in the first place.” So what is a purple cow? Well, on a family road trip through some beautiful countryside “. . . they became enchanted by hundreds of storybook cows grazing in picturesque pastures.” He noticed that after a few minutes however, they began to ignore the cows and realized that cows, after you've seen them for a while, are boring. They may be well-bred cows, Six Sigma cows, cows lit by a beautiful light, but they are still boring. “A Purple Cow, though: that would really stand out. The essence of the Purple Cow—the reason it would shine among a crowd of perfectly competent, even undeniably excellent cows—is that it would be remarkable.” Something remarkable is worth talking about, worth paying attention to.

“A Purple Cow...would really stand out...the reason it would shine among a crowd of perfectly competent, even undeniably excellent cows—is that it would be remarkable.”

So how do you create, or “raise” a purple cow? Mr. Godin states making and marketing something remarkable means asking new questions—and trying new practices. Some of his suggestions to help you do something remarkable include:

1. Differentiate your customers. Find the group that's most profitable. Find the group that's most likely to influence other customers. Figure out how to develop for, advertise to, or reward either group. Ignore the rest. Cater to the customers you would choose if you could choose your customers.
2. If you could pick one underserved niche to target (and to dominate), what would it be? Why not launch a product to compete with your own that does nothing but appeal to that market?
3. Do you have the email addresses of the 20% of your customer base that loves what you do? If not, start getting them. If you do, what could you make for them that would be superspecial?
4. Remarkable can be the way you answer the phone, launch a new brand, or price a revision of your software. Getting in the habit of doing the “unsafe” thing every time you have the opportunity is the best way to see what's working and what's not.

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Toward a MARKETPLACE MISSIOLOGY

C. Neal Johnson, J.D.

Charles Van Engen, a prominent missiologist, has written
“The commercial business marketplace may well be the primary mission field of the 21st Century.”—

while *Fortune* magazine (July 16, 2001 Cover Story) comments

A groundswell of believers is breaching the last taboo in corporate America . . . Historically, such folk operated . . . on their own or in small workplace groups where they prayed or studied the Bible. But now they are getting organized and going public to agitate for change (“The Surprising Quest for Spiritual Renewal in the American Workplace”): 59, 61).

In addition, thousands of business owners and CEOs are actively seeking effective ways to integrate their faith into the lifeblood of their companies and into their daily business practices.

As these and other sources underscore, the faith-in-the-workplace phenomenon is taking on the shape and dynamic of a new, powerful, global mission movement. As Henry Blackaby notes, “God is moving in a powerful way in the marketplace” (Blackaby 2001). Furthermore this emerging new form of Christian mission in-and-to the Marketplace is related to other emerging global phenomena. Globalization in all of its facets—economic, political, social, environmental—is a fast growing reality of the world we live in, the world we seek to serve, the world Christ said for us to “go” into. He said for us to take the good news of the gospel to that world, to demonstrate incarnationally the all-encompassing, caring love of Jesus, and to do so with a sensitive, listening servant heart and attitude.

When I look at the “real” world, the world that you and I live in, I see an infinitely complex maze of formal and informal power centers. Among these, the economic and political power centers are particularly in need of attention by the Christian business community and must be seen as primary elements of mission that need to be studied, not only in mission schools, but in Christian business schools as well. To this end, we must engage in an expanded, all-encompassing understanding of the economic and political realities of the world from a Christ-centered, Christ-led *missio Dei* perspective. And the world to which I refer must not only be the world of mission “over there,” but must also include the intercultural mission challenges “next door,” in the cultural milieu called the Marketplace.

We might entitle this approach “*Marketplace Missiology*.” As I envisage this, it is comprised of three primary components: 1) A Marketplace Mission Component; 2) a Contextualization Component; and 3) a Biblical Theology Component. The balance of this essay will discuss briefly each component.

Marketplace Mission Component

The *Marketplace Mission Component* approaches the commercial marketplace as a mission field in its own right. This is a place that has traditionally too often been seen as “off-limits”

to the church and its mission. But it is a place that has a distinctive culture, a unique worldview, and a remarkable capacity to touch virtually every person on the face of this planet. To search this out, consideration must be given to three areas.

The first is “*Mission into the Marketplace*” by those who are not participants in the business community who seek to convert and disciple non-believers within that community. The second area of interest is “*Mission within the Marketplace*” in which Christians who are participants in the Marketplace seek to evangelize and disciple, to network and encourage, one another within their own work environment. The third area is *Mission through the Marketplace*, in which Christians in the marketplace utilize their enormous, God-given influence, resources and expertise for Christ. This type of mission may take many different forms, from businesses that reach out into their local communities with holistic people projects—individual or group—such as social services, educational support, employment training, health care, youth service or family assistance, to international economic development projects.

The point is that the business community, because of its tremendous base of influence, resources and expertise is in a unique position to undertake mission for Christ: worldwide and next door. Christian believers in the business community can do this mission effectively and efficiently. The heart of mission is helping hurting people holistically through the love of Christ. And what matters is not who *does* it, but who *receives* it; not *who* does it, but *how* and *why* it is done. In these instances, the business community can participate in the role of the traditional “sending agencies” of earlier Christian mission paradigms. It is the business community utilizing the resources that God has placed in its hands to become a major part of *missio Dei*.

Contextualization Component

The context in which mission is carried out is defined by many factors: cultural, anthropological, historic, sociological, geographic, environmental and religious. But overriding every person’s context is the prevailing economic and political power structures in that society. In terms of basic survival necessities, every person must make a living or be supported economically, and every person is subject to a prevailing economic and governing regime.

Accordingly, the Contextualization Component of Marketplace Missiology is made up of three tracks, each representing a major power center that must be studied and reckoned with in mission. The first deals with *private sector* power centers (commercial business) which stems from a recognition that not only is the marketplace a mission center of its own, it is also a power center that strongly impacts the reality of every person living in a given mission context. Understanding and engaging this power structure is often essential for peoples’ survival strategy. The second addresses the *public sector* economic power centers and involves studying the economic

policies and practices of powerful national and transnational economic groups which have a sometimes unrecognized, overwhelming impact upon the individual human beings who are the subject of our mission effort. The third deals with *political centers* of power, politics and governments, policies and processes, as they impact mission. A host of political sector issues, including religious freedom, religious persecution, human rights, immigration, law enforcement structures and practices, international relations, war and peacemaking, directly impact the people who are the focus of mission—the people who are in the marketplace.

Biblical Theology Component

The third component of Marketplace Missiology is the *Biblical Theology Component*. It consists of two very distinct tracks of study. The first track, *Contemporary Issues of Marketplace Missiology*, seeks to define and develop a biblical understanding of issues that are critical to Christians in the workplace, such as biblical theologies of work, of business, profits, income, lifestyles, leisure and rest, as well as broader issues such as globalization and the role of the church in market societies.

The second track, *The Worldview of the Contemporary Capitalist*, involves an inquiry into the nature of worldview and the methodology for discovering it, as applied to the capitalist mindset and business context. Of necessity, it will also involve an inquiry into the relationship between capitalism and Christianity, between the capitalist worldview and the Christian worldview, as well as biblical perspectives on modern capitalist cultural trends such as materialism and consumerism. Not only is capitalism a dominant reality in virtually every corner of the planet, but with the head-long spread of economic globalization, capitalism is being propagated like a new religion around the world. Further, Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan have noted that the “trend now to elevate the market into a supernatural power is making the church irrelevant.” We must not allow that to occur, but instead use the Judeo-Christian foundation of American capitalism, which made us the economic envy of the world, as a primary vehicle for bringing the Good News of Christ to all creation.

A final comment. Though this is new ground that has not been discussed in missiology circles (publicly at least), there has been some related discussion in business. I am excited about Biola’s MBA program, purpose and direction—and its special emphasis on the integration of faith and business—and I am delighted to be associated with it. ◇

Sources

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Fill the Shaker— TRIM THE WICK

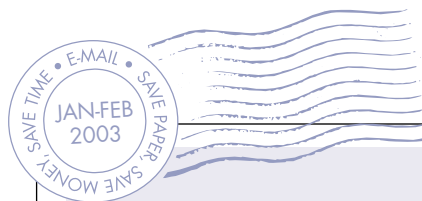
Larry D. Strand

Dean of the School of Business

One of the strong words from Scripture that is foundational to our MBA program, is found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13-16). We are commanded to be salt and light to our world. In this issue are two admonitions by our faculty, Tom Buckles and Neal Johnson, of ways to demonstrate how to be effective in obedience to these commandments. What an impact we make when we become known for being good listeners. Also, when we are committed to the task of “ministry in business”.

The demonstration of integrity (Proverbs 10:9), excellence in whatever we do (Colossians 3:23), and serving others (Philippians 2:2-7) are also foundational to the words of Jesus Christ found in the Sermon on the Mount. As we follow His words to “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16) we are bringing salt and light to the marketplace.

May we all be faithful in our study of God’s word, so our shakers are being filled and our wicks trimmed and ready. And then let it shake and shine! ◇



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PURPLE COW continued

5. Think small. One vestige of the TV-industrial complex is a need to think mass. If it doesn't appeal to everyone, the thinking goes, it's not worth it. No longer. Think of the smallest conceivable market and describe a product that overwhelms it with its remarkability. Go from there.
6. Find things that are “just not done” in your industry, and then go ahead and do them. For example, JetBlue Airways almost instituted a dress code—for its passengers! The company is still playing with the idea of giving a free airline ticket to the best-dressed person on the plane. Stew Leonard's took the strawberries out of the little green plastic cages and let the customers pick their own. Sales doubled.
7. Ask, “Why not?” Almost everything you don't do has no good reason for it. Almost everything you don't do is the result of fear or inertia or a historical lack of someone asking, “Why not?”
8. What would happen if you simply told the truth inside your company and to your customers?

Two examples Mr. Godin describes as remarkable are Otis Elevator and Dutch Boy Paint. Otis Elevator studied people using elevators and realized that every elevator ride is basically a local one. The elevator stops 5, 10, 15 times on the way to your floor. This is a hassle for you, but it's a huge, expensive problem for the building. While your elevator is busy stopping at every floor, the folks in the lobby are getting more and more frustrated.

Otis's insight? When you approach the elevators, you key in your floor on a centralized control panel. In return, the panel tells you which elevator is going to take you to your floor. With this simple presort, Otis has managed to turn every elevator into an express. Your elevator takes you immediately to the 12th floor and races back to the lobby. This means that buildings can be taller, they need fewer elevators for a given density of people, the wait is shorter, and the building can use precious space for people rather than for elevators. A huge win, implemented at a remarkably low cost.

What did Dutch Boy Paint do to create their purple cow? They changed the can. Paint cans are heavy, hard to carry, hard to close, hard to open, and hard to pour. The traditional paint can has been around for a long time, such that no one really thought about the reason for the poor package design. Dutch Boy realized that the can was an integral part of the product: People don't buy paint, they buy painted walls.

The Dutch Boy purple cow? They introduced an easier-to-carry, easier-to-pour, easier-to-close paint jug. “Customers tell us that the new Twist & Pour paint container is a packaging innovation that was long overdue,” says Dennis Eckols, group vice president of the home division for Fred Meyer stores. “People wonder why it took so long for someone to come up with the idea, and they love Dutch Boy for doing it.”

It's an amazing innovation and worth noticing. Not only did the new packaging increase sales, but it also got them more distribution, and they were able to charge a higher retail price! A truly remarkable purple cow.

These are just two examples of marketing done right. Marketing where the marketer changes the product, not the ads. *In Praise of the Purple Cow* becomes available in March 2003. If you would like to obtain a copy for \$5 (the cost of shipping), send an email to mentor@biola.edu. ◇



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