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Beginners Mind, Marketers Mind

By Doug Hudiburg

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UNSOLICITED ADVICE AND A HOT IRON

I recently returned from a vacation. I was fortunate enough to leave the heat and humidity of Memphis and go back to my home state of Colorado and spend time with my extended family. While I was in the laundry room ironing a shirt, my Mom walked through and said "are you going to iron that shirt backwards?"

Of course, I immediately thought "what is this, I have to get ironing advice from my Mom? I'm a grown man, I think I can handle something as simple as pressing wrinkles out of a shirt. I have, after all, ironed a few shirts since I left home for college nearly 20 years ago!"

I started getting irritated and grumbling to myself that there is no such thing as ironing backwards. "Hot iron, ironing board, wrinkled shirt, what difference does it make from which direction you approach this simple job?"

And then I paused, and realized, my Mom has been ironing shirts her whole life. In fact, she was a home economics teacher. She *taught* people how to iron for a good portion of her teaching career. This is a woman who knows how to iron. Who am I to argue with an expert?

So I promptly stopped and realized that if I turned the shirt around and got on the other side of the ironing board, I could much more easily complete the job because the cord would not be constantly getting in my way. All was well in the laundry room

as I was reminded, once again, that it pays to be open to new information.

This experience helps to illustrate a key concept that has a lot of value for marketers.

Always send your shirts out for cleaning. It's worth a couple of bucks not to have to stand in front of an ironing board. ;-)

Nah, just kidding. True as that may be, I actually do have a relevant concept to discuss with you.

FIRST AN EXPERT...ZEN A BEGINNER

Zen Buddhism is credited with bringing us a concept called "beginners mind." Zen masters refer to beginners mind as a mental state or a way of approaching the world around you that allows you operate in an open, learning mode all the time just like you are when you first start a new endeavor as a rank beginner.

Part of the reason that it works is that a beginner knows nothing and they *know* they know nothing. So they do not approach a subject with a predefined set of biases. Everything a beginner learns is knowledge that adds to their knowledge base.

As you become more of an expert, you filter the input based on your own personal knowledge. This is natural and helpful. If we didn't filter some input based on our existing knowledge, we would constantly be overwhelmed with data. The problem is, if you take it too far, and become so much of an expert that new knowledge cannot reach your consciousness, then you cease to learn.

You have absolutely flattened the learning curve, or maybe even started to see it decline because your mind is so full of facts and knowledge that there is no room for anything else.

Alright, so what does all this have to do with marketing? The best way to approach marketing is to stay open to new concepts and new ways of doing things.

-> EXPERT MIND, STAGNANT MIND

I firmly believe that lack of a beginners mind attitude is what causes leading companies (small and large) to lose their marketing edge. From a standpoint of beginners mind, the worst possible place to be is #1 in your market. If you are in this position, you have to fight hard to maintain your edge and keep the rest of the pack at bay.

Take a step back and think about ways to put your existing biases and knowledge aside and find ways to approach a subject as a beginner would.

If you are a market leader, look for ways to cultivate a non-expert attitude within your marketing team. If you are low on the market totem pole, look for ways to capitalize on the fact that the market leaders are likely to be the last to see new solutions to old problems, you have the advantage of beginners

mind.

Good luck in cultivating beginners mind, and until next time...
happy marketing.

Scrapbooking For Beginners

By I Henman

Most things that require patience, a little bit of imagination, mind's eye, so to say to do creative work is daunting for beginners. Scrapbooking is no exception. The mere thought of collecting specially treated scrapbooking paper, using the right adhesive to stick it to a non-stickable surface, doing the art-work to suit the project, using a motif appropriate to the theme, put most people off the job. My advice to beginners wishing to do scrapbooking is to go one step at a time and not think of accomplishing all at once. Consider the case of trainees going for mountaineering. You know what the experts advise them... "Do not look at the top of the mountain, because then you would never be able to reach there. Go to the base camp; reach the second and then the mountain itself will bring you to the top". The same principle, I guess, applies to scrapbooking for beginners.

It is true that there are a good number of websites on scrapbooking for beginners, but none of them can take the terror out of your system. Only your own will power can urge you to achieve. Nothing else can take you out of the stupor that silently gnaws at your innards, telling you to refrain from it. However, I am sure you will ultimately win if the motivation is there. Besides, there are quite a few forums that are dedicated to acting as scrapbooking for beginners guide and in these scrapbooking forums, you are sure to find the incentive that seems to be lacking now.

Another serious impediment that haunts the mind of beginners is the feeling that it is "too late" to barge

into it. But remember, it is never too late to start any creative work. Like any other job where you have to `apply your mind', you may start scrapbooking anytime in your life, and once your mind runs in a positive direction, nothing can stop you. You should not apply a brake once the momentum has built up because putting a reign on it at that stage may spoil the game and it is difficult to come back from a point of no return.

Also, don't be discouraged by the enormity of the work in hand - nothing is impossible. I recollect, locating an interesting signpost in the workshop of a stainless steel fabricator years ago that read "Standard assembly jobs take 12 hours to fabricate, impossible(s) take a bit longer." So, take heart, don't leave, not even in despair. It may be sound advise to consider scrapbooking like taking a long train ride through life, imbibing the scenic beauty en route, taking a video here and there as you travel along since there is much to be absorbed as a beginner and your enthusiasm and fervor will surely pay off in the long run.

For more information about scrapbooking and other hobbies and passtimes please visit our website at



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