

Make 'em Buy or Make 'em Miserable!

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By Mike Banks Valentine

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This weekend I watched a program on television called – I kid you not – "Buyology". This show is about marketing and sales of products in the free world. I found the show utterly and completely fascinating -- not because I'm a web marketer, but because it seemed entirely like science fiction, or just plain fiction.

It seems there are people out there who spend their workdays studying "consumer behavior" and how to influence that behavior without our conscious participation and knowledge! As a search engine optimizer, my job is to make small business web sites rank well in search results at the major search engines. The goal of that activity is to attract online buyers of my clients' products to their web site. Fortunately, that's where my job ends and the web site takes over. I generate traffic and the site supposedly generates sales.

In the real world though, there are people dedicating their professional lives to making certain that consumers not only purchase specific brands, but fall in love with those brands, entice them to buy those brands next time, and indeed to feel they can't survive without those products! The program showed a "marketing anthropologist" following a woman through the grocery store observing her buying habits and asking questions about the purchases made.

This woman bought Cascade dishwashing detergent exclusively in a specific size package. When she discovered that size of the product missing from the shelf in the supermarket, she couldn't

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bring herself to buy the larger box, or --- GASP! --- to switch brands so she could get that same size box! Asked why, she said, "I've always bought that brand in that size, I grew up with it!" This is the ultimate customer as long as Cascade doesn't change the size of that box or alter their packaging. Maybe it's a guy thing, but I honestly don't get it! SudsyDish liquid works too.

Now I'll be the first to recommend changes to a web site if I believe it unlikely to sell products once I generate sufficient traffic for a client because the "buy now" button is misplaced or because the site seems unprofessional. Thank goodness though that I don't find myself studying consumer behavior to determine

brand awareness or loyalty! I admit that server log files and traffic analysis software serve similar purposes online and can be used to determine visitor paths through the site and tell how they searched keywords to make their way to a client web site.

CRM software makes similar attempts to categorize and study consumer behavior but I find it creepy that there are consumer spies viewing my shopping behavior in the department store via security cameras as the Buyology TV program showed me. Session cookies do the same thing online but I can tell my browser not to accept them. My favorite online humor site is called futurefeedforward and they offered a wonderful column this week, "Wal-mart Tags Shoppers with Subcutaneous Cookies" from the year 2009. View the story at <http://futurefeedforward.com>

There's another article, "Ad Pox Cured by Branded Products" at FutureFeedForward that suggests a solution for branded product loyalty guarantees. Consumers will become ill if they can't get their beloved brands and are rapidly cured once the product is purchased again. In other words, "Make Them Buy It or Make Them Miserable!" This comes to us in the year 2064.

Gaining search engine visibility for small business web sites seems so much nobler, (ahem!) than selling cigarettes to teens with cartoony camels and determining consumer behavior while spying on them with video cameras in the aisles of supermarkets. I think we actually enjoy far more privacy online than we do in the real world. My job is to get people to visit client web sites. I'll leave it to the consumer anthropologists to figure out how to make them buy once they get there. Sheesh!

It's The Ride That Counts

By Selena Richardson

Having goals is a good thing. It means that you're willing to take the first step to achieving those goals. When you write down your goals, articulate them on paper, that's the first step to achieving them.

But what about the second step, the third and the fourth and so on? If you persevere and keep focused you will eventually reach the goals that you set for yourself. But when you finally reach that goal, how will you feel about it?

Will it be a sense of accomplishment and pride? Or will it be more of 'yeah I finally got it done' and you're just happy that you've gotten it over with?

The route you take while pursuing your goal determines how you feel about it at the end. It's the ride that counts. Have you been on a road trip where everything that could go wrong did? How did you feel when you finally got to your destination? Pretty worn out, huh? Now what about a good road trip where everything went smoothly? You were probably still tired depending on how long the trip was but you were a bit happier when you got there.

See, it's how you get there that counts. If you're miserable during the entire trip, you're going to be miserable when you get to where you're going. I've had too many road trips where everyone in the car was cranky during the entire ride and as soon as we got to our last stop, the crankiness only continued on. Sure we were glad to get there but only because we were finally there and able to get out of the car. We were just glad the trip was over and still quite a bit cranky too.

But when the road trip is smooth and fun with no accidents or construction or any mishaps, not only are you happy during the ride but you're ecstatic when you get to your final stop. You're not as tired and worn out as you would have been if it were a bad trip.

It's the same thing with your goals. You're more appreciative of achieving your goals if you have fun with it while you're working on it. So enjoy the ride, have fun and there will be a lot more satisfaction when you reach your goals.

Selena Richardson believes in following your dreams and creating the life you want. To receive more articles like this and a free ebook, subscribe to Creative Possibilities by sending a blank email to

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