

Marketing: Market Selection

Spin. A diversion, a misdirection.

Bait. Ensnarement by trickery.

Gloss. Polished surfaces with no depth-created purely to mislead.

Often, when people think of marketing, words like these come to mind. Myths about marketers abound: Marketers manipulate information and people. They tell half-truths. They spin, they bait, and they gloss – all in the name of making the sale. But are they all myths? Don't we see evidence of these very things in our marketplace?

Biblically-based marketing is not manipulation, but service. Providing the right product to the right people is valuable, life-giving work. And so when we think of marketing, other words should spring to mind. Honesty. Informative. Integrity. Straightforwardness. Service.

Two important marketing concepts are MARKET SELECTION and the MARKETING MIX.

MARKET SELECTION is the choice of which customer needs to attempt to fill, and which customer needs to explicitly not attempt to fill. Every organization has a finite set of abilities and resources and, thus, can only serve a certain group of customers, and only fill a limited set of needs. It is impossible to succeed in being “all things to all people.”

The MARKETING MIX is the “tool kit” of the marketer and consists of four elements:

1. Product policy – all aspects of the product or service being offered to meet the needs of the selected market such as models, brands, versions, packaging, product life cycle.
2. Price policy – how to price the product to the customer.
3. Distribution policy – where and how to distribute the product.
4. Communication policy – how to communicate to the marketplace about the product.

Every business, from the sole proprietorship to the Fortune 500 corporation, needs to address MARKET SELECTION and MARKETING MIX. In fact, not addressing it explicitly (marketing strategies, goals and plans) is addressing it by default (inactivity or discordant activity).

You will not find the word “marketing” in the Bible. Does this mean God's Word is silent on the topic? No, that cannot be true since we learned from the studies on the *Inspired Word of God* that the Bible is authoritative, necessary and sufficient on all matters of faith and life, and that includes business marketing.

Lets dig for the vital truths from God's Word that teach us how, and how not, to market our products and services.

Genesis 1:26-31

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, [I have given] every green plant for food ";and it was so.

31 And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

First, it will be helpful to **establish God's purpose for our work.** Does our work matter to God? Does He care what products and services we market and sell? Does He care how we do it? We are going to Genesis to begin this study. Genesis, the first book in the Bible, is the book of beginnings, and many foundational truths are taught in this book, including God's design for work.

Leader: Read these two passages in Genesis (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:8, 15) and say aloud and mark "man" and any pronouns.

OBSERVE

List what God said about man in these passages:

DISCUSS

What do you learn about work in this passage? Keep in mind that these words and commands were given before the fall and subsequent curse on man regarding his work (Genesis 3:17).

Is all work legitimate in God's eyes? Are we all supposed to be farmers? Does the Bible provide guidelines on what is legitimate and what is not? Lets take a look.

Genesis 2:8, 15

8 And the Lord planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and He placed there the man whom He had formed.

15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Matthew 6:31-33

31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'

32 "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

Leader: Ask someone to read from their Bibles Romans 13:1-7, Ephesians 5:3-11, and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.

Based on these passages, what are some characteristics of "illegitimate" work?

OBSERVE

We've defined "illegitimate" work, now let's consider what God considers "legitimate" work. The context of this passage is Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His teaching that we cannot serve both God and money (6:24), thus when we serve God we don't need to worry about the money to buy the things we need.

*Leader: Read Matthew 6:31-33 and say aloud and mark **need** and **things**.*

How does God define **needs** in this passage?

Who supplies what people need?

DISCUSS

Generally speaking, how does God supply these needs? Where do these things come from?

How does this relate to our discussion about our work, about the products and services that we provide? What is one characteristic of "legitimate" work?

Ephesians 4:25-32

25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one [of you,] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

26 Be angry, and [yet] do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.

28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have [something] to share with him who has need.

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such [a word] as is good for edification according to the need [of the moment,] that it may give grace to those who hear.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

OBSERVE

Paul's exhortation to the church in his letter to the Ephesians is to "... walk in a manner worthy of the calling by which you have been called." He goes on to explain "... that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self" Then he lists several things to lay aside and put on.

*Leader: Read Ephesians 4:25-32. Then walk the group through the verses to pick out what we are to **lay aside** now that we are Christians, and what we then to **put on** instead.*

Lay aside	Put on	Why

Leader: Read Ephesians 4:28 again, but this time in the NIV version (next page).

What are we to stop doing?

What are we to do instead?

Why are these paired?

NIV

28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, doing something useful with his hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

DISCUSS

I believe we can all readily admit to wrestling at times with truthfulness, anger, unwholesome words, and bitterness towards others - even after becoming a Christian. But stealing?

One commentator noted that stealing was prevalent in these pagan cultures, and was not wholly condemned, especially if a person were unemployed and in need. If that were the case, then why did Paul list it right in the middle of these other general characteristics of the "old self," the old sin nature? "You shall not steal" is the 8th commandment (Exodus 20:15). God's Word is clear that stealing is wrong under any circumstances. But, we wouldn't be commanded not to steal if it weren't our nature to steal.

Stealing can take many forms in business. Insider trading – the illegal practice of selling or buying stock based on information not available to all the stockholders or the general public is stealing. "Cooking the books" – the illegal practice of falsely manipulating the corporate financial statements for gain is stealing. Tax fraud – the illegal practice of deliberately cheating on your taxes. Many of us cheer when we see these so-called "white collar" criminals go to jail.

But what about the advertisement that subtly misleads the customer regarding the true usefulness of the product or service, or the actual total cost? What about that broken promise regarding customer service? What about that bankruptcy ruling that permits one to legally not pay their debts? What about those questionable personal expenses recorded as business expenses to lower the tax owed, or that under-the-table income that never gets reported? What about that time you sold something to someone and you knew they really couldn't afford it, or it didn't really meet their need, or you knew it probably wouldn't meet their expectation? What about those manipulative techniques to close a sale? What about that customer who paid more than the other customers? What about all that time you wasted at the office when you were getting paid to work? What about those personal phone calls using the business line? What about those business tithes and offerings that you never gave to God? What about those marginal wages you paid?

Take a moment or two to reflect on this and quietly, in your own heart, confess to the Lord if you have been "stealing" in the conduct of your business, make restitution, repent, and do things differently going forward.

There should be changes in our life when we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. What kind of changes should there be in our business life based on this passage?

What is your definition of a “useful” product or service? Is there a relationship between “useful” and “need?” Do your products and services meet legitimate needs? Are they useful?

INSIGHT

John Woolman, an 18th century Quaker in America who was a merchandiser by trade, wrote this about his work. “It had been my general practice to buy and sell things really useful. Things that served chiefly to please the vain mind in people, I was not easy to trade in, seldom did it; and whenever I did, I found it weaken me as a Christian . . . though trading in things useful is an honest employ.”

“All legitimate work is an extension of God’s work. By legitimate work I mean work that somehow contributes to what God wants done in the world, and does not actively contribute to what He does not want done.” Your Work Matters to God, Doug Sherman and William Hendricks.

What is the “Market Selection” principle that we can extract from what we have studied thus far? How would you apply this to your business?

Proverbs 22:29

29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

Isaiah 32:7-8

7 As for a rogue, his weapons are evil; He devises wicked schemes To destroy [the] afflicted with slander, Even though [the] needy one speaks what is right
8 But the noble man devises noble plans; and by noble plans he stands.

Okay, so now you have identified legitimate customer needs that you think your business can meet. But in most cases this is too broad a market definition.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud Proverbs 22:29 and have the group mark and say aloud "skilled."

The Hebrew word translated "skilled" means extraordinary expertise in an area. Where will the skilled workman stand? Why?

DISCUSS

What is the market selection principle being taught in this verse? How can you apply this to your business?

Okay, you have identified legitimate needs to be met, and you understand which "needs" you can meet better than anyone else in your market. What's next in this market selection process?

In the secular, but insightful, book Built to Last written by James Collins and Jerry Porras, these researchers came to this interesting conclusion: "Contrary to business school doctrine, we did not find *maximizing shareholder wealth* or *profit maximization* as the dominant driving force or primary objective through the history of most of the visionary companies."

Colossians 3:22-24

22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who [merely] please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men;

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Psalm 37:4

4 Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

OBSERVE

*Leader: Read aloud Isaiah 32:1-8 and say aloud and mark **noble**.*

How is the noble man described in this passage? The Hebrew word translated "noble" means willing, generous and also excellent moral character. Compare him to the fool and the rogue.

*Leader: Read Colossians 3:22-24 have the group say aloud and mark the word **heartily**.*

How is the slave (servant) to do his work? Why?

*Leader: Read Psalm 37:4-5 and have the group mark and say aloud **desires**.*

What is the relationship between delighting ourselves in the Lord and the desires of our heart?

DISCUSS

What have we discovered from these three passages regarding the focus of our businesses, our market selection?

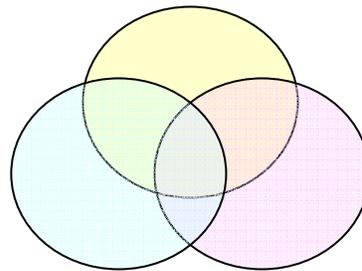
Do you have a passion for your work? Passion, what does passion have to do with it? Well, for the vast majority of very average businesses, apparently nothing at all, as evidenced by shoddy workmanship, indifferent customer service, and a general lack of enthusiasm. But the best businesses seem to have a passion for the work, for the customer, for the mission of the organization.

What is the market selection principle here for the Christian businessperson?

RECAP

Your "sweet spot" – the market you should select to serve – is the market that needs, or at least will find useful, what you can provide better than your competition, and what you and your team are truly passionate to provide.

What is the "sweet spot" for your business? How does this line up with the market your business is currently targeting? What are you going to do about it?



BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES DISCOVERED

- God is a worker, man was created to be a worker, and not only that, but a **co-worker with God**.
- **All legitimate work is an extension of God's work** – work that somehow contributes to what God wants done in the world, and does not actively contribute to what He does not want done.
- Christians in business should **identify legitimate consumer needs** that their business can meet **skillfully** and **passionately**. The corollary to this principle is that if such a market cannot be found for your product or service, maybe you shouldn't be in this particular business.

BUSINESS APPLICATION

1. Is the product or service that you or your company provide "legitimate work" in God's eyes?
2. What legitimate need does your product or service meet? Is it truly useful, and if so, to whom? How do you know this? Have you ever analyzed your satisfied customers to create a market profile?
3. Is there anything about your product or service, or how you deliver it, that is significantly better than your competition? Are you focused on leveraging that potential competitive advantage?
4. Are you and your organization passionate about what you do? Would your customers agree with you? Have you ever asked them?

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