

## **Silence: The missing element in Marketing**

I clearly remember - When I first started to work in the Digital Marketing space, everything was new and fresh and unexplored. Many brands still assumed that social media is a fad, SEM is too difficult and no real business can ever come from it.

The early players in the game had an advantage. They could get a tremendous amount of attention because of low competition.

And then things started changing.

Currently, the Digital Marketing space is extremely crowded. Getting attention has become so much more difficult. This challenge then pushes the brands to be even louder. In order to get attention, the only solution now is to compete even more, right?

More competition, more noise, more chaos.

Many times it is needlessly competitive, where brand A is trying to outperform brand B, there are no specific goals that brand A wants to achieve, but the only brief that the boss of Brand A gives is that “we need more Instagram followers than the Instagram account of Brand B”

Ego-driven.

Marketing can easily become a space, where the work is done at the whims and fancies of our emotions like greed, impatience, and all of those things. These emotions make us marketers insecure. The insecurity then forces us to be noisy. It tricks us into believing that the only way of being successful at marketing is yelling at people, interrupting people and sometimes even tricking people.

Too many times Marketing is done without any direction, without any alignment with the goals forever. It is a runner, running madly in a random direction, hoping and praying that he would reach the destination.

What is the missing ingredient here?

Silence.

Silent marketing encourages brands and businesses to take a different route. Now, instead of trying to be louder, we become silent. We listen more. We focus on a smaller tribe. We focus on marketing that makes an impact, marketing that adds

value, marketing which is very much aligned with the 'why' of the business, marketing which is remarkable and based on values like empathy, right intentions, and generosity.

### **Who needs to read this?**

If you are absolutely, a 100% happy with your marketing initiatives, I don't think this is for you. If you are mildly unhappy, maybe this would help. If you are extremely unhappy, and you feel that your marketing is just not making enough impact and driving the necessary results, then maybe this essay could help you.

Through this essay, I intend to show the reader a different way of marketing. I believe that this new way of marketing will be much more wholesome than the conventional ways. I believe that this way of marketing will be based more on awareness than blindness. I believe that this way of marketing will allow you to execute marketing strategies that matter and make a difference.

As you can see, I have not forced you to give your email id for this e-book. But if you liked what was written, do write to me on [pranavkale120@gmail.com](mailto:pranavkale120@gmail.com)

### **What is a successful Marketing campaign?**

A couple of years back, I remember rejoicing and celebrating with my team. The team was celebrating because we had been successful in making a Hashtag trend for one of our clients - A Shopping Mall.

We had reached out to a few influencers on Twitter, paid them a certain sum of money to tweet about this contest. Owing to the huge fan following of the influencers, a lot of people actually took part in the Twitter contest and the hashtag started trending.

There were a lot of high-fives, a lot of congratulations, a lot of joy and happiness in the air. We had done it! We had beaten Twitter's algorithm, (or rather deceived it by collaborating with influencers), and made a hashtag trend.

The campaign did reach out to a large number of people. Quantity was achieved. But what did we really achieve?

Brand awareness? People who take part in these contests, do they really give a \*\*\*\* about the brand? Does a brand ever succeed in creating loyal fans out of these exercises?

Increase in footfalls? Well, we never calculated. My gut feeling? The campaign made no difference whatsoever as far as the visitors were concerned.

Could there have been a better strategy? Could there have been a marketing strategy where the execution would have actually given us measurable results? Could there have been a strategy where we could have actually used the client's money into something much more productive and meaningful?

Yes.

Instead, we focussed on 'getting big numbers'. We focussed on satisfying the egos; our own egos, the ego of our boss and the ego of our client.

Could there have been a strategy to just increase the footfall in the mall by 50 people? Just 50.

Possibly.

The marketing strategy used by us was a 'noisy strategy'.

The strategy of trying to reach all, the strategy of wanting to be loud, the strategy of wanting to be everywhere, the strategy which is not based on listening, intentions, empathy, generosity... is a noisy strategy.

Could there be a different way of marketing?

Possibly.

Silence is the missing ingredient in Marketing.

## **Listening**

I am almost sure that no-one would disagree that Marketing is about forming connections with the audience. And do you know a really powerful way of forming connections?

That's right, listening.

Think about your favorite teacher, think about your favorite boss, your best friend, your favorite colleague; there are high chances, that the reason you are close to them, is NOT that they are glamorous talkers. The reason you have a connection with them is that they are excellent listeners.

Beautiful relationships are formed when we listen.

However, many times, 'Listening' is misunderstood.

Listening in this context, does not mean - doing nothing. Listening does not mean the act of simply hearing. It is not a passive act.

Listening is much more profound than that. Listening is a skill of responding with awareness and wisdom. Listening is an act of getting on the same page as the other person and then adding value.

Listening is a precious, precious skill.

Listening is hard. Listening takes efforts.

### **How do we listen?**

I will let you figure out this one. The answers are many.

I have seen many brands 'purchase' databases of email ids. A certain amount of money is paid to the database company, and that company then shares the email addresses of people. Pay Rs. 5000 to get the email details of 1 lakh people.

When you get the details, send them an email that they are not interested in the first place. And then we hope and pray that they will respond.

This is a classic example of shouting and yelling.

Cold-calling falls in the same category.

The shift is simple, can we listen instead?

Why getting obsessed about those 1 lakh people.

Why not send an email to only 50 people, and see how many of them care enough to reply. 10? 20? 25? Zero?

(If the answer is Zero, you failed and you need to try again the next day. Give them the value that they need.)

Are we measuring the right things? If nobody replies, it is a serious concern. Maybe, our aim is to not force our message onto 1,00,000 people but to get relevant people to have meaningful conversations with us.

Greed is not good.

Social media gives us a chance to listen. Email gives us a chance to listen. Google Trends gives us a chance to listen.

Let's listen.

### **Chili's Grill and Bar**

One of my favorite brands on Twitter is Chili's Grill and Bar.

The efforts that this brand puts in listening and responding is remarkable. The brand typically listens and then responds to most of the tweets that they get. And by 'respond', I am not referring to a bland robotic reply. By 'respond', I mean, replying like a human being, with a lot of care and attention.

Link: <https://twitter.com/Chilis>

The reason Chili's Grill and Bar is going well is that they are doing the hard work of caring. They are not taking the easier route that most of the other brands are.

### **Empathy**

I found this pretty cool definition of Empathy -

the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner; *also* :the capacity for this

Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empathy>

Empathy encourages us to step into the shoes of the other person.

Empathy is hard; empathy is difficult. It demands us to open up to the suffering of others. And hence it is very easy for us to run away from empathy. However,

practising the quality of empathy can be life-changing. Not just for you, but also for the other person.

Take a look at this made-up story to better understand the quality of empathy

There was a lady who was extremely scared of flying. She happened to be sitting on the plane, which, unfortunately, was suffering from turbulence.

As she was trying to put a brave face, the pilot came to know about the situation. He came and sat next to her. Yes, yes... don't worry, the plane was in the auto-pilot mode.

The pilot shared his life-story with the lady. He told her how he himself was afraid of flying, and the difficulties he had to go through, in order to overcome the fear.

As the lady listened to the story, she felt lighter. Slowly, the fear subsided.

What actually happened?

The pilot deployed empathy. He felt the lady's pain. He dealt with the situation through awareness and empathy, and not according to a rule-book.

This is the power of empathy.

Imagine this - The pilot goes to the lady with an excel sheet and a pie chart, and says to her, "Don't worry. The probability of the plane crash is very low. Look at this pie chart. It explains everything."

Do you think this would have worked? Mathematically, he was correct, no doubt. But in that situation, would this strategy have worked? Probably not. Because that is not what the lady wanted to hear. It wasn't empathetic.

As Marketers, we aspire to make change happen. How will that change happen if we do not the suffering, the troubles, the insecurities of our target audience?

### **How to develop empathy?**

I haven't been able to find a course on Empathy. If you do, please let me know.

Empathy is developed when we drop down the walls surrounding us, and really feel what the other person is feeling. Now I can suggest 2 methods of developing this skill -

## **1. Do the work**

The first one is obvious. In order to be empathetic about me, you need to spend more time with me. You need to put efforts to enter my mind.

Who is the target market? How frequently are you talking to them? Are you listening to them? Are you understanding their pain points?

## **2. Empathy essay**

The other thing that we can do to develop this skill is writing an 'Empathy Essay'.

An Empathy Essay is an essay written from the point of view of the target market. It's an exercise where you argue from your customer's point of view.

Let's get deeper with an example.

Suppose you are Brand A and your competitor is Brand B. You have a certain share of the market, and so does the Brand B.

Now when we say a person buying from Brand B, we usually tend to judge that person. We tend to think of them as silly, stupid and incapable of making a wise decision.

In our head, the wise decision is buying from Brand A!

"Don't you get it? Brand A is so much cooler than Brand B."

"You are simply a fool to buy from Brand B. Look at what you are missing out on!"

Now the moment, we judge or say these statements, we feel good. We instantly feel a sense of relief. That relief is present because we have conveniently shifted the blame of the situation to another human being. But the moment we do that, the growth stops.

Now what we do is that instead of calling them stupid, we put ourselves in their shoes. Because guess what, in their mind, they are making the right choice.

So why exactly are they choosing brand B?

When we write an empathy essay, we actually argue from their standpoint, that buying from Brand B is actually the right decision. At the end of this essay, we will have a clear insight into the fears and insecurities of the people.

Making sense?

[Here is an empathy essay that I had written during my Alt-MBA.](#)

I am going to repeat what I said earlier.

As Marketers, we aspire to make change happen. How will that change happen if we do not the suffering, the troubles, the insecurities of our target audience?

Empathy is a much needed quality.

### **Right intentions**

Well, this is a fascinating thing for me.

Consider a team sport. Let's say Hockey.

In hockey, if a team wants to win, it's absolutely essential that all the players in the team have a common goal. In other words, they need to have the right intentions.

The word 'right' here means intentions which are aligned with the goal. Now, if one of the players in the team becomes obsessed with the number of goals that she is going to score, the intentions are no longer right. They are selfish.

The moment the intentions stop being right, the chances of the team winning diminish.

Now what makes us think that Businesses operate differently?

We all know how we struggle when the 2 Founders of the company indulge in an ego-battle. Or when the designer and the Social Media Executive never seem to agree on a design because of personal issues between them. It's very obvious and clear that in order to succeed, we need to have the best intentions for our clients.

Now, this is not always easy. The client can get very unreasonable. The client can get rude, ruthless, impatient, greedy... and all those unpleasant things. How can one maintain the right intentions for the client in such difficult times?



Well, of course, we need to set boundaries. Of course, if it gets too overwhelming, we need to have the courage to say Goodbye to the client. But if we are to work with someone, and if we hope to achieve amazing things together, we don't have a choice but to have the right intentions for our client.

### **We manipulate**

We love manipulating. I remember how I used to manipulate the Digital Marketing monthly reports so that my work looks good. I used to focus on the statistics that improved so that my boss and my client would feel good about my work. But how does it matter if the Facebook likes have gone up if that wasn't the objective of the client in the first place?

But never did I mention the things that had gone wrong. I never raised my hand and said: "I screwed up."

This is the classic scenario of manipulating the client. Manipulation and the right intentions are the exact opposite of each other.

### **No Client Bitching day:**

One exercise that I strongly recommend to different organizations is the exercise of No Client Bitching day.

Now if we truly want to cultivate the best intentions for our clients, how can we indulge in unwholesome speech? Backbiting and gossiping are like a virus. It's powerless in the beginning, but as the gossiping virus spreads, the more seductive and addictive it is. Also, the moment we push the blame onto the client, we feel relieved. Because now, we are no longer responsible for the pain, the blame is on someone else!

But if we take a step back and become aware of our frustration when the client disapproves a design creative, if we just try to be a little empathetic and actually try to listen and understand what the client is trying to say, we become better at our job.

For one whole day, do not indulge in any sort of gossiping or bitching about the client. One day might seem like a small time duration, but trust me, it isn't easy. If you are ambitious, go with 2 days. If you are really really ambitious, 3 days.

And if the client is really a jerk, dump him. But no point in planting negative seeds on a daily basis as we do the work.

Slowly and steadily, become someone who has only the best intentions for the clients and the bosses.

## **Generosity**

An aware marketer is generous.

An aware marketer believes in adding value. She believes in making change happen. Her focus is not only on the 'conversion ads', but also on the value that the business is bringing to the people.

The marketer knows that there is a lot of noise, and shouting at people won't take work at all. Offering value to people, just might. Sharing gifts with people, just might.

A loud marketer is a little insecure and only wants to focus on making short-term profits. The Aware Marketer, on the other hand, is concerned about the long-game. No, no.. the Aware Marketer isn't just altruistic, he also has the mission of making a profit... but the game that he plays is different.

### **How can the marketer be generous?**

There are so many ways in which Marketers can be generous. Look at Gary Vaynerchuck. You can have various opinions about him, but if you look at his marketing strategy, it is all about adding value. His favorite format is 'Videos'. What is yours?

### **Where can the generous marketer start?**

The marketer can start from anywhere. What is the vision (the 'Why') of the organization? What is the change that the organization wants to make? What status quo is being challenged?

If the organization's mission is to reduce the number of accidents happening on the road, is the marketer paying attention to this vision? Is the Marketer creating Content Marketing Strategies based on this mission? Or is he only trying to sell helmets by using Instagram ads?

In his book, Linchpin, Seth Godin talks about the 3 circles of sharing gifts.

**Circle 1** represents true gifts. It's similar to inviting someone for dinner. You do not charge them, but happily, share the gift with them.

**Circle 2** represents the commerce circle. In this circle, people pay you for your work.

**Circle 3** is born out of the internet. In this circle, you can share your gifts with your tribe, friends, followers, etc.

Brands and marketers are heavily focussing on circle 2. Marketing which is focussed only on the second circle is boring, selfish and insignificant. Maybe, just maybe, businesses will be able to cut through the noise and make more impact (and more money), if they focus on circle 1 and circle 3.

For a Marketer, circle 3 is the most important. It's his stage. It's his platform.

The question then is - Will you make an effort to use circle 3?

### **Being generous can be difficult**

Our conditioning makes it hard for us to be generous. When we open ourselves to generosity, we feel vulnerable. This vulnerability can be scary. We might feel as if we are being used.

When I decided to publish this e-book, a part of my brain said -

“Wait... what?

Will you give away this for free? One month effort for free? Are you nuts?”

The challenge here is to embrace this fear and steadily cultivate the virtue of generosity.

P.S. - I truly believe that for a Marketer, the content can be the best way to share gifts. Blogs, videos, podcasts, e-books, manuscripts, infographics, podcasts... many options are available.

### **Summary**

Whether we like it or not, Marketing has become scary. But it's scary that only if we look at it from a 'noisy' stand-point. But if we choose to listen intently, cultivate

empathy and generosity, and do the hard work which others are not... maybe, just maybe our Marketing will make an impact.

### **Are you mad at me?**

Are you mad at me because I did not share a roadmap? Because I did not share a step-wise guide as to how to go about this?

Does this seem too abstract to you? If it does, you can choose to ignore this completely. But if this essay made you think, if it lit up a bulb in your mind, if this feels like something you always wanted to hear... maybe you shouldn't.

Trust me this isn't a ploy to generate business by keeping the roadmap a secret. Honestly, I don't even have a step-wise guide to this; it totally depends on the business and the overall scenario. Hell, if everyone had a roadmap, everyone would be successful.

The key here is to understand these principles and translate them into actionables in your Marketing strategies and see if they work. If they do, please send me a nice email; it will make me feel nice. If they don't, still let me know. My email id is [pranavkale120@gmail.com](mailto:pranavkale120@gmail.com)

Go now, change the world.