Marketers Have It Wrong: Forget Engagement, Consumers Want Simplicity

In a world where brands are constantly fighting for attention, many marketers are asking themselves a key question: What is the best way to impact purchase decision and brand loyalty? The answer they are likely arriving at is that they should engage potential and current customers via social media. After all, consumers are all about social media, right? Wrong.

The IBM Institute for Business Value found that 60-65% of business leaders who believe that consumers follow their brands on social media sites because they want to be a part of a community. Only 25-30% of consumers agree. The top reason consumers follow a brand? To get discounts – not exactly ideal for a company’s bottom line.

On top of trying too hard to engage with consumers via social media, marketers are generally pushing out too much information, causing people to over-think purchase decisions and making them more likely to change their minds about a product, be less confident in their choice and less likely remain loyal to the brand.

So what should marketers do? Here at Corporate Executive Board, we surveyed more than 7,000 consumers and interviewed 200 marketing executives across consumer brands and industries to find out. The answer: Simplify the decision-making process, so much so that consumers actually think less about the decision. Marketers can do that in three easy ways by helping consumers:

- **Trust the information they receive** – providing recommendations by consumer advisors, ratings and reviews.
- **Learn effectively without distraction** – simplifying the research process by offering clear and streamlined brand-specific product information targeted to each decision stage.
- **Weigh options confidently** – making transparent buying guides and brand differentiated information easily available.

When used together, this approach is known as Decision Simplicity.

Not only is Decision Simplicity the number one driver of likelihood to buy, but the impact of simplifying purchase decisions for consumers is four times stronger than the favored marketing strategy of engagement.

In addition, CEB found that a 20 percent increase in Decision Simplicity results in a 96 percent increase in customer loyalty. It also results in brands being 86 percent more likely to be purchased and 115 percent more likely to be recommended to others.
You may find yourself asking: But how exactly do marketers increase Decision Simplicity? A good example is Intuit, the maker of TurboTax. Here’s how they do it:

- **Trust** – Intuit provides more than 160,000 unfiltered user reviews and ratings on the TurboTax website and helps people find the information most relevant to them.
- **Learn** – Intuit offers a live forum – TurboTax Live Community – where people can ask questions and share information.
- **Weigh Options** – Intuit has designed the TurboTax home page to show basic product choices side by side for easy comparison. The company even goes one step further and includes a “help me choose” function that guides people through an exercise to determine the best provide for them.

Don’t you think it’s time to stop overwhelming consumers with marketing information and cut through the clutter? Take an unconventional approach – forget engagement, increase simplicity.

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