

Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Episode #13: Marketing Defined

[music]

Announcer: Welcome to the Marketing Munchies Podcast series hosted by Dr. Bridget Behe. Each week Bridget and her guests will share information, insights, research-based findings, and her 30 years of experience to help your horticultural business connect better with current and future customers. Now, let's join our host, Dr. Bridget Behe.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Hi, and welcome to this edition of the Marketing Munchies Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Bridget Behe. This week I would like to introduce a new segment of the Marketing Munchies Podcast that I'm going to call Marketing Basics. While these podcasts are not based on my first-hand research, they are based on marketing literature and basic marketing principles and practices.

This first one, today, I'm going to call "the Marketing Concept." Marketing has been defined in a great many ways. Often times, people confuse it with just simply advertising, but marketing is a very rich and diverse set of activities. In 2014, the American Marketing Association revised its definition of marketing to include, basically, the creation, communication, and delivery of value. Now, if you think about it, "value" is really the key word in this definition. Value is what you get for what you pay. All of the activities that a business does in regard to marketing have to do with creating value, communicating value, and delivering value.

If you think about in the creation of value, what typically we do in horticulture is take pieces, parts, and plant seeds or cuttings, and we create something that is far more valuable than the individual inputs, because the plant grows. We can also create value through services—whether that's landscape design, maintenance, or installation. We also create value through the opportunity for consumers to have experiences—whether it's creating a fabulous backdrop for a wedding or birthday party or helping them to grow some delicious food that maybe they have enjoying in an outdoor meal with some friends and relatives.

The communication of value is usually the part that is most often equated with marketing, and that's advertising, but this dimension of marketing really has grown and changed dramatically in the last ten years (particularly with the advent of e-marketing and e-commerce). Social media marketing really has forged a new method where we can connect with consumers. They make the choices of what businesses they choose to connect with, but it really has opened a new arena for many firms to create that sense of community, connect with their consumers (maybe not so much "direct sell" plants and services to them), but create and foster that sense of interest in a particular product or in a particular store.

Then the delivery of value obviously comes when a retailer markets or merchandizes products that consumers find appealing, that they want to have in and around their home. But that delivering value can also come when a landscape designer helps to screen out an unsightly

neighbor or to mitigate some storm water runoff. Think of marketing as that set of activities that help a business create, communicate, and deliver value.

How do we recognize firms that have this marketing perspective or a real sound marketing emphasis? Typically, we see companies may be developed through a 3-step process. That would be a production focus, a sales focus, and then a marketing focus. What do I mean by a production focus? Well, when your eyes are exclusively focused on the product that you are creating, whether that's a stunning perennial or a landscape design or a poinsettia that's going to adorn somebody's table at the holidays. Creating a product is the first step. When the focus is solely on the product, it becomes very difficult to connect with the consumer. Sometimes, firms will develop from this product-focus into a sales-focus. Where they believe if people, they could just get the product in front of somebody, if they could just talk to them about some of the different features, they could really sell them on that particular product.

Well, I think there is also a flaw with that sales-focus, when again, it's more eyes on the product or the service, than eyes on the consumer. Often times, this is where consumers get a very poor perception of sales people, because they believe that some sales people are very pushy (very aggressive, very assertive). I think this comes from that sales person having a pretty singular focus on the product and not much of a focus on the consumer.

Now, the third development or the third step in the marketing perspective, I would call the marketing focus. This is where we see businesses, whether they are primarily sales or not, they are very focused on the consumer and what the consumer needs. When we take our focus off the product and put it onto the consumer, and we understand: "how do they use our product? And what are the challenges? How do they need different dimensions of the product? Do they need something tall or short? Do they need something in color now or in a few weeks? Do they need something to mitigate some runoff? Are they interested in attracting pollinators? Do they want to have something fun to grow and eat with their kids?" When we understand what the consumer's needs are, what the consumer's interests are, that's really where we have the true marketing focus.

To loop back around, when we engage in marketing, our eyes are on the consumer, not exclusively, but primarily (we still have to have very high product quality) we look at what the consumer needs, how they're going to use it (maybe anticipate some of the problems and challenges). Then what we do in our business to connect with them is to creatively develop, creatively communicate, and creatively deliver something that the consumer needs in the time and space and at the price point that they need it.

That's kind of a primer on the concept of marketing, how the American Marketing Association defines the term "marketing" as "a set of activities" that really are centered around creating, communicating, and delivering that very very important word: value.

[music]

Announcer: Thank you for joining us on this week's Marketing Munchies Podcast. For more information or to download the transcript of this podcast, please visit, connect-2-consumer.org. That's C-O-N-N-E-C-T, dash, the number two, dash, C-O-N-S-U-M-E-R, dot, C-O-M.