

Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Episode #33

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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 back to the Marketing Munchies Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Bridget Behe. This week I would like to talk about a really interesting article that was in this month's *Harvard Business Review* called the "Business Case for Curiosity." This was a great article by Francesca Gino who is a professor at the Harvard Business School. It got me thinking about "curiosity" and my job and how that has made me a better professor, a better academician. I kind of take curiosity for granted, but what was interesting to me, and what really struck me about this article was how much business curiosity can help a business be resilient and adapt to change.

She talks about curiosity being important to a business to help them build in some flexibility, build in some resilience, to help businesses adapt to change. It's really interesting that small changes in the business can really improve the business' capacity for curiosity. But, sadly, there are a lot of business cultures where curiosity can seem to contribute to inefficiency and just really is a waste of time. I think it is important that we visit this subject about why being curious is important for a business.

A couple of reasons that Professor Gino gave was that a curious business can make better decisions. You are better able to think of creative explanations for something you see or observe rather than trying to get it to fit into the box. You are thinking more out-of-the-box. It also sets the stage for business innovation. Without being innovative, businesses are going to decline and eventually fail. Curiosity helps employees get a varied perspective on things. If they are curious about learning, curious about new information, curious about "what if..." or "why" something happened. They are better able to put themselves in someone else's position. They would help develop empathy and perspective. Curiosity also opens employees to sharing information, because curious employees are curious learners, so they are actively seeking information.

What I want to do is talk about the five ways that Professor Gino said that businesses can bolster curiosity in the business. The first way is to hire for curiosity. It was interesting that when Google was hiring, they put a billboard up that had people solve an equation. The curious people would go to the website that had the solution for the equation, and that led to another problem to solve which eventually led to a Google application. Google really needs curious people, because they are developing their vision, their future, is really born out of the imaginations of a lot of their employees. Hiring for curiosity, you could ask people: when they came upon a roadblock, or a problem, or an issue, what was their response to that? If people are

actively seeking information, or asking “why?” or “how could we get around this?” Or “how could we make this better?” They are asking good questions in order to solve that problem. That shows an innate sense of curiosity.

The second thing that Professor Gino says that we can do to build curiosity in our businesses is to model it. Leadership asking good questions is a great way to model curiosity. “Why did this problem happen?” “What do you think might have prevented it?” “How could we avoid this situation in the future?” “What do you think our customers are thinking?” Or even asking customers about information. Modeling curiosity really means that you are asking good questions.

The third point that Dr. Gino made was to emphasize learning. Learning over results I think is important, because too many people focus on results and the bottom line and getting sales or getting profitability. While that is important, doing that at the expense of exploring alternatives for what might be possible, how might we have a new revenue stream in the future? How might we become more cost-efficient in growing these plants? How might we better merchandize these products? Really, emphasizing learning, as well as results, is an important part of building curiosity in the business.

The fourth way that she suggested a corporation build curiosity was to help their employees build interests and networks. I think this is a great way to build curiosity. As I was reading this part of the article, I could not help but think about fieldtrips and how important that is to broaden our interest beyond our own industry and look at how are things being done in the hotel industry? How are things being done in shopping malls? What types of food retailers or other service providers can we look at to learn from? Really, emphasizing interests in building those networks especially by going to different places and learning by seeing first-hand, really could help build a sense of curiosity on the part of the employees.

Then, the last way that she suggested that we build curiosity is to have days where we simply just ask, “why?” Her example in the article was really the development of the Polaroid picture. Where Edwin Land’s daughter, who was the... (Edwin Land was the founder of the Polaroid camera) she wanted to know why she had to wait for pictures. Why couldn’t she have that picture right away or within a minute or so? Asking the question, “what if..?” or “why does it have to be this way?” or “how might we change?” or “what is possible?” Really, thinking about future alternatives and what direction that might lead the business in is really important for building curiosity.

As most parents know, one of the first questions children learn to ask is “why?” Foster that sense of curiosity within your own company by having those “ask: why?” days. Think about the curiosity level in your company today. Think about a question or two you could ask as you are hiring to hire for curiosity. Model it yourself by asking good questions. Emphasize learning in the business. Results and alternatives are more important than simply focusing on results. And then, think about the importance and what you can learn from a fieldtrip. When people broaden their interests and broaden their networks, they become more curious and they have more resilience. They are better able to adapt to future changes.

So, I am an avid *Harvard Business Review* reader. I really enjoy that magazine. That's one article I think you should take a look at, and I appreciate you listening.

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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.

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