

Successful Marketing with Maslow

When Abraham Maslow conceived his Hierarchy of Needs in 1943, he couldn't possibly have known that it would be one of the most influential advances in the field of human behavioral study and would remain so well into the subsequent century.

The theory developed by Maslow put forth that the motivation for any action made by any human being is an unfulfilled need. When we have unmet needs, we are motivated to meet them in a specific order. Once the needs on the first level are met, we move on to the needs of the next level, and so on until we reach the top tier.

Physiological requirements are primary concern to a person that keeps him alive. Next is safety needs and then comes social needs. Later in the list is the need for self esteem and last is self-actualization. A student following Maslow's theory will know how this can be adapted in the marketing world. During the attempt to make a sale, it applies not only to the product that is sold; the idea of the product, and the image, but, in the end, the result of the product is also sold. Thus, one or more requirements in the hierarchy may be fulfilled.

Obviously, a marketing campaign will be more successful the more it appeals to the lower levels of unfulfilled need in a person's life. What this means for you, the marketer, is that knowing your audience's needs is key. A product that promises to fulfill an esteem need will be virtually useless to a customer whose safety needs are not yet met.

In order to be successful in any marketing endeavor, the first step is to get a firm grasp on the psychographic motivators to which you will be appealing. Which need on the hierarchy is your product going to fulfill? How will it fulfill this need, and how can you prove to your potential customers that it will effectively fulfill their need?

A more important issue is how you can address the level of need of potential customers you are trying to reach. If a product is requested by a customer, then they are doing your work for you. It is hard, however, to tell what a total stranger wants when you are trying to approach them for the first time.

The best way to overcome this obstacle is simple, and it's one that every marketer is taught from the very beginning of their career: just talk. Talk about sports, the weather, or family life - anything other than the product you are trying to sell. Chatting with your potential customer in a friendly, non-pressured way will allow you to pick up on invaluable clues about their needs.

When you are able to understand the motivations of your potential customers, you approach the ability to meet their needs. After you figure out what motivates them then you can gear your sales pitch towards what will be effective for each customer. As you understand the needs of customers in general you can be more effective in selling to the market in general.

Many management practices today are based on Maslow's theory. His theory can also be useful when it comes to marketing. The most important thing is to be aware of how you can help the customer decide that they need your product.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

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