

THE CIRCLES OF MARKETING



Most amateurs and citizens believe that marketing is the outer circle. Marketing = advertising, it seems. The job of marketing in this circle is to take what the factory/system/boss gives you and hype it, promote it and yell about it. This is what so many charities, politicians, insurance companies, financial advisors, computer makers and well, just about everyone does.

The next circle in has so much more leverage. This is the circle of telling a story that resonates with a tribe. This is the act of creating alignment, of understanding worldviews, of embracing and elevating the weird.

Smart marketers in this circle acknowledge that their product or service isn't for everyone, but bend over backwards to be sure that some people will be able to fall in love with it.

The next circle is easily overlooked. This is the act of changing what surrounds the actual product or service, adding enough usability and support and atmosphere that the perception of the product itself changes. Zappos did this for shoes. Ikea almost willfully goes in the other direction with its furniture assembly and delivery approach. When you go to an expensive restaurant, you're buying far more than what the chef cooked. Products and services are only commodities if you treat them that way.

And the innermost circle is the product or service itself. When the thing you sell has communication built in, when it is remarkable and worth talking about, when it changes the game—marketing seems a lot easier.

Of course, that's because you did the marketing when you invented the thing, saving you the expense and trouble of yelling about it.

When in doubt, when your marketing isn't working, the answer is easy: go one circle in.
— Seth Godin