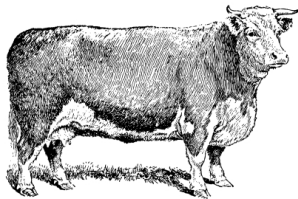


Drive Vs. Draw



Seven practical ways to provide value in the digital channel.

By Jonathan Kochis

Introduction

The notion of "drive vs. draw" as a framework for understanding how to provide value through digital marketing is something I've developed over time, through experience and practice, as both a web professional and as a consumer myself.

It hit home when I was asked to give a digital marketing trend report to an industry association in Toronto. The speaker before me listed "driving traffic to your web site" as a key marketing strategy.

"Drive," I thought to myself, "that just doesn't sound like something we should be doing to people." To me, "driving" people to something almost infers an anticipated unwillingness to co-operate that traditional marketers attempt to overcome using clever messaging. In other words, "driving" means pushing and prodding people like cattle. That doesn't work online.

So I decided to risk creating a little friction: I challenged the speaker to think of digital marketing in terms of "draw" rather than "drive":

What can we do to provide a valuable experience, such that our customers will be drawn to our efforts in the digital channel and more importantly, be willing to share these experiences with friends?

She responded with a hostile glance, but I noticed nods of agreement from other attendees in the room.

My next move was to try refining my thoughts to put them in a blog post. I find this helps and is a great way to validate or receive input on embryonic ideas. Through the feedback I've received since the original post, I've developed a framework for value-creation using a combination of these 7 forms of value:

1. Information
2. Entertainment

3. Utility
4. Exclusivity
5. Recognition
6. Savings
7. Connection

The difference between "drive" and "draw" is not unlike the difference between outbound and inbound marketing: the former is typically interruptive in nature and requires marketers to buy or beg their way in, while the latter attracts consumers by appealing to their needs and providing value.

The following chapters in this ebook cover each of those 7 forms of value, respectively citing best-practice examples along the way.

Information

In 1995 when the Internet reached my small, rural area, I spent hours simply reading, researching, and seeking information from this seemingly endless resource. Now I turn to the web for my daily weather report, news, recipes, home improvement tips, business information, and whatever I happen to find on Wikipedia. There is tremendous value in providing real, honest, usable information in the digital channel.

In Practice:

Rona, a large Canadian home improvement retailer, has a "Projects"¹ section on their web site. There I can find detailed steps on how to make my laundry room more practical -- from layout, to furnishings, to decor. I can also find instructions and a free plan outlining how to build a 16' x 22' garage. If I download the plans and proceed with my project it's quite likely that I'll start with Rona when purchasing my materials.

Blogging has largely developed as a means for businesses and individuals to grow large, active communities by providing valuable information related to a specific field. One of the most effective is Smashing Magazine²: a blog that offers tips, advice, and reviews to the web design and development community. The free information posted by Smashing Magazine draws web professionals looking to grow their business, and generally improve their knowledge and skills.

¹ www.rona.ca/project/build-garage_projects

² <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/>

Entertainment

The economic downturn has drawn people towards free, online games. A report from early 2009 showed that online gaming sites received 86 million visitors in December 2008, with 27% growth month-on-month.

Gaming is just one example. People are naturally drawn to watch online video, read blog posts and articles, and engage in peer-to-peer video chatting using applications like Chatroulette. All of these represent value for users in the form of entertainment.

When thinking of providing value via entertainment, especially if it's in the form of games, I recommend putting serious thought into how it increases (or decreases) the effectiveness of your brand's position. Make sure whatever you do fits with the essence of your brand and doesn't conflict with other initiatives in your marketing plan.

In Practice:

Dekalb, a seed company in the Monsanto family, has an online game called Canola Curling³. The game seems a little hokey at first but it does become kind of addictive after the first few rocks are thrown. I'm not suggesting that all farmers curl, but in this case the game fits well with Dekalb's target audience.

The Tim Hortons web site features a "Tools and Fun" section where visitors can watch branded video and play a game called Donut Sudoku⁴. Sudoku really has nothing to do with pastries and commodity-grade coffee but it does offer entertainment value to many people. Tim Hortons has paired the positive feeling of being entertained with its brand and products -- even though the two aren't necessarily related.

³ <http://www.dekalb.ca/swfs/dekalbcurling.html>

⁴ <http://www.timhortons.com/ca/en/tools/sudoku.html>

Utility

A tool or application we use as part of our daily routines can certainly generate a lot of drawing power, but it doesn't even have to be used regularly. Offering just the right tool for the right occasion may be just as effective.

For the purpose of this chapter I'm going to assume that mobile applications fit as part of your digital channel, along with web sites and social networks. The iTunes App Store has over 11,000 applications in the Utilities category alone. The specific utility provided by these applications ranges from lighting a dark room (Flashlight) to calculating the quantity of material needed to build a backyard fence.

Is there a utility you could provide that is related to the product or service you offer to consumers?

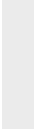
In Practice:

When building and deploying a mobile application I recommend focusing on the utility provided by the app itself, as opposed to pushing your brand or company. Time Out London⁵ is an iPhone application that helps people "seek out and celebrate one-of-a kind experiences" in the UK's largest city. The app provides utility by helping people organize their social schedule and see ratings and reviews by others. Though it's called Time Out London, the app is sponsored by Smirnoff. The focus of both the app and corresponding web site is to provide value before pushing the Smirnoff brand.

While working with Samsonite Canada, we integrated a flight tracking application into their public website⁶. It doesn't add value

⁵ <http://itunes.apple.com/uk/app/time-out-london/id345010376>

⁶ <http://www.samsonite.ca/page/flight-status>



to the product itself, but it certainly adds value to the experience people have while using it, which helps draw people closer to Samsonite's brand.

Exclusivity

According to Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs, the desire for exclusivity is an "esteem need" along with the need for acceptance, status, and recognition. We're each proud of things that are uniquely our own.

We're all familiar with the satisfaction that comes from having something our peers aren't aware of or can't acquire. Personally, I have a pair of yellow Adidas track shoes from Italy that I haven't seen anywhere in Canada yet. Nothing expensive, just not available here, so they have more value to me.

Providing exclusivity online is a relatively simple thing to do. Technology allows us to customize special products, services, and promotions for a limited time or to a specific region, almost automatically.

In Practice:

Threadless⁷, an online t-shirt retailer, does an excellent job of providing value through exclusivity. As a Threadless subscriber I recently received an email informing me that I could purchase a limited edition set of tees, but only until 11:00 am. Unfortunately, none of the tees matched my yellow Adidas track shoes -- but the exclusivity of the offer was so appealing, it was tempting to take advantage of it anyway.

⁷ <http://www.threadless.com/>

Recognition

The feeling of being recognized as a unique individual can be a very rewarding experience. Maslow placed our desire for recognition alongside similar needs for status, fame, attention, and other motivations at the level of esteem. The speed at which information travels in the digital age makes it easy to be recognized by a greater number of people over a shorter period of time. For better or worse, it's the reality of our connected world.

Brands and businesses can provide value-by-recognition through an increasing number of tactics. One of the simplest ways is to provide a platform for customers to speak and make their opinions heard. An important step that is often overlooked when thinking in this vein is the simple step of asking for input. Facebook Pages are excellent forums in which to ask questions to fans of your brand. A small level of recognition is provided by simply soliciting input, but the reward is far greater when the comment is recognized by a response from the brand.

In Practice:

Frito Lay Canada recently ran a viral video contest for its Doritos brand called Doritos Virality⁸. On their website, they presented their fans with a challenge: "Do it well, and you may get super famous and could get super rich at the same time. Just name the newest unidentified Doritos® flavour. Make a viral video about it. Then, use your Internet savvy to help your video go real viral, real fast." The cash prizes offered as part of the contest are certainly appealing but our desire to become "super famous" is being tapped here as well.

⁸ <http://www.doritosvirality.ca/>

Savings

Selling products and services online is generally less expensive for retailers than operating a brick and mortar storefront or physical operation. In most cases the overhead saved is passed on to consumers (or at least it should be) in the form of lower prices. Savings can be provided by simply offering your consumers a discount for shopping online or perhaps by allocating discount codes or limited-time specials.

By presenting savings like that, customers are also drawn through recognition, exclusivity, and connection. People love getting a deal -- and they love telling their friends about it. Savings can be a great draw on its own, but it's most effective when combined with other forms of value, like exclusivity and connection.

In Practice:

Someone on Twitter pointed me to an online retailer called Monoprice.com⁹, which offers deep discounts on a number of home theatre and PC cables. Because some national electronics retailers charge prices for HDMI cables that border on ridiculous, people like me (and the person who bragged about it on Twitter) are compelled to tell everyone about the great value offered by Monoprice and other sites.

⁹ <http://www.monoprice.com>

Connection

Perhaps the greatest benefit ever realized by the Internet is its ability to easily connect people around the globe. Many brands and businesses have groups of fans and customers who enjoy being connected and communicating with one another, it's quite possible that yours does too.

It's satisfying to find like-minded people with whom we can share ideas and grow as individuals. As the African proverb says "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." As we strive to go further as individuals we seek others to share in (and improve) the journey.

When approaching the idea of facilitating connection in the digital channel it's important to remember that communities work best when they aren't governed or restricted by rules put in place by the brand. When people are empowered to feel a sense of freedom and ownership of the platform, the most passionate users will voluntarily assume responsibility for answering questions and addressing other people's concerns. Often, negative feedback is met by positive rebuttals from fellow users who support the brand.

In Practice:

Though rules are in place, the official community for Ford's Sync product¹⁰ is active and provides a wealth of value to Ford owners. Users are able to ask technical questions about the product and often receive replies immediately from other Ford owners. Additionally, that serves to lend more authenticity to the platform and affinity with the brand.

¹⁰ <http://boards.synccommunity.com>

Put Your Draw Into Practice

Online, people resist efforts to be driven by marketers. Businesses that push and prod people like cattle aren't effective in the digital channel.

Instead, appeal to people's needs and desires: draw them to your brand by creating value they will identify with and want to share with their friends: give them something that informs, entertains, or is useful to them; offer people opportunities to experience a sense of exclusivity, recognition, and savings. Finally, let them connect with others who love your brand.

You don't need to offer all 7 forms of value. Depending on your brand and the needs of your consumers, it might be enough to offer one or some combination of these forms of value. The early stages of any digital marketing plan should therefore clearly outline how and where value can be provided based on the needs of the target audience.

In some cases, your customers might already be creating these kinds of value for themselves, and it would be counterproductive to compete against them. I always recommend researching on Facebook and other social networks for communities that already exist. Depending on your situation, it might be best to join and support an active community as opposed to starting one from scratch. Instead of starting a Facebook fan page for themselves, Coca Cola put their support behind an existing page started by fans and used it as the official brand presence on Facebook.

After setting objectives and researching the needs and opportunities that are available, tactical ideation can grow from a framework built out of the 7 forms of value I've mentioned in this book.

To help, I've included a work sheet. It starts with identifying an audience need and progresses through opportunities for the 7 forms of value:

1. Information
2. Entertainment

3. Utility
4. Exclusivity
5. Recognition
6. Savings
7. Connection

Give it a try and let me know what you think. I hope this framework adds value to your digital strategy.

About Me



Since my first job as a brand and web marketer in 2003 I've been involved, on a professional level, in online marketing and digital strategy. At the moment I'm co-founder and account director at Resolution Interactive Media (<http://www.res.im>), a web design and digital marketing firm in London, Ontario, Canada. I have a wonderful wife and two gorgeous children who teach me patience, understanding, and love on a daily basis. I enjoy offline activities such as ice hockey, soccer, pint-sampling, and spending time with friends (usually all four activities go hand-in-hand).

I'm interested in your feedback and furthering the discussion around the points I've presented in this ebook. Here's how to reach me:

Email: jonathan@resolutionim.com

Twitter: @jonathankochis

Drive Vs. Draw

Idea Validation Worksheet



1. Identify consumer/customer/client/market need:

2. Choose the best way to provide value:

- Information
- Entertainment
- Utility
- Recognition
- Savings
- Connection
- Exclusivity

3. Write your awesome idea here:

4. Is the idea brand-appropriate?

- Yes
- No