

6 Basic Human Needs to Rethink Marketing

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Bryan Kramer

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As marketers, it's our job to use stories to build relationships with our audience that both meet their needs and align with the brand we represent. But how do we know which needs hit the hot buttons that are sure to evoke a response?

Over the years, I've adopted the "6 Basic Human Needs" that Tony Robbins uses as a foundation in his teaching, and morphed them to apply to marketing:



1. Certainty. We all want to know what's going to happen. People with certainty as a primary need are the ones who skip to the last few pages of a novel before they even start at page 1. As brands, we all want to surprise and delight our customers, but remember that most of your potential customers want to know the results of the experience before they buy. Certainty happens with trust – trust of a friend explaining their experience, or trust with the brand because they've experienced it firsthand. Certainty – or consistency – is one of the hardest needs to fulfill for brands, especially if you're selling service where interactions can be unpredictable. Deliver certainty to your customers along with a great brand and you'll have customers for life.

2. Variety. Everybody loves an adventure. A ride. The unpredictable. Variety is what keeps horror movies as a thriving genre. For marketing, it's no secret that the customer journey has been turned upside down, in that there isn't one sales pipeline or

channel that works alone anymore. Today, every story should be told within the context of where it's delivered – social, mobile, SMS text messaging – because consumers are using every one of these channels. We love the variety of channels we have to choose from, and use each one for slightly different purposes. As a consumer, using for example, the in-app chat feature in the game "Words with Friends" to nurture a relationship is fun and new. As a marketer, it's a nightmare to consider the scale of these diverse and random channels entering the mix every day.

3. Significance. Simply put, we all need meaning in our lives in order to feel good about what we are doing. We need to be acknowledged for a job well done. We need to own our own hilltop somewhere. When brands find ways to personalize their stories to a 1:1 level, it gives their audience the significance they crave. It's achieved by listening, acknowledging, and reflecting it back to the originator in a way that makes them feel special and important. A significant challenge for many global brands today.

4. Connection. This basic need is the primary reason why social exploded and will never go away. The reason we join them is to belong to something we all believe in with a common purpose. People need to feel connected – to themselves, their families, their community, their country, their planet, their Universe – and for brands, it goes without saying that if you can't connect with your audience, you need to identify the problem and approach it differently. The stories we tell have to connect as simply as possible to the core of your audience. In order to

do this, it takes real authenticity and transparency. I know these are the buzzwords of the day, but I don't use them loosely. It's that simple.

5. Growth. I constantly marvel at people who proclaim that they're happy with themselves exactly as they are right now. Every human being has a need to grow – mentally, cerebrally, psychologically, ethically – in other words, we were built to never stop learning. As marketers, part of our role is to help others become successful through teaching and learning. When we understand how and why to use a product, or why we should buy this over that, that is information we can use to grow our knowledge – as long as it's created with authenticity. The challenge for marketers today, with so many ways to distribute and consume information, is the persistent battle is noisy and never-ending. Good news: Also never-ending is our insatiable human need to grow.

6. Contribution. Everyone needs to feel like what they're doing is making a difference. In work, we need to feel like an important contributor to the success of the company. We donate our time to help others in need. And online, we offer our opinions and reviews to contribute to a conversation. In social, it's called "engagement", to describe when you actively participate in groups instead of just joining them and passively watching from the sidelines. When you're engaged, you increase your chances to make connection with others sharing common interests. As a brand, you can tap into this basic need by making your customers feel like they're making a difference in the success of your mission. You can solicit your employees for new ideas, or match up mentors together to share experience and information. In any case, we all need to feel like what we're doing matters.

KEY TAKEAWAY: We are all connected as humans and share basic needs that when activated, can be powerful for marketers. Tapping into this core set of values in your marketing initiatives will give your efforts a boost of human energy that will activate your audience into action.

Author's Note: Thank you to [Brian Solis](#) and [John Valpreda](#) for reminding me about why I got into this business in the first place. For me, it's these tenets that resonated most when listening to you speak.