

Find That Common Ground

Increase sales, say the Eisenberg brothers, with a message that speaks the customer's language across all marketing channels **By Eric Butterman**

Jeffrey and Bryan Eisenberg like to introduce themselves as “just two guys from Brooklyn, N.Y.” You’d never know it judging by their success as online marketing experts and best-selling authors. Cofounders of Future Now, a marketing consulting boutique, the Eisenberg brothers have helped companies increase leads by as much as 5,500 percent. They even claim that their 2005 book, *Call to Action: Secret Formulas to Improve Online Results*, was the first to land on the bestseller lists of *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* without bookstore distribution. The Eisenbergs are back in the news with their latest tome, *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark? Persuading Customers When They Ignore Marketing*, which reveals how businesses can optimize increasingly interconnected media channels. *The Advertiser* recently caught up with the dynamic duo to discuss the book at greater length.

Q. What is one of the major lessons readers will glean from your book?

A. (Jeffrey) Online brand marketing and offline marketing are seen as discrete disciplines, but my brother and I see them as [connected]. There’s all this talk about direct marketing and branding. People are confused about how to make them work together. By introducing scenario planning in the book, we connect the two. Branding and direct marketing are discrete only to a company, but to a customer, it’s all the same experience.

Q. Could you talk about the online marketing component further?

A. (Jeffrey) Traditional marketers [say to us], “We don’t sell online.” They’re right, but only because they’re not paying attention to it. People look online before

buying, so we put a lot of data into that premise. For example, car companies spend a lot of money [on their Web sites], yet people go to other sites to get information first. It’s time they made their sites more applicable.

Q. A big focus of the book is on an integrative model you call Persuasion Architecture. What does that mean?

A. (Jeffrey) Persuasion Architecture is a way of deliberating how your customers



will buy instead of how you will sell to them. And there’s a big difference. One customer may buy online, while another may prefer a different channel like TV. We explain how to integrate your message across all channels and all platforms so you have the best chance to hit on the one that your customer relates to. It’s about speaking their language without knowing which [channel they prefer]. It’s also about finding out what moves people. Persuasive momentum helps customers move forward as volunteers. To do this, we have to ask three questions: Who is the customer? What is the action we want them to take? What would motivate them to take that

action? You need an archetype to develop empathy for this.

Q. You suggest that empathy is more important than sympathy. Why?

A. (Jeffrey) If marketers could develop empathy, they’d be more effective. Everyone can sympathize with an audience, but you want to place yourself in [the customer’s] shoes. We’re not the first to talk about personas, but we use them to make empathy much more tangible. We’re taking the [customer] research we have and instead of saying, “They’re 24 years old,” we turn it into a story. I remember what it’s like to be 24, but I’m not in that headspace as a 40-year-old. The story puts me there.

(Bryan) Today, more customers want to hear marketing in the voice of everyday people. When companies put on marketing hats, they talk like advertisers. It’s not a real language. You can’t talk to someone like you do in commercials.

Q. When you say personas, what do you mean?

A. (Bryan) Marketers have always used market segments to profile people. Personas are about understanding behavior instead of actual segments. People will change behavior on the basis of where they are in the buying process. You have to prepare for all those modes and mimic customers because your goal is to gain customers that are more popular to you.

Q. What should marketers be mindful of if they concentrate on just one channel?

A. (Bryan) Give your online customers the easiest way to the checkout line. How often do you find what you’re looking for in the first three pages on sales sites these days? Not often. You have to make things as visible as you can from the home page on.