

In Pursuit of the Micro-Moment

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For the last few years Google has been spending a lot of time trying to understand something called the micro-moment. The micro-moment is the time between researching a product or service and the time a person makes the buy decision. It is during this slice of time that the brain tells the person; yes you should (or should not) buy this product or service. Understanding the brain and a person's emotional response during these micro-moments has become very important for marketers. This behavioral approach to marketing is often referred to as Neuro-Marketing.

"Micro-moments collect and use data to predict consumers' needs, delivering answers before one even asks a question. Done well, marketers who can deliver value in the micro-moment have the opportunity to create exceptional experiences that differentiate brands, strengthening the bond consumers will have with those brands for years to come." – Why Micro Moments Will Require Magic, Business Trends, October 19, 2015

The traditional approach to marketing works hard at trying to convince someone to act. This can be a drawn-out process, requiring a barrage of ads over time. Increasingly people are not interested in evaluating and thinking about your products over time. What Google and others are realizing is that the brain wants an easy and quick way at making the buy decision. For example, simple value propositions are preferred over complex presentations – the brain reaches an efficient conclusion with little effort. Traditional marketing is flawed – it keeps reaching out and trying to convince the brain to act or at least provide some input. In the traditional marketing world, the brain finally gives in and takes a guess at what to buy.

"Neuro-Marketing has been applied extensively in product and package design, in part because people find it very hard to articulate why they like or don't like a design, and in part because people are very poor predictors of their future buying behavior. Neuro-Marketing can help marketers and product designers answer three questions: 1) How do new products get noticed; 2) What makes a product or package attractive; and 3) Why do so many new products fail and what can be done about it." – NeuroMarketing for Dummies by Stephen J. Genco, PhD, Andrew P. Pohlmann, and Peter Steidl, PhD

In this new world of marketing, every single detail matters since we are emotional creatures reacting to what we see. Visual communication is more effective than reading through text. Knowing how to present with the right mix of visuals makes the conversion exercise much easier. This is one of the key takeaways with trying to convert people during these micro-moments. You have to make the exercise extremely easy – we are lazy and we don't want our brains spending a lot of time trying to figure things out.

Larger companies now make the study of micro moments a part of their marketing programs. Microsoft studies users' interactions with computers including their feelings of surprise, satisfaction and frustration. Frito-Lay has studied female brains, learning to avoid any pitch that may convey guilt and guilt-free when selling "healthy" as part of its value proposition. Getting these micro-moments right makes the difference between buy or no-buy decisions.

Part of the lesson here is that people often do not react the way we think they will react. So you can easily get fooled when you do traditional marketing, not understanding micro-moments. Even simple things like color combinations can turn people off. You have to run different versions or scenarios past people to truly understand how they will react. For example, you may want to try different mixes and presentations in different stores, compare the reactions and see what moves the needle in a positive direction. This is part of how you pursue the micro-moment.

"Yet if you think about what people actually do in an organization from day to day, the bulk of their efforts are spent on what I call the 'first mile' problems. These include the efforts devoted to thinking through the competitive landscape; developing strategies to address it; designing processes of innovations; and coming up with new products and services. Very little attention is paid to the 'last mile' – the part where a potential customer actually gets to your website, walks into your retail store, or talks to your sales representative, and then makes the decision to purchase your product (or not)." – The Last Mile: Using Behavioral Insights to Create Value by Dilip Soman, Rotman Magazine, Fall 2015

Companies that get their micro-moments (or last mile) right usually provide a set of basic options. They include fallback positions for the brain to take, making the conversion process effortless. For example, maybe you allow people to use the product on a trial basis or free initial consultation. The key here is to present a low risk option that the brain can default against. You should also limit the options to no more than three; otherwise people will click away. It can also help to present a set of preferences since you are not sure how people will react. In order to get to profitable conversions, you will need to make a compelling visual argument that converts the customer to a long-term commitment. Keep in mind we are lazy and we do not want to commit at first, but eventually we commit as we realize the benefits of your product or service.

A final point concerns social validation by others. If you can convey this as part of your pitch, then you are more likely to get positive micro-moments. A good example is high customer reviews from Yelp when compared visually against the competition with lower ratings, triggering the positive reaction or conversion you are seeking.

This article has touched on the very basics behind micro-moments or what many call Neuromarketing. It's all about understanding customer behavior and designing around this behavior to get a conversion. And this behavior has a lot to do with how the brain responds to what is being presented. These tiny micro moments can make a huge difference.

#Neuro Marketing