

Segmenting the Marketing Department

Part of being human is that we are hard-wired to see patterns; to pigeon-hole; to classify. We can't turn it off. So it should come as no surprise that segmentation has become one of the mantras of our profession. Maybe it's just me, but segmentation is a concept that never really grabbed me as being the path to universal domination. It always seemed backwards looking; a bit too trite – “early adopter”, “empty nester”.

But then I realized that I had spent quite a lot of mental energy over the years doing exactly the same to the people who worked with me and for me. I was always segmenting the marketing department.

The first and most obvious way to segment was by the parts of the job with which they most aligned themselves. Using this approach, I found I was able to categorise 95% of Brand Managers into one of three groups:

- Research geek
- Snake Oil Salesman
- Advertising Wannabee

Research Geeks are always, but always, sat at their desks. They can be relied upon to spout data in any situation, but especially when responding to creative work. When it comes to stirring the passions, they fall a little flat.

The Snake Oil guys feel at home on the stage in front of a 300 strong sales force. The sales team loves them. Their team loves them. But they annoy the Finance Dept. Where's the detail? Where's the analysis? Where's the process?

Then there are the Advertising Wannabees. They have an unmistakable look – the gelled hair, the impractically too rectangular glasses, and just in case we had missed the point, the pony tail. They believe themselves to be experts on advertising, and can't resist inputting into every last detail – death by a thousand interventions.

However, these are just first impressions. When you have had a chance to gauge someone's impact on the business, then a whole new segmentation kicks in by which you can clearly and easily categorise everyone:

- Movers and Shakers
- Bystanders
- Victims

Movers and Shakers have a positive impact on the business – leave their footprints in the snow. I reckon less than 10% of Brand Managers fall into this category. Nurture these people – they will make you famous.

Bystanders used to frustrate the heck out of me. Business seems to go on around them. They have all the technical capabilities to Move and Shake, but it never

quite happens. They just seem to lack that inner desire to make a difference and they usually have a highly infectious attitude problem.

Victims however, do leave their mark on businesses. Bad things happen to them - but there is always someone else to blame. I used to think that Victims were just unlucky Bystanders; but there seems to be something deeper than that; something written in destiny.

So, I hear you asking; in which segment was I?

If you talk to enough people who worked with me, the answer will be – all of the above.

And that's my problem with segmentation. Show two people exactly the same information, and they will see two completely different patterns. Which is right? It doesn't matter. If it works for you and helps you comprehend – use it. If it doesn't resonate – then don't force it.