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BrandAnimation: We're Not an Army; It's Not a War

By Erik Hauser



Marketers, as you all well know, are professionals who choose words very carefully for a living. So why do we continue to use military terminology when talking about what we do, and in terms of the people we're trying to reach? You know what I'm talking about: We often speak as though we're engaged in some sort of global war (or

campaign) with our allies (clients) against their targets (customers).

It's a new marketing world, and it requires a new way of articulating what we hope to accomplish. Our intended audiences are not targets. We aren't aiming our arsenal of marketing weapons in guerilla campaigns against people. Smart and ethical marketers are trying to create a dialogue and win the mindshare of customers by creating enticing propositions that stimulate purchase. That's a lot different than it sounds in the boardrooms of agencies around the globe.

I think it should be more like Peter Gabriel sang: "I come to you defenses down with the trust of a child." We need to throw away the terms "targeting" and "targets" and as an industry find new ways and words to explain the positive engagement and experiences we want people to have with the brands we represent..

It doesn't end there. Get ready to throw on your full protective body armor because here comes "viral marketing." I am guilty of having thrown this term around in the past, but now I try to stay clear of it and use "peer-to-peer marketing" instead.

Maybe we just don't fully realize that the words we use in our business dealings affects us on a deeper level and how we operate day to day. Think about Don Imus. Shouldn't we all be using terms that truly reflect what we're doing and how we think about it? So I'm going to end this here and start working on creating the next great experience between my clients and their customers.

Erik Hauser is creative director/founder of San Francisco-based marketing firm Swivel Media and founder of IXMA, the International Experiential Marketing Association. He also moderates the Experiential Marketing Forum.

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