

nothing more than feelings

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“Emotion is the bridge to take to cross the chasm from the early market to the mainstream market.”



That was one of the points from my address at a [Women in Technology International luncheon](#) last week. The topic of my talk was **“Crossing the Digital Health & Fitness Chasm.”**

I outlined practices that enable technology companies to successfully [cross the chasm](#) between early adopters and mainstream consumers. I spent some time unpacking why and **how successful companies use emotional appeals** – I thought I’d share some of my thoughts here.

The challenge is that, unlike the early market, mainstream consumers aren’t into technology for technology’s sake. That means simply designing a solid go-to-market strategy around an innovative technology is not enough – you must build a brand in order to produce a successful sustainable business. This requires some shifts:

- From designing great products...to designing **great experiences**
- From thinking about how a product functions...to also thinking about how a product **makes people feel**
- From enrolling users to adopt new behaviors with technology...to approaching customers as people who are interested in **enhancing the way they live**
- From getting people’s attention...to also having a **magnetic quality** that attracts them to you
- From simply communicating with them...to **engaging** them
- From making a sale...to **winning people’s hearts** so that they love you — they are willing to pay more for you, they want to buy more products from you, and they want to tell their friends about you.

Making an emotional appeal is key to making these changes. [A New York Times article](#) explains why. It observed, “...in the last 50 years, the economic base has shifted from production to consumption. It has gravitated from the sphere of rationality to the realm of desire: from the objective to the subjective, to the realm of psychology.”

Emotion was what brought back Apple from its near death back in 1997. Remember the [Think Different](#) ad campaign? Then Sr. WW Marketing Dir. [Allen Olivo](#) explains that they ran the campaign because *“We had to make the Apple brand stand for something again. One of our strengths is that Apple users have an **emotional attachment** to our brand. To restore and build meaning into the Apple brand, we **first** made an appeal to that attachment. **Then** we followed up with a **rational** appeal based on our products.”*[emphasis mine]

Apple knew people have to like and trust you before they will buy you. That’s why an emotional appeal is so important.

An emotional appeal also helps to **differentiate products**. This is particularly true in categories where differences between products aren’t immediately obvious like heart rate monitors and credit cards.

To most people, [MasterCard](#) and [Visa](#) are 3.5 x 2.5 inches of plastic and the differences between them are only based on the bank you get them from and the terms that bank offers. So the two brands usually run neck and neck in terms of purchase volume, their industry’s key business metric. But in 1997 MasterCard launched its [Priceless](#) ad campaign. Through it, MasterCard affirmed that the dream or promise connected to products is as powerful if not more so than the actual material objects themselves. With such an emotionally resonant message, MasterCard increased its purchase volume by 16% and it’s taken years for Visa to regain its loss.

Emotion also helps **increase perceived value** which allows companies to charge higher price points. [Method](#) is a brand of natural, biodegradable household cleaners and soaps and other personal care products. When Method launched in 2001, it elected to price its products at a 15-20% premium relative to competitors. This was a big risk because the categories it plays in are notorious for having little price elasticity and relying heavily on promotion. But the brand has been successful because it’s struck an emotional chord with consumers. From the way the products look to the ingredients in them to the values the company espouses, Method inspires customers’ love.

New technologies and features may come and go or be quickly copied, but an emotional appeal has **more lasting impact**. As [Maya Angelou](#) famously said, *“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”* When you bond with customers emotionally, they are more likely to purchase and use you on an ongoing basis and to stick with you when problems arise. According to research by [Forrester](#), brands that distinguish themselves on emotional attributes can capture 60% greater loyalty.

Emotional appeals are effective in attracting mainstream consumers who hesitate to adopt a new technology unless it speaks to their **desires**, not just their product needs. And **emotion fosters liking and trust, differentiates, commands higher prices, and locks in loyalty**.

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- [Digital Device Manifesto](#)
- [Justin McCarthy on Crossing the Chasm at Garmin \(interview\)](#)
- [Crossing the Health & Fitness Tech Chasm](#)

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