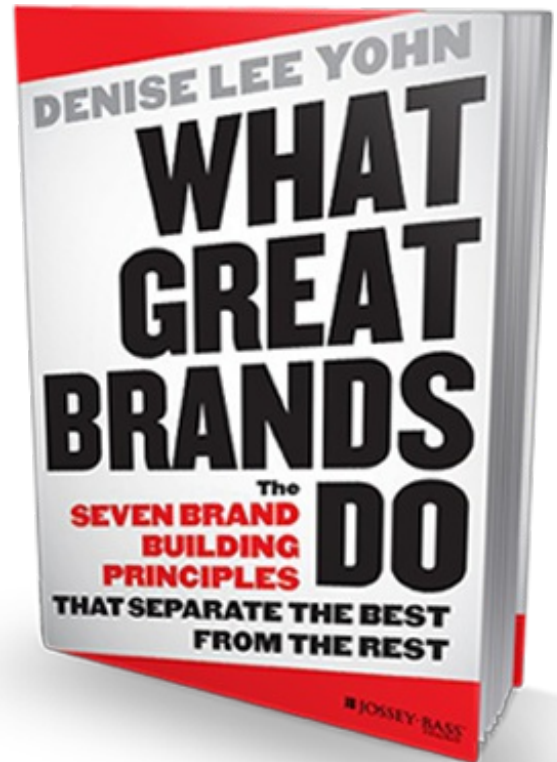


## What Great Brands Do (And why listening is Important)

Robert Madison

In chapter #2 (“Great Brands Avoid Selling Products”) of Denise Lee Yohn’s new book *What Great Brands Do* (Jossey-Bass, Jan 2014), Denise tells a short story of how Pampers was losing market share in Europe, despite having a diaper that was technologically superior to its chief rival Huggies.



*“Pampers was Europe’s top-selling disposable diaper brand in 1997, but it was rapidly losing market share to Huggies. Somehow, Pampers as a brand was failing to connect with consumers, which baffled executives at parent company P&G because Pampers really was the superior diaper.*

*When Pampers marketers convened focus groups to study the problem, they soon discovered that dryness (the area in which they had technological superiority) wasn’t really the ultimate benefit that young mothers wanted from their babies’ diapers. The deepest concern expressed by the mothers was for their babies’ health and development. Dry diapers were important, but for reasons that Pampers’ marketers hadn’t fully appreciated: dry diapers allow babies to sleep better, and sound sleep addressed the mothers’ fundamental emotional concern about their babies’ well-being and development.”*

*“Eventually, Pampers created a new ideal for itself as a brand that would partner with parents throughout their baby’s stages of physical, social, and emotional development.”*

*“Consumers responded to Pampers new emotional connections with them, and global revenue grew from 3.4 billion in 1997 to 10 billion by 2001.”*



OK, so maybe developing insights like this isn't important to your brand. Maybe your brand already has all the answers, and doesn't need any new insights. If that's you, the rest of this post won't be of any interest to you. But if that isn't you, if you think developing insights into what your customers really want is important, pay attention to this next part.

*It takes a lot of [careful listening](#) to arrive at the insights that have the power to transform a brand as big and established as Pampers. Deciphering what people find most important emotionally necessitates playing connect-the-dots between what is said, why it's said, and how it's said – and what is not said. Traditional market research methodologies are limited in this respect. Focus groups and surveys usually rely on people to report on their attitudes and behaviors, but consumers are notoriously inaccurate in the information they provide. Most critically, they rarely get to their own underlying drivers for decision making – their emotions.*

*To dig beneath the surface with customers and develop keen market insights, it's necessary to borrow techniques from the realm of social sciences.”*

Can you see where this is going yet? In the first part of this post I make the case that developing insights can help companies add value to the bottom line. Some companies will surely find that at least plausibly relevant. In the second part I make the case that focused listening is a key component of developing those insights (which again, are really only relevant if you're company is focused on growing bottom line revenue.) And in the third part, the coup de grâce:

*“Particularly valuable anthropological methods include the in-home visit and the shop-along. By observing and interviewing select consumers in situ, where they are most comfortable and their behaviors are less censored, you are more likely to uncover their unspoken – and in some cases unconscious – needs and desires.”*



What location could be more in situ – where could consumers feel more comfortable, where would they be less likely to censor their thoughts – than on some sort of social channel on their very own smartphone? Did you know most Twitter users, for example, send tweets via their mobile devices? (This last fact [according to Twitter themselves](#), mind you)

So there it is, folks: Listening – especially to social channels, where people feel more relaxed and less censored – can help companies develop the sorts of insights that give them a competitive advantage in the market, and help drive revenue and market share up.

THAT is why you should be listening, and THAT is why Spiral16 does what it does.

[drops mic]