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## Understanding the New Buyer's Journey



# How we shop today

When you realize that you might need something, whether in your personal life or your work life, where's the first place you turn? Almost certainly, it's the Internet. Before you head to the store, before you draft an RFP, before you call a salesperson, you go online to do research. Whether you're

thinking about a new big screen TV or a new CRM system for your sales department, you're going to conduct plenty of research.

**Does anyone disagree with this scenario? Do you know anyone who doesn't operate this way?**

# As a consumer of goods and services, this is awesome. We've never been more informed.

According to Google, 97 percent of all purchases are preceded by an online search. This is how we shop today, both at home and at work. We are seeking high quality, credible information that helps us to wrap our head around the issue at hand. Importantly, we're going to search for and consume this content on a timetable of our choosing.

As a consumer of goods and services, this is awesome. We've never been more informed. We've never been more in-control of the process.

However, in the other half of our lives – the halves in which we are responsible for marketing – we often act as if we are completely unaware of this new reality. So many companies continue to sell, sell, SELL! when they intuitively know that their prospects and customers pretty much hate this type of marketing.

The audience has a simple solution for this continuing avalanche of annoying marketing – it tunes out, clicks away and moves on to your competitor that happens to show more empathy towards them.



# Buyers are in control now

In late 2012, Christine Crandell wrote about **"preference marketing"** for Forbes. The concept is focused on the notion that marketers must build preference for their good or service; she wrote that marketers no longer have control of the relationship.

**"Buyers took control when information became ubiquitous on the Web. No longer dependent upon marketing for information on trends or new ways to solve problems, and equally no longer dependent on Sales to navigate the pros and cons of solutions they were considering – buyers threw off the shackles and rewrote the rules."**

A large crowd of people is silhouetted against a bright, golden light source, likely a stage or sunset. Many people have their arms raised in the air, some making hand gestures. The scene is filled with energy and excitement.

# Meeting the Audience Imperative.

Buying today is social, self-directed, trust-based and transparent.

Audiences are ever more discriminating and they have more options for information every single day.



Whether or not you like it, or whether you're equipped to operate in this world, this is the Audience Imperative today.

And it means that marketing must be social, trust-based and transparent, and be readily available for the prospect that's searching for solutions in the middle of the night.

You must meet the buyer wherever she is, whenever she wants. (This is not an argument for Real Time Marketing, which has its place; rather it's an indication that marketers must create both ongoing content-of-the-moment and evergreen content that is helpful to the consumer.)

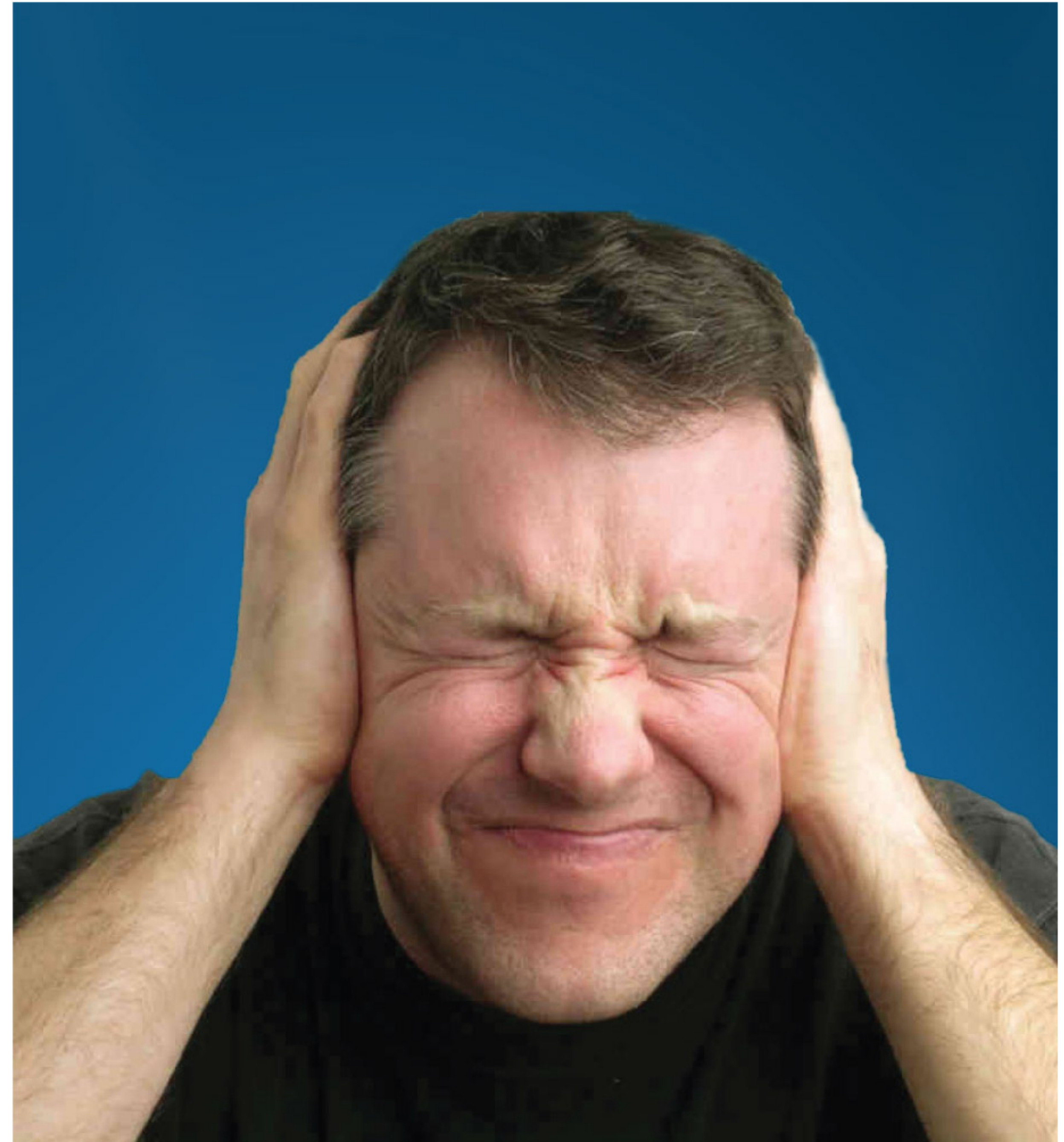
Audiences are ever more discriminating and they have more options for information every single day. They see through transparent sales pitches and they tend to shun brands that only try to sell them, while seeking out and engaging with brands that are trying to help them.



Traditional marketing training is all about learning to sell stuff. Most marketers have an inclination towards advertising. That's a good and valuable thing, but it also can be limiting when it comes to aligning with the new buyer's journey.

The trouble with selling all the time is that the audience tunes it out; not listening is a legitimate option for them.

Today's buyer wants to educate himself at his own pace, in his own way. As a marketer you cannot force the issue. If you try to force the sale, you're doing more harm than good.





# Understanding the Buyer's Journey

The Buyer's Journey has changed. Once upon a time it was a straightforward process that went something like this:

**Discovery » Consideration » Decision**

Now, it's a far more complex process.



# The New Buyer's Journey

This is how we map the new buyer's journey. As you can see – and undoubtedly have experienced – it is filled with stops and starts, twists and turns, and is almost exclusively directed by the buyer herself.

*Let's dive in deeper to each stage of the journey.*





As it always has, the buyer's journey begins with discovery. Traditionally, most marketing has been focused on this phase – the job is to get your brand noticed.

Many of the old marketing theories apply to this stage – the focus should be on reach and frequency.

Of course, how you achieve reach and frequency has changed dramatically in recent years, with the advent of SEO, SEM and a wide variety of social media platforms.

More than ever before, marketers need to be mindful of how and why they get discovered. The old “just spell our name right” approach to marketing has never been more wrongheaded; the customer relationship is not nearly as transactional as it once was. Today, the relationship is going to be a longer term proposition, and you need to build the foundation on trust. So wacky, attention-grabbing stunts are typically counter-productive for brands.



**RESEARCH**  
**SOCIAL SEARCH**  
**IMMERSION**  
**EXPLORE OPTIONS**

The education phase of the buyer's journey is where customers spend most of their time, researching the topic, immersing themselves in it to develop context. They'll interact on social media with friends and colleagues – people they already know and trust – in order to form their thinking.

This portion of the buyer's journey is a critical area for the creation and delivery of audience-focused content. By assisting prospects in a non-salesy way, brands begin to earn trust.



**Finally!**

The customer has decided to move forward. They've compared various solutions and arrived at what they believe is the right answer.

This might not mean that they've decided on the particular brand or product – they may have merely decided that “I need a new shirt” or “It's time for a CRM overhaul.”

But this phase of the buyer's journey is distinct from the often meandering Education phase. It typically means the buyer is ready, willing and able to buy.



**But hold, not so fast**

Even when the buyer is ready to ... buy ... she often stops one last time to step back and justify the decision. The buyer wants to make sure she hasn't missed anything. Typically, she wants one last chance to verify the choice.

Brands need to be aware of this and be prepared for it. You need to build in materials and talk tracks to smoothly negotiate this final potential hurdle.

Content specifically created for this “bottom of the funnel” stage should be created and ready to be delivered to the prospective customer.



After the customer confirms the wisdom of her choice, the contract is finally signed, the cash register rings and bonuses get paid.

**Woot!**

However, the care and feeding of customers never truly ends.

And marketing should play a role in continual communications with customers.



Because even when the sale is complete, the buyer's journey continues.

The pace of change in business means that customers are constantly evaluating the choices they've made. They want validation that they've made the right choice.

And they want to know if something better comes along, because recent history suggests that it often does.

So remember: This road never ends.

# What we believe

The new buyer's journey means brands must market themselves differently. They need to provide value rather than promote themselves.

To meet the Audience Imperative and shepherd prospects along this journey, brands need to create preference. We believe that content marketing enables you to do that. Of course, not all content marketing is created equal. Here's how we define content marketing:

**The creation and distribution of journalistic, helpful, audience-focused material that ultimately increases customer acquisition.**

It's not about keywords, and it isn't about hype. It's about the content that delivers value. It creates engagement. More importantly, it builds trust.

At Scribewise, that's what we deliver. We're an outsourced newsroom that creates and distributes content that connects with your audience. We help you engage the audience at a higher level. We help you build trust. And these days, trust always comes before the sale.

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Building Connections Through Content

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