



brand & strategy

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b&s interview

Clearing the Clutter

An interview with Peter Sealey, co-author of [Simplicity Marketing](#).

Your clients or constituents suffer from decision paralysis. The market offers them endless choices like what you provide. Stress and confusion inevitably result. Worse, your clients begin to ignore you.

Peter Sealey, professor at The Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management at the Claremont Graduate University, and former Chief Marketing Officer of Coca-Cola, thinks that success lies in marketers' abilities to simplify their customers' lives.

B&S: Why so much fragmentation?

Peter Sealey: One reason is the internal marketing organization. There's a built-in bias at the marketing department level to fragment, line-extend, and introduce new products. It gives them something to do. It means they have brand managers, assistant brand managers, and advertisers.

We only have room for so many products and services in our life. How do organizations simultaneously offer choice and simplicity?

I use Crest as an example in my lectures. Crest toothpaste offers 27 different flavor, additive, and packaging variations. When Crest came out, it had one flavor, two package sizes.

The new positioning for Crest is that it's not just a toothpaste. It's a healthy, beautiful smile for life, whether it's from dental floss, whitening strips, a battery-powered toothbrush, or toothpaste. The smart marketers are positioning



high protein thinking

Peter Sealey and Steven Cristol on Ending Brand Complexity, Clutter, and Confusion

Quotables from [Simplicity Marketing](#).

their brand in a more complete, wider context.

How can smaller organizations, who don't have the deep pockets of Procter & Gamble, respond quickly to trends in the marketplace?

Most importantly, observe consumers in the act of actually using your product. Then hold a focus group with your product and customers. How do they interface with the product? Are they happy? You can do that for almost nothing. There's not a marketer in this country who can't afford a couple of group sessions. Finally, study people who are not your customers. Why are they not users of your product or service?

Can your concepts of simplicity marketing be adapted to nonprofits and service organizations?

The nonprofit sector has the same challenges as the profit sector. The old thought was these people live in a hazy, "touchy feely" world, and don't have the discipline of budgets and balance sheets. In reality, they need as much discipline as the profit sector.

Volunteer work and charitable giving is huge in this country—competition exists within nonprofits. You need to position your brand. What motivates people to volunteer? And why would they choose you out of the myriad of options?

Given the speed of change today, how can a small organization plan in the way you suggest in your book?

Micro-trends—movements that are low key but important—pop up everywhere. Right now, there's a micro-trend that shuns bottled water. It has been the star of the beverage category for the past 10 years, but people now say that bottled water is no better, maybe worse than most tap water in the United States.

I doubt that the major bottled water companies have spotted this micro-trend yet. It's key for small companies to see these trends and to adapt. Your antennae need to be up and you need to be very sensitive. Hands-on marketing, viral marketing, is the way to go.

So small, speedy, and agile are the key traits of success today?

Absolutely. In the old days, you could simply pound consumers over the head with television advertising. The guy with the biggest budget and a decent brain won. That's not the case anymore.

The big companies are having trouble adapting. Being small is a real advantage today; the world is going in their direction.

“Even if the category is not inherently stressful for the customer, and even if the most important category-driving attributes are not ostensibly stress-related, it is still strategically important to ensure that brands and products are both evaluated based on whether they are perceived as *sources* or *relievers* of stress.”

- *Simplicity Marketing*, p.204

“A key component of brand equity is brand knowledge—the combination of the customer's awareness of and perceptions about a brand. A familiar brand can reduce stress just by virtue of its familiarity.”

- *Simplicity Marketing*, p.205

“Even if your company doesn't have all the customer research in place, or the time and resources to do everything suggested by a Simplicity Marketing audit, there can still be huge opportunity in intuitive-style Simplicity Marketing when planned and executed by managers who carry stress sensitivity in their consciousness.”

- *Simplicity Marketing*, p.226

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