

Using marketing for cultural transformations

presentation by

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Thank you Peter and welcome everyone to today's forum.

I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people.

I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

We might find it useful to draw upon that wisdom during the course of our discussions today and afterwards

About me

- Sustainability facilitator bringing together people, information & ideas
- 20 years Aust Gov't policy & management, mainly in environment, industry & ageing
- Long-term interest in climate change & urban planning, as a scientist, policy-maker, community member
- Particular interest in systemic change and game-changers

In the Transforming Culture stream, we make the following assumptions which we do not intend to discuss:

- Human activity is causing degradation to the natural environment and that this is being detrimental to human prosperity, health and wellbeing.
 - We can see this in the Earth having entered the Anthropocene, the great acceleration that is straining and exceeding the limits of the Earth's ability to support life as we know it.
 - We have already overstepped three of nine planetary boundaries and are at grave risk of transgressing several others.
 - That's largely arisen because our socio-economic culture (incl worldview, practices) ignores or disrespects fundamental processes of life & nature.
- Transformation of the current dominant world culture, including its worldview and practices, is imperative to protect human civilisation.
 - This transformation will need to reassert the biophysical realities within which we live and promote a culture which is sensitive to and respects nature and its limits.
- While a rapid transformation is required to protect human civilisation, there is still time to take effective action to minimise disruption to human society.

Further, we do not want to spend time dwelling on the present situation except in so far as some analysis of the current situation helps understanding of the suggestions and recommendations for change...and we'll need to do some of that today.

The 2014 Transforming Culture stream seeks to address the core question: how might we bring about the cultural transformation necessary to ensure the long term survival of the human species? The website points out that this is about societal change;

the mix of individual and systems change needed to transform culture. The focus was to be on a very practical set of steps and possibly even a group to carry these forward.

So far we've mainly focused on theoretical models and academic discussion.

One of the themes has been the narratives we tell ourselves and how those narratives become our identity.

We've also looked at some models for change.

But we have yet to really move onto the practical discussion – how we go about effecting change – and that's what I'm hoping to spur on today.

We've heard how:

- Culture is communication
- Meaning requires emotion
- Systems models can give us language to negotiate & share understanding
- New stories can replace current stories – the new stories need to be about what is needed, not what is possible.

And we know that it can be done, because it's been done in the past...but not necessarily for good. The campaigns of both the tobacco industry and the fossil fuel industry come to mind. They set out to, in their own words, “develop a message and strategy for shaping public opinion on a national scale”.

¹ And it has worked – spectacularly.

As Al Gore has pointed out:

This manufactured campaign found a receptive audience among many citizens who would understandably prefer not to acknowledge the existence of such a frightening and potentially overwhelming threat as global climate change.²

It is important to note that these campaigns made use of experts, commercial marketing experts.

So, what can we learn from the commercial world that might help us in our efforts to replace the stories, images, language and thinking that is causing so much harm that civilisation and indeed life as we know it is threatened?

The commercial world offers practical models of behavioural and cultural change.

We can learn from it about the psychology of changing behaviour and models for influencing people.

Today we will look at a basic model of facilitating that change and, through discussion, look at how it might be applied to effect cultural transformation.

I am finding this new book very useful. [*The Advertising Effect: How to change behaviour*].

Adam Ferrier is a registered psychologist who is now a very successful advertiser, who you may have seen on Gruen Transfer. He wrote it because he wants to stop *mindless* consumption. (He wants it to change to *mindful* consumption.)

The book gives both excellent overview and detail of the interaction between the science of psychology and the art of advertising, including key research.

Why should we pay attention to advertisers and marketers?
Because:

- They are in the behaviour change industry.
- They use psychology to influence behaviour.
- Their work is evidence-based – at least quite a lot of it is.
- They are creative.

- And they've spent real money to see what does and doesn't work to change behaviour.

You might say 'So what? We are interested in what people think, why they do things, their attitudes – and that when they get that right, then they will behave the right way.'

Well...the evidence says that it's the other way around, that action changes attitude faster than attitude changes action. If you've done any behavioural change or Neuro-Linguistic Programming then you'll know that.

Now, just park that in your brain for a while...and we'll look at some ways we can get change and some of the evidence that comes out of marketing.

First let's look at some ways of getting change.

Val Brown told us how, according to George Laycock, there is only one story: the journey – with a Hero, Villain, Direction, and Outcome.

We're all familiar with fairy tales. You know, someone (usually a young female) gets into trouble – usually Villain wrongs the Victim. And then someone else (Hero, usually a handsome young man) rescues the Victim, sometimes with help from Fairy Godmothers or dwarves (Direction). Then, they usually get married and they always live happily ever after (Outcome).

That's a powerful story. And it could be argued that it's dominant in our society: someone (or something) stronger, smarter, more powerful than us will rescue us from the trouble we're in...

It's the ultimate outsourcing, especially when big cultural change is needed. And it's well established in the cultural and political spheres. Examples in recent times include Whitlam,

Rudd, Obama, Abbott, technology. Some have fared better than others, but the fairytale is still being used; for example, Abbott in the lead-up to the last election (although that hasn't been working so well since the election) and the belief that technology will save us from catastrophic climate change and other environmental catastrophes.

I would argue that the fairy tale narrative suits incumbent power elites, and inspirational leadership and crisis opportunities that Bob Douglas decided is necessary for radical cultural transformation.

But there are some problems with the fairy tale approach to change: we never find out how the hero does it in detail or what the outcome really is (although Shrek gives us an idea). And it doesn't fundamentally change the culture of Victim as helpless.

Also, in the environment movement and academia and broader society we have a lot of:

- stories about bad things (eg climate change)
- stories about victims, who are helpless (often us, eg climate change)

We are both victim and villain. This sets up an internal conflict that can't be resolved. So we – particularly the general public – put it in the 'too hard' basket.

Then we have the empowerment movements. These aim to put powerful cultural and practical change in the hands of 'ordinary people'.

We have seen them before and they can lead to cultural transformation (eg Magna Carta, end of Chinese dynasties, revolutions, female vote, equality – which has a way to go).

Some recent examples are:

- March Australia – has empowered Australians to speak up

- Kitchen Table Conversations – empowers people to speak up and feed their views into political processes. (Now March Australia and KTC joining together.)
- Divestment – empowers people to take action; symbolic but effective – South Africa, fossil fuels.

But will these empowerment movements lead to cultural transformation of the scale & depth needed for the dominant culture to become biosensitive (i.e. live within the limits of Earth)?

And then we have marketing that deliberately sets out to change behaviour.

Today I'll be specifically introducing you to the basic sales model and how it might be used for transforming culture. And the reason for that is because deep and widespread cultural transformation only occurs when:

- People's behaviour changes
- People's thinking (their frame) changes

We've heard before how you can't change someone's mind by telling them: you need to change their frame by giving them an alternative.

And that's where marketing comes in.

Here is the basic sales model:

1 Pain Island:

- Show the audience you understand the problem/pain.
- This builds rapport, so they trust you.
- 'Rub salt' into the problem, using as many senses as possible, to make it seem even worse.
- This engages their emotions.

2 Pleasure Island:

- Show a better alternative to Pain Island.
- Show how it solves the problem and relieves their pain. Use as many senses as possible.
- This sets up a dilemma/conflict: they want to be on Pleasure Island but they're stuck on Pain Island - how do they get from Pain Island to Pleasure Island?

3 Show them the only Boat (with you as captain, Hero) to take them from Pain Island to Pleasure Island

- Getting on board the boat has to be a no-brainer, so you have to make it as easy as possible.

Now, a little look out the window at what advertising, psychology and systems thinking bring to the table.

Robert Heath showed that every time we see an ad it makes an impression on the brain.³

From that, we can deduce that every time we see a picture, hear a story or read words, it makes an impression on our brains.

You may be familiar with the idea that our brains have a filter, so we can concentrate on the things that matter to us. But that seems to me to relate only to the conscious brain, that part that we use for active thinking.

The idea that everything our senses pick up makes an impression on our brains has been demonstrated by Robert Zajonc in what he called the 'mere-exposure effect': we like something simply because it is more familiar to us – whether or not we are aware of it.⁴

I think that is critical to what is driving our culture and how cultural transformation might be effected.

Back to our basic sales model, and how it might be used for selling change.

The basic sales model: moving a potential client from pain island to pleasure island (with thanks to Vrinda Normand, irresistablemarketing.com, & her clients)

Pain Island is where your ideal prospective clients, your audience is now. It's what they are currently struggling with and where they are stuck. Pain Island sucks. Your audience members are marooned on Pain Island, suffering, frustrated and no matter how hard they try, they don't know how to escape!

Until you (the hero) come along. You are the captain of a boat, and your business is the 'boat'. Your purpose is to get people off Pain Island and take them to Pleasure Island.

Pleasure Island is where your audience wants to be. Pleasure Island is amazing, full of abundance, beauty, fun, freedom, happiness and the positive results your audience members are craving. You know what it's like because you've been to Pleasure Island and you know how to help others get there

When people buy a ticket to get on your boat, they don't care about how your boat works. They care about where they're going – they invest in the destination. And you need to make sure that getting on board is very easy; it has to be a no-brainer for them.

We do this by engaging their emotions, because a decision to buy (or change) is emotional, not intellectual.

And that means we need to choose our language, words, stories and images carefully.

We need to describe in great deal what Pain Island is like. (That's what it's like living in the Anthropocene, as well as the time that has lead to it.)

Our ability to identify exactly what's going on for them will make a massive difference to how well they receive our marketing message. What does Pain Island look and feel like to them? Here we need to remember from Val Brown & John Harris's work that every audience has its own story. Getting clear on what they are currently experiencing will take us most of the way towards helping them take action. The audience needs to know that we've been on Pain Island, or that we've helped people who've been there. They need to know that we are normal human beings and we've suffered just like them. Then they will start trusting us, be inspired by us, and begin to *aspire* to something different in their own life.

So, the first and most important part of marketing is being able to describe Pain Island in terms that will resonate with potential clients.

Language is the key here – especially using the same language, imagery, situations that they recognise.

And how do we find that out? We hang out where they hang out. Online. In electronic media. In print media. In real life. We look, listen, read.

Now, because we are people living in a society, we already know some of this. And that's what I want you to draw on – that tacit knowledge we all have.

Let's start by looking at what might be the dominant images, stories and words in our culture.

[move to writing area for brainstorm & discussion]

Here are some things that we might consider.

[refer to slide]

We also need to describe what Pleasure Island is like. (This is what life is like in what Bryan Furnass has called the Sustainocene.)

Again, we need to know exactly what our audience members are looking for, in the short and long term. This is where we need to use language that shows them that there is a real alternative to Pain Island and causes them to want to take action. We need to take them through the transformation and experience that will happen with what we're offering, not just the nuts and bolts involved. We may need to focus on the stages that someone will go through to transform. We need to be able to communicate what Pleasure Island looks and feels like so they are inspired to take action to get in the boat that will take them there.

Now, what do we want to replace the currently dominant images, stories and words with?

[move to writing area for brainstorm & discussion]

Here are some things that we might consider.

[refer to 2 slides]

I particularly like this slide of Xhosa children.

Finally, *how* do we replace the currently dominant images, stories and words?

This is the Boat that will take them from Pain Island to Pleasure Island. The boat is simply the means of getting there.

[It might be a *framework* or *system*, the step-by-step *sequential* journey from Pain Island to Pleasure Island. Imagine a boat taking a stranded sailor from Pain Island to Pleasure Island. It's a long journey, so they have to make some stops at the smaller islands in between. The smaller stops are the steps within the framework, and each of those steps is one step closer to Pleasure Island.]

The biggest mistake many people make when implementing their marketing system is trying to use their *modality* (particular expertise) as the boat. People don't care about your modality, they care about having a better life. You need to establish trust and rapport by describing Pain Island and Pleasure Island *first*. Once you've established that trust and rapport – then, and only then, can you show them the boat, whatever it is (your product, service, training, idea or action) that will help them get there. This is where we need to use language that causes the audience members to actually take action.

There is quite a body of work on how to go about effecting change. Here are some books from the University of Canberra library. They look very good but I haven't read them yet... and they're probably a too detailed for this session. So I thought I'd just stick with a couple of things with which I am familiar.

First, an ancient Chinese proverb explains why social marketing is being used so effectively:

Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.

Second, Robert Cialdini, Regents' Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University, has been possibly the key researcher on the 'how'. He published his Six Principles of Influence (also known as the Six Weapons of Influence) in his seminal and best-selling 1984 book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*.

Cialdini identified the six principles through experimental studies, and by immersing himself in the world of what he called 'compliance professionals', people who are skilled in the art of convincing and influencing others.

Here are his six principles:

1. Reciprocity

People tend to return favors, pay back debts, and treat others as they treat us. According to the idea of reciprocity, this can lead us to feel obliged to offer concessions or discounts to others if they have offered them to us. This is because we're uncomfortable with feeling indebted to them.

2. Commitment and Consistency

People have a deep desire to be consistent. Because of this desire for internal consistency, once we've made any commitment to something, then we're then more inclined to go through with honoring the commitment, even if the original incentive or motivation is removed. (If we don't, we suffer from cognitive dissonance: the mental discomfort of holding two contradictory beliefs or ideas at the same time.)

3. Social Proof.

People will do things that other people do. That is why conformity is so pervasive.

4. Liking

People are more likely to be influenced by people they like. We are more easily persuaded by people who are similar or familiar to us, people who give us compliments, or people we just simply trust.

5. Authority

People tend to obey authority figures, even if it involves something unpleasant or objectionable. We are even influenced by the authority conveyed by people's titles and positions and their clothes.

6. Scarcity

Scarcity generates demand. If we perceive something is scarce, then we're more likely to want it. That's the power of 'only a few left' and 'for a limited time only'.

To recap:

- Culture is about communication.
- Language, stories and images that resonate with us emotionally are the key.
- Psychology and marketing can provide invaluable help with transforming culture.
- A bold, vivid and clear alternative that engages us emotionally is the key to change.

¹ Internal memo from within the fossil fuel industry. Cited in Gore, A. 2009. *Our Choice: A Plan to Solve The Climate Crisis*. Bloomsbury: London, p. 358.

² Internal memo from within the fossil fuel industry. Cited in Gore, A. 2009. *Our Choice: A Plan to Solve The Climate Crisis*. Bloomsbury: London, p. 358.

³ Heath, R. F. 2001. *The Hidden Power of Advertising*. Admap Monograph no. 7, WARC : Henley-on-Thames, 125pp.

⁴ Zajonc, R. B. 2001. Mere exposure: A gateway to the subliminal. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10(6): 224-8.