

# TIME TO UNFUCK OURSELVES.

A large crowd of people is gathered for an event. In the foreground, a white banner is held up by two poles. The banner contains the text "9 THINGS MARKETING MUST START DOING IN 2021". The crowd is diverse in age and attire, and the scene is set outdoors. The background is a bright, overexposed sky. The entire image is framed by a red, torn-paper-like border at the top.

9 THINGS MARKETING MUST  
START DOING IN 2021



# “Events, Dear Boy, Events”

## FOREWORD

As Macmillan dryly noted 'events' - the unknown rider in the saddle driving mankind - are so often the things that steer us and determine our fate.

Such is the case this year.

**An event so  
powerful  
it's pretty  
much fucked  
everything.**



And although its entrance was largely ignored, slipped in past politically-appointed bouncers, the subsequent chaos was akin to a charged up Red Bull in the proverbial china shop. A wrecking ball sent - inexplicably it seems - swinging into the wrong house.

Everything got levelled - no time to call off the dogs. Nothing sacred. Nothing spared. Scorched earth. Rules, legacies, established norms, carnage. Shit changed. Exponentially. Quickly.

### **Is it all bad?**

Is it the mandatory shot of tequila needed for the guests of an otherwise dreary wedding at a working men's club in Rochdale? Has the subsequent shake out; the inventing, adapting, overcoming, advancing, been positive?



**This isn't  
a love  
letter to  
Covid, it's  
wreaked  
too much  
havoc.**

Rather a withering eye-roll, a tacit acknowledgment that this 'event' has achieved more change than any one of us in decades.

# In July & August we talked to over 50 people...

...about changes they see happening in their respective fields, to get a sense of what 2021 could be like.

Our overwhelming sense is that we have new horizons, ambitions and permissions to weaponise. Not for the sake of it, but for the sake of 'us'. Stuff was running way too hot. Most of society was on the rev limiter. It's time to take stock. It's time to leave the ineffective behind, get on for the better.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's time to unfuck ourselves.

From a farmer, racing driver, private equity investor and garage owner to FTSE Chairman, teacher, tube driver and nurse. Nobody was spared our simple and banal questioning. Including ourselves.

'MARKETING' HAS BEEN FUCKED FOR A LONG TIME SO WE'VE PUT FORWARD A MANIFESTO FOR 2021 – 9 THINGS WE WANT TO SEE CHANGED.



# ...So, how **fucked** are we, really?

- How protected are we as individuals or business owners?
- How secure is my living situation and employment?
- How dependent on others am I to take care of my family?
- How much time and money is wasted on things that are either utterly inefficient or bring little joy?

FROM THE 5-YEAR OLD PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPIL TO THE QUEEN,  
NO INDIVIDUAL CAN AFFORD TO BURY THEIR HEAD IN THE SAND,  
HOPING TO EMERGE UNCHANGED WHEN THIS ALL 'BLOWS OVER'.

They're big questions and the answers have big implications.



It's opened up a greater understanding and appreciation of how we function as a market and as communities. Trade relations with China and the US are more exposed (and understood) than ever; supply chains have been revealed as precariously dependent; and privatised healthcare has not offered any significant advantage to the wealthy. This stuff is the fabric of our society, economy and affects us all.





# With this greater awareness comes deeper questioning...

The efforts to unfuck ourselves are taking different shapes and scales depending on sectors and industries. Our conversations with the CEO of a Liverpool-based wealth management firm indicate that he expects to see a greater move towards “Sleep at Night funds” as individuals and business owners recognise the need to have a six-month cash buffer in the event of another crisis.

Arable Farmer Rob from Herefordshire anticipates a move away from “just in time” supply processes given the inability to manage any sort of demand shock, with pressure on UK farmers to produce a greater percentage of our fresh produce.

Commercial real estate – from office blocks to university campuses – are likely to take on a different role in towns and cities as many have already committed to a permanent move away from heavily populated buildings.

A source at one of the world’s leading executive search companies for education described a shift in the future of university campuses, from “traditional seats of learning to huge sofas of educational joy” for communities.

**AND THE MAJORITY OF BUSINESS LEADERS AGREE THAT THE RITUAL OF “SUIT AND COMMUTE” MAY BE LEFT FIRMLY IN 2019.**

These big, structural (and cultural) changes are happening in every industry, and in every business function. And the reason isn’t purely down to necessity.

It’s about permission.





# Like losing your virginity on prom night, Covid has gifted us the **rare permission** to do extraordinary things:

## **1. Accelerate experimentation**

– as seen in teaching and tech solutions

## **2. Force reinvention**

– as seen in live events and retail

## **3. Embrace collectivism**

– as seen in engineering and creative industries

We'll discuss these themes in more detail later, but let's take a moment to understand exactly why businesses are now faced with the best chance to change they'll ever get...

# Say 'new normal' one more time...



The pandemic has spawned many labels and descriptors; some positive, some negative, some tediously trite.

- "A world re-ordering event" (Chairman, Law firm)
- "National soul-searching" (CEO, Technology Group)
- "A productivity rebellion" (Founder, Recruitment)
- "A values exposure" (Brand Manager, Energy drinks)

But one thing they all capture is the transformative energy that surrounds every household, business and industry in 2020.

Conditions for seismic change so rarely align on such a scale that it's little wonder that companies are still dependent on antiquated IT systems and the high street remains reliant on footfall despite this being the age of 'digital transformation' and eComm.

Primark went from a revenue of £650million per month to zero during lockdown. In their case, having no eComm strategy resulted in 68,000 furloughed employees and £248m of unsold stock. Slightly more than 'a minor fuck up', one might argue.

It should not have taken a pandemic to expose the vulnerability of the business strategy of a behemoth like Primark.

**BUT IT DID.**

And they weren't the only ones - the live entertainment and hospitality sectors have been brought to their knees, with only the quickest thinkers managing to keep their chins above water.

AIRBNB'S FOUNDER SAID

**“12 years of effort  
were destroyed  
in 6 weeks”.**

That's got to sting.




# **And why?** Because when the sun shines you don't notice the leaky roof

It takes a huge counter-force to disrupt even the most benign habits, like how you get to work. Thriving businesses are often blinkered businesses - they bask in the sunshine of healthy balance sheets and their growth strategy is to simply "do more of the same". Change is met with resistance.

**“Why would you fuck  
with the status quo?”**

New opportunities are met with challenges around 'money, talent and timings'. But that's rarely where the real problem lies. Internal politics, unclear vision and managerial merry-go-rounds make any change to business function feel like turning a battleship – slow, arduous and with results so delayed that by the time change has happened there's a new storm to weather, or it's time to change course again.





# <sup>35</sup>Br eaking <sup>56</sup>Ba d habits

But the conditions for change have aligned. Businesses and consumers both *need* and *want* to start doing things differently. Commercial models that were unsustainable before Covid-19 (WeWork anyone?) are now in need of total renovation.

Retailers with little or no online presence have felt the full effect of their tardiness. Ironically, Primark is likely to weather the storm, but smaller cousins are already on the DNR list. It's the unique combination of need, want and scale that is the formula for change.



# The scale of change required is **relative** to the **consumer need**

During the early part of lockdown, consumers quickly adapted their purchasing habits to that which was useful or entertaining. Banana bread, who knew?! If your brand or business did not fall into one of those categories, now is the time to re-visit either your product format, innovation pipeline or positioning.

Too many brands have failed to deliver genuine USPs – simply serving up copycat products or services. They've been suspicious of promoting rational reasons to buy as if 'they're not enough for a modern consumer' – but when faced with the ultimate acid test, 'rational and utility' will prevail.

Similarly, businesses that previously resisted (or even prohibited) remote working transformed their operations over night. When asked 'what has been the biggest driver of digital transformation in your business: A) the CTO, B) the CMO or C) Covid19', Twitter users responded with a resounding but sobering "Option C".

# A virus has been **more productive** than our business leaders – ouch



“What if we don’t change at all ... and something magical just happens?”

Without the heavyweight arm-twisting of Covid19, businesses were controlled by group think – the thankless attempt to satisfy all parties before any change is implemented.

As the latest McKinsey report points out, a lot of the longer-term consumer behaviour changes are still being formed – we’re all still trying to find stable footings on shifting sands. But this represents a huge opportunity for companies to **ACT NOW AND HELP SHAPE WHAT 'NEXT' LOOKS LIKE.**

That said, there is no promise that the things that are in flux will settle into a more fortuitous future for all – much still rides on the severity of the recession and consumer satisfaction with new experiences. So – this isn’t a time to close your eyes, hold on and hope for the best.

Across the sectors we've engaged with, desire for **change has collided with permission** – attempts to unfuck ourselves are underway and exciting things are beginning to happen:





01 //

# Accelerated Experimentation

The first of our 3 'gift-wrapped' themes has been evident through the novelty of Zoom meetings, lessons, dates and broadcasts; in the pride of discovering you can make a decent sourdough; in the triumph of setting up a road-side deli counter to keep your restaurant business ticking over; businesses and individuals have been fuelled by an energy that only comes when 'there's no other choice'.

Largely positive, the feeling of surprise and pride at the ability to solve problems creatively and embrace that which was perceived as unnecessary has armed even the reluctant with new skills and new ambition.



“Everyone has realised you can do your job just as effectively without having to wear smart clothes”  
**Brand Manager,  
Energy Drinks, London**”

“Most clients have been genuinely surprised with how easy and productive it is to run virtual projects”  
**Brand Consultant, London**”

“For businesses slow in the uptake of e-comm, they've had to dramatically and speedily upskill for survival”  
**Marketing Director, Global  
Cosmetics, London**”



# Hitting the gas on experimentation

“We should expect a resurgence of local and even hyper-local business, renewables, sustainable and ethical products as our consciousness has been awakened”

**Executive Coach, London**

ONE OF THE BIGGEST WINNERS OF THIS TREND IS EDTECH.

As the COO of a leading software systems company told us, EdTech is in a unique position as colleges and universities are now embracing virtual learning at scale and at pace. New players are starting to emerge to aid and implement the technological transition.

Experimentation with new ways of learning is about to come into its own because of a universal 'permission' - in this case, to ensure the continuity of education. Tech companies are hitting the gas in order to inspire with highly personalised learning experiences and scale education in unimaginable ways.

EdTech will be able to access areas where traditional education cannot – and the surge in growth is thanks to the appetite for experimentation born out of Covid.

## 01 //ACCELERATED EXPERIMENTATION

The flip side however has seen many businesses 'experiment' with furlough - to effectively see who and what they could do without. The Sales Director of an international manufacturing company highlighted patterns seen across sectors and industries: business functions being streamlined, teams re-shaped, roles amalgamated, superfluous operations cut.

Good experimentation for improving the P&L post-pandemic; bad for individuals.

That said, the result is a workforce with renewed impetus to add value and prove their worth. Accelerated experimentation under the safety net of 'need' is likely to produce more business-centric benefits, as under-utilised skills within a workforce are surfaced, and those without the 'next gen' skills migrate to new roles or companies.

**Sacrifice can often provide plenty.**

“Brutal redundancy, part time contracts, office landscape desolation will require new modes of team operation and recovery from adversity”

**Executive Coach, London**

02 //

# Forced re-invention

THIS THEME SHOWS UP IN TWO MAIN AREAS:

1. **The product or service for sale**
2. **The way in which they're delivered**

Take engineering.

An aerospace engineer described a 3750% increase in orders for ventilator parts, whilst demand for aerospace components plummeted. Companies who have typically specialised in one area have been most vulnerable, whereas those with a more generalised offer have managed to re-point efforts to both serve and capitalise on Covid-based demand.

**The perpetual dilemma of whether to specialise or generalise has faced its biggest pressure test in 2020**

– and there have only been a handful of 'specialists' who have fared well during lockdown.

That said, even the fortuitously-placed specialists have had a fight on their hands – Skype losing out to Zoom being the most glaring exponent of a Covid-induced own-goal. A textbook example of how product quality + brand relevance is the best and only form of offence in growth.

**What do you mean we need to update everyone's IT and home office?**



Software companies told us about the number of businesses that struggled to transition into remote working due to legacy systems that were not prepared for home-working. Outdated systems caused major migraines, so the review and implementation of modern tech solutions is now a priority agenda point.

Investment in automation is also gathering serious momentum to avoid future dependency on human beings.

Great news for tech firms and brands – but just because demand is building does not mean players in this category should rest on their laurels.

No one needs another Skype situation.

For the software and tech sectors, the opportunity for growth has been gift wrapped – so they must surface themselves in the most distinctive way possible to avoid being drowned out by big-spending competitors.

“

“New start ups will appear after this unique market research to prove what we can and cannot do at home. Tech will have even more prominence for business, removing the need for human beings, increasing efficiency and going global”

**COO, Software Tech Firm, London**

”

When it comes to 'forced reinvention' no-one's had a bigger job on their hands than Live Events. As one of the hardest hit industries, Live Events continue to examine the ways in which to resurrect lost activity.

Some brands have responded to the crisis better than others. For example, Camp Bestival's Easter weekend 'Stay at Home Sleepover' was strategically smart in two ways: they moved quickly (to enjoy a first player advantage) and they recognised

**their brand equity was more important than a short term cash injection.**

Producing a free online event, the festival stayed true to its family-values, community spirit and creativity in order to maintain a loyal fan-base - and crucially secure as many re-bookings for 2021 as possible.

Whilst a shorter-term example of 'forced reinvention', live events is an industry where fans have appreciated 'something' and 'solidarity', over radio silence or surrender.



# Anything else?

Throughout our conversations with business leaders, there were hints at other areas which needed to be 'unfucked'.

The other massive global concerns that represent threats to survival may have slipped down the agenda for now, but are no less foreboding – climate change and sustainability.

The message was clear: vulnerabilities have been awakened and exposed by a global crisis; whatever the shape of the next one, businesses cannot crumble as easily as they have under the tyranny of Covid.

New progressive leaders must emerge as companies recognise that resilience against existential threats is more crucial than hammering 'the competition'.

“

“This is bad news for airlines, travel companies, transport, cars and controversially – oil and gas – all the 'dirty industries' – because we have much more of a conscience now”

**CEO, Private Equity + Tech, London**

”

“

“The shift that had started pre Covid19 to work with the environment to deliver a cleaner planet will become a priority as people reflect on how lockdown benefited the planet”

**Chairman, Law, Liverpool**

”





03 //

# Embracing collectivism



The third recurrent theme we witnessed is something of a by-product of accelerated experimentation and forced reinvention. 'Embracing collectivism' is another largely positive trend emerging across businesses and industries.

**A true sign of trying to unfuck  
ourselves – by helping each other out.**

# All brainer

In businesses with divisions that span multiple sectors or channels, collaborative hybrids have formed to solve big pandemic-shaped problems.

A Partnerships Director for a large entertainment group told us about divisions coming together to form pitch ideas featuring talent across sports, music and theatre - which would never happen ordinarily.

THE BENEFITS OF LATERAL THINKING AND COLLECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING - WITHOUT THE USUAL BARRIERS AND EGOS - IS GENERATING A NEW BREED OF BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

– and is finally making a business 'eco-system' work at every level.



# Action not just tributes

Similarly, in the comms industry, brands have turned to consumers and fans to create content and TV commercials - Tesco, KFC, Oreo, Co-op and Made.com all made the most of their extended, collective creative team.

Brands that responded with action for fellow industries (not just tributes) have risen in awareness and popularity. Consumers witnessing brands behaving in unexpected and lateral ways to support the greater good – from Zara and Burberry making NHS scrubs and masks; to ventilators being made by McLaren and hand sanitiser by Brewdog – has undoubtedly invited reappraisal of a brand's role in society.



# Values exposure

Connected to this is the behaviour of businesses towards their employees. There has been a deep 'values exposure' as individuals compare stories of how their respective employers have responded. Many employees have experienced the 'true side' (for better or worse) of the companies they work for - and those that place value on individual contribution, safety and financial wellbeing will win the talent attraction race in the future.

The old adage that

**“your values are only your values until they cost you money”**

has come to light for many businesses, so a focus on the 'employer brand' (or indeed, creating one in the first place!), is likely to increase.

# Rainbow's end



For working parents, the role that schools and teachers play in raising children has been given renewed recognition. The general public have seen teachers not just as 'curriculum leaders' but as guardians and emotional educators of the next generation.

Amongst the teachers we spoke to, lockdown has brought with it hope of a shift away from the more formalised, test-based, old-fashioned form of education defining the last 5 years, towards a bigger focus on emotional and social education.

**HOWEVER, SOME ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS SPIRIT OF COLLECTIVISM WILL BE SHORT LIVED.**

Brand-owners are likely to return to complete control over creative output and 'help thy neighbour' will dissolve back into 'help myself'. NHS workers particularly suspect that there will be little impact on improving unhealthy lifestyle choices, even with the stark wake-up call delivered by Covid to smokers and those with an unhealthy BMI.

“By their nature, human beings will quickly revert back to whatever is the easiest and most gratuitous option – servicing the collective needs of others will become more of a chore than a symbol of national solidarity”

**ICU Nurse, NHS, Worcestershire**

“The thing most families missed during lockdown was being part of a school community - the importance of human interaction and connection – and knowing there is someone else who knows and cares for their child”

**Primary School Teacher, North London**

Perhaps one sector that has responded and adjusted seamlessly and without fanfare is utilities.

The CFO of a national utilities company told us that they too have experienced a 'colossal channel shift in demand' but have done so quietly and effectively, performing as the 'boringly' reliable, steady spine of the country whilst navigating inevitable cracks and frailties in operational and regulatory structures.

Lockdown without broadband or electricity would've been unimaginable – but we were protected from that ugly fate by a sector who delivered against the collective need for efficiency and nothing else.



**It's  
crucial to  
remember  
that **what  
counts can't  
always be  
counted****

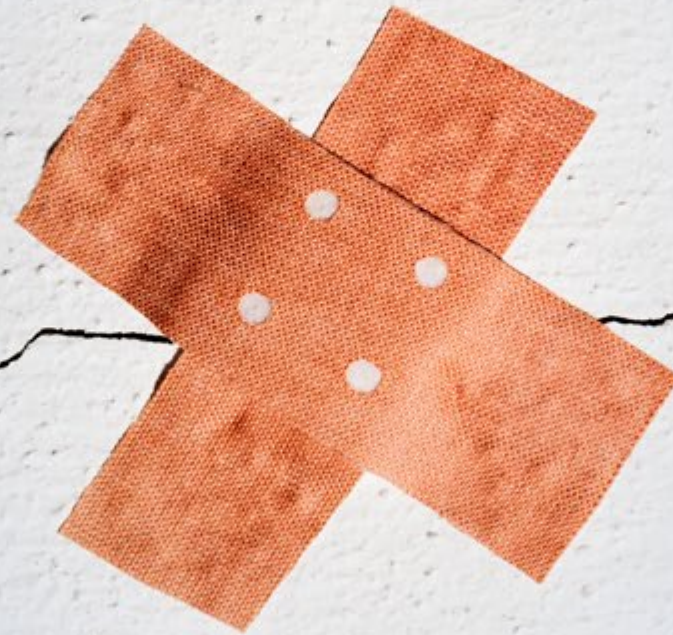
“There is one lasting legacy that I hope utilities will create from this crisis – [a sector where] many have questioned the legitimacy of the private provision of a public service model - that through reliable efficiency, care for customers and financial independence, we can be the socially purposeful business we aspire to”

**CFO, Utilities, Coventry**

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04 //

# Marketing. Oh, FFS.



04 // MARKETING: OH, FFS.

# A double McWhopper for Marketing

Despite (rightly) not being on the 'frontline' of pandemic headlines, marketing services provision has also suffered some significant right-hooks. Advertising spend was cut by \$50bn<sup>1</sup> - its lowest levels for 20 years - and the IPA Bellweather report predicts a very modest 1% YOY increase in 2021.

'Robust' growth won't return until 2022 at the earliest<sup>2</sup>. The creative industries are predicted to be hit twice as hard as the wider economy, with a projected £74bn revenue decline and 406,000 jobs lost.

Holy shit.



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1. <https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/news/brands-cut-50bn-from-global-adspend-in-wake-of-covid-19/43659>

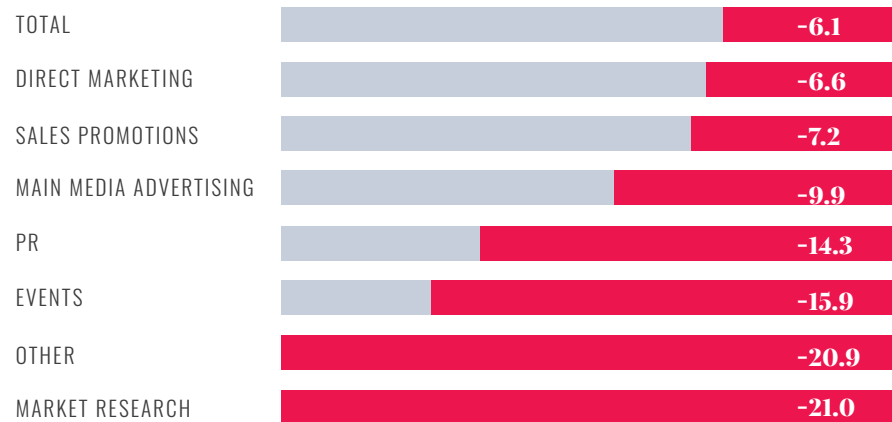




# Marketing is going to have to work harder than ever **to unfuck itself**

These numbers alone paint a picture of an industry under an endangered species level of threat. Suddenly, there is a compromised client base, with less money to spend and a smaller pool of talent to spend it with - and a meteoric hole in the economy to fill.

## BREAKDOWN OF REVISIONS TO CURRENT BUDGETS



% of all companies reporting an upward revision to current budgets minus % reporting a downward revision

IPA Bellweather Report for the first quarter of 2020.

**From bull shit**

**to balance sheet**

Fucked for a long time by its own petard, the 'marketing sector' is on its knees. Structurally, operationally and ideologically.

The dull echo from a recent call to arms from marketing services companies telling manufacturers, services businesses and retailers to

**“Advertise your way out of it” felt about as welcome - rightly - as a sausage at a vegan orgy.**

It may have some strategic merit but at a time where redundancies are everywhere 'tone deaf' doesn't even start to describe it.

No. Doubling down on unthoughtful noise won't solve anything. We need a more thoughtful shift. A move away from the Insta-generation of fakers-and-makers back to more established principles taught and practiced by a generation of marketers Mark Read has long put out to grass.

For too long marketing-BS has provided air-cover for the ineffective, given the naïve something to spout in boardrooms and allowed the mediocre to trade in smoke & mirrors. It's contributed to ejection from the C-Suite and derailed its capacity to catalyse economic movement & growth.

# So

spurred on by a new found permission and optimism felt in response to this piece of work, NOKAMO puts forward 9 things the marketing industry should 'stop' and 9 things we should move toward.

They aren't silver bullets; cut & paste solutions for the instantly gratified. Rather directions of travel that require a bit of thought, a read around and a good conversation.



## Stop talking about brand

It's ethereal, way too conceptual and as a result misunderstood 90% of the time. Consequently, the people you really need to influence will assume you wear a black roll-neck, have silly spectacles and talk juvenile shit. They are therefore well within their rights to ignore anything you say.

## Start adulting your conversation

Grow up. Use a commercial narrative that CEOs, CFO, investors and shareholders understand. A 'brand' is a commercial vehicle to generate EBIT. A marketing programme is a mechanism to sustain a long term healthy balance sheet; by definition LT and strategic. A communications campaign plan is about protecting future cashflow and - while it sounds strategic - is very much tactical. Talk less about brands and more about balance sheets.



## Stop trying to be liked by everyone

It's tiresome, demeaning and displays such a misunderstanding of marketing's first principles that you may as well go and retrain as a Love Islander. Beady brand-man talks about brand love. It's bollocks and food for unicorns. Not everyone is for everything - in brands as it is in life.

## Start trying to be hated

Segmentation, targeting and positioning - done well - means you'll identify populations you very much don't want to talk to in a way they very much don't want to be talked to. Celebrate this. Revel in the sacrifices you'll make and the clarity it brings. For those that you're aiming at will reward your specificity with their wallet. Any good proposition polarises people. For all those that don't like what you're saying, loads will. So, don't fear missing out. Worry about fitting in.



## Stop saying what you see, this isn't Catchphrase

Unless your target is cognitively impaired, stop using nouns to explain why a customer should buy your product or service. Describing what you do is to describe the sector and 9 times out of 10 you'll be using platitudes, just like your competitors. It's pointless, will relegate any enquiry to a price negotiation and make media money less effective. On the upside your mother will think it sounds clever.

## Start being more blinkered

USPs are difficult. They're specific. And as Shackleton observed "Nothing great is easy". So start thinking that a USP isn't always about utility. If your offer is functionally the same as your competitors', think harder and more laterally about why else customers should choose it. Start thinking about your brand as a 'belief' rather than a description. Rapha believe cycling is about 'suffering'. This belief is a greater USP than describing the chamois in their shorts. It gives customers something to identify with, it's incomparable and something hard-core cycling fans absolutely understand and believe in – or not. Focus FFS.

## Stop thinking digital

Amoxicillin is the most common antibiotic. Anyone going to their GP expects a bag full and to be on their way. Yet antibiotics only cure a tiny proportion the world's ills, in much the same way a short-term digital media campaign addresses a tiny proportion of the world's marketing problems. Stop the fascination with the channel, shiny shit and speed to market. It puts the solution in the driving seat ahead of the problem. Turn your brain on. VOD or something horrible like programmatic and Insta is dumb. Get more balance, cut it out.

## Start irritating people

Start pulling the thread on the jumper. Ask a few more 'whys?', pose more awkward agitations and step on a few toes. A marketer has many diagnosis tools in their armory (read books by Kotler, Sharp etc). Use them more. Know that very few problems are solved with glittering something up and social mediating the fuck out of it. Structural or commercial problems are more than skin deep. No one likes them identified because they're more difficult to deal with but solving issues with a value proposition, positioning, route to market or targeting are far more likely to build a P&L than some shit walloped out on Insta.



## Stop with the 'Why?'

No doubt Simon Sinek had good intentions. But when seemingly innocuous brands in banking, detergents, soft drinks and cars start talking more about a 'cause' than the business they're in, then the party's over. 'Purpose' has become a proxy for sustainability, CSR, health, wellness and Jonny polar bear. Businesses hitching their brands up to this fuck-truck misunderstand the original idea, its role in strategic marketing and - ironically - that it does more harm than good at a P&L level.

## Start inward looking

What is your business's North Star and is everyone on the same piste? In marketing - as in business - most people respond magnificently to simple motivations. Specific, applicable and straightforward, usually does the trick. Challenge is, there's complexity in simplicity and it requires sacrifice. The best North Stars cut out all the shit and get to one word. Labour managed to win 3 elections with "New", Apple achieved greatness with "Different" and Lotus cars have "Lightness". This stuff isn't glamorous but it provides direction for all marketing activity and gives internal customers (staff) real clarity of purpose\* that hitherto "Integrity, Honesty, Respect and Innovation" can only dream about. If you're gonna nail anything to the office wall make it count.

\*Not that one, fuck's sake



## Stop thinking about data

Collecting and using data; micro-targeting, high frequency media buying, interrupts, VODs, programmatic, blah blah... is killing the magic. The fascination with the ever-changing digital landscape has produced a fucking army of 'Fakers-and-Makers' selling all sorts of voodoo to clients obsessed with ROI metrics they made up. Amid the gold-rush, proper strategic marketing planning and execution got pushed aside to make way for rudderless, short-term, tactical schizz. Data obsession because you can, doesn't mean you should. As Sir John Hegarty once profoundly observed, "Shit that travels at the speed of light is still shit when it arrives". Amen.

## Start doing rhymes not just reasons

Let's shift the focus away from the method and the media and back toward the message and the meaning. Thinking more about the big problems that need solving rather than the tactics of BAU. Great marketing leaps, in any area, require a degree of faith. With the correct rigour applied to marketing operations, customer facing marketing thinking and action must be let off the lead more to explore, innovate and transform... Let's not confuse this with tech's 'fail fast' bullshit – we're in different industries. But let's use new found energies and permissions to go against the grain a little more. Try new things. Break the mould. Just because it can't be empirically validated beforehand doesn't mean it shouldn't go ahead. What counts can't always be counted.



## Stop benchmarking

The word 'creative' is about as boggy as it gets. Like 'strategy' and 'insights' it's depressingly overused, chronically misunderstood and rarely achieved. In 'marketing' - which most mistake to mean 'communications' - creativity has been battered.

Little new, little differentiated... tired, washed up old crap you've seen before. An advert for lager or cars, some twat talking about retirement or the B2B proposition for a cyber security firm or law practice.

They're all the same. 'Benchmarked' to the point of being copycats.

It's lazy, requires no intelligence to do, delivers nothing material to the P&L and leaves the customer as fucked off as the horse he came in on. Great minds don't think alike.

Stop confusing creativity with copying and stop putting shite on my telly.

## Start thinking laterally

Lateral thought is the capacity to join seemingly unconnected dots to solve problems; making leaps, looking through new lenses, identifying disparate things that until that moment hadn't been connected... all the work of lateral thought. Talk more about "thinking laterally" as it's more encompassing, inclusive and empowering than "be more creative". The latter is cul-de-sac-ing. It doesn't 'release' people - its too narrow a definition, something only achieved by 'Creatives'. Racoon shit. Weaponising a marketing team's lateral thought points to a direction away from the colouring pencils toward commercial marketing. Product development, pricing, routes to market, ideas - as well as the communications aspects - will achieve far greater returns.



## Stop being comfortable

Growing up, you do everything you can to avoid standing out. Being outside the comfort of the 'pack' is uncomfortable. Your friends are everything and fit in you must. It's different in business.

To fit in is to disappear. All sectors in all markets are over supplied.

The fact is you're selling the same thing as your competitor, in the same way and you fit right in. Take a look. As Forbes stated recently, 81% of CEO's think their company's offer is distinctive, while 7% of customers agreed. Think about that. Remove the blinkers, uncork your ears, put your nose in the wind.

## Start a monopoly

Aim for isolation. White space. A positioning and proposition that's untaken and unsaid. Product, service, price, distribution, communications etc, can all be twerked up, down and sideways to position you differently from your competitors. To do this will allow less comparison, greater fame and increased price elasticity. A 3-way that's self-perpetuating. Nice!



## Stop being normal

Normal isn't remarkable.

Normal isn't exponential growth and a banging balance sheet. Normal isn't uncomfortable, desirable or stand out. Normal is fucking pointless and has no place in aspiration, ambition or the lexicon of marketing leaders who want to get great stuff done. Just stop it.

## Start un hiding, FFS.

Do. Shit. Differently.

Let **conspicuous thinking** layered on top of established marketing principles and practice drive new strategy, tactics and execution to solve problems in new and chaotic ways.

Lean into a **conspicuous attitude** to question the status quo, to fuck off 'cause we've always done it that way', to blaze new trails, live a little see what might happen. Enjoy being unnormal.

Practice **conspicuous actions**, get comfortable agitating, polarising, removing consensus and committees...it'll feel amazing and your balance sheet will thank you for it.

**Conspicuous Behavior is the last bastion of independent thought, competitive advantage and commercial success... Champion and enjoy it and watch people follow.**



## Thanks for reading

NOKAMO Consulting exists to grow clients' market share and their P&Ls through better strategic brand marketing – in theory & application.

Experts in positioning and propositions, we create brands, relaunch them and make them grow.

We practice what we preach; any commission will produce brand work that'll sacrifice, polarise and agitate the market. Paradigm shifts will be made, noses will be bloodied and as a consequence, balance sheets will grow.

So, if you're up for a post-Covid brand adventure, keen to capitalise on a new-found permission and get in the grill of your competitors... to grow market share quicker – give us a call.

**Ian Humphris**

FOUNDER/CEO

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## With thanks to -

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**NOKAMO**  
Positively Uncomfortable Consulting



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