

# **DISPATCHES**<sup>TM</sup>

*Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front*

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April 8, 2007

## **PLUMBING THE DEPTHS OF EMOTIONS**

Emotional connections are vitally important in creating brand loyalty. Why is it that consumers will pay a significant price premium (upwards of 50%) for Johnson's Baby Powder? Is it the talc ingredient found in the product? Or is it the product's fragrance? The fact of the matter is that competitive baby powder products are comprised of the same ingredients – talc and fragrance. And, while the rational mind of the consumer chooses to defend the selection of Johnson's Baby Powder with one of these product attributes the subconscious mind, if plumbed, would undoubtedly reveal an emotional connection. It's the only connection that matters when it comes to establishing "brands."

Dr. Abraham Maslow, the clinical psychologist, suggested the importance of emotions in his theory of the "Hierarchy of Needs." As you will recall from your studies, he postulated that there is a hierarchy of needs progressing from the most basic to the most sophisticated. He likened the hierarchy to a ladder we climb one rung at a time. We must first step onto the lowest rung, which deals with survival (give me food, clothing, shelter), before we can proceed up the ladder. The topmost rung is ... yes, you have it, "self-actualization." Self-actualization is an emotional need. It's in one's head. So he is informing us that emotional needs are the highest order needs. And remember, needs and benefits are "two sides of the same coin." This suggests, in turn, that emotional benefits are the highest order benefits. Ergo we choose Johnson's Baby Powder because it symbolizes the deep and abiding love we have for and share with our baby, Starbuck's Coffee for a deserved self-rewarding experience, Rolex watches to affirm our success to and status with others and, maybe, Viagra because it helps us feel like a "whole man" again.

Accordingly, our brand positioning should (at some point in our brand lifecycle) cater to an emotional need and pay-off that need with an emotional benefit. But as we have stated in past issues of DISPATCHES, many of the emotional benefits we encounter in Brand Positioning Strategy statements are just so much malarkey. They either haven't earned it (one rung of the ladder at a time), or it's wishful thinking (that deceives no one but the marketers that have penned it), or it's over the top (in other words it's -----!). Many more times the proffered emotional benefit is innocuous. It just doesn't mean anything to prospective target-customers.

Part of the problem traces to our rather limited vocabulary (do you find this surprising? astonishing?) when it comes to identifying and expressing emotions. Most often the emotional benefit in the BPS will read "confidence/trust," "peace of mind," "control," or "feel like a (whatever – you fill in the blank)." It's just so shallow. Moreover, it is probably not grounded in the reality of the product, brand equity, customer experiences and/or perceptions. A limited vocabulary will also hamper our ability to identify and/or understand the emotions of our target-

customer, no less be able to blueprint and establish the connection we hope to build through our marketing initiatives.

It's important for us, then, to expand our vocabulary when it comes to emotions. Dave Roche recently provided us with a listing of "the vocabulary of feelings" which provides a useful starting point since "feelings" are, after all, "emotions." The source of this work is "Improving Therapeutic Communications – A Guide for Developing Effective Techniques" by Hammond, Hepworth and Smith. Actually, Dave came across this in his extensive reading on developing healthy relationships – the kind between partners. This, too, is apropos since brands establish relationships with target customers, products do not. The vocabulary of feelings that Dave shared with us (which we believe may only be a partial listing) has 10 basic feelings (e.g., happy, fearful, lonely, etc.), which, in turn, contain a plethora of feeling states, which are further classified as to being "strong," "moderate" and "mild." The total number of vocabulary words is more than 300. A more precise articulation of someone who is "happy" could be "on cloud nine" (strong), jovial (moderate), or glad (mild).

We need to establish an emotional connection with target-customers to create brand loyalty and, in order to do so, we need to plumb the depths of emotions in drawing-up our Brand Positioning Strategy statements.

**BOATS & HELICOPTERS:**

- 1. Expand your vocabulary of emotions.** This will assist you in identifying target-customers' feelings and articulating the emotional connection you need to establish. Below is a list of "the vocabulary of feelings":

**THE VOCABULARY OF FEELINGS**

LEVEL OF INTENSITY	HAPPY	CARING	DEPRESSED	INADEQUATE	FEARFUL
<b>STRONG</b>	Thrilled On cloud nine Ecstatic Overjoyed Excited Elated Sensational Exhilarated Fantastic Terrific On top of the world Turned on Euphoric Enthusiastic Delighted Marvelous Great	Tenderness toward Affection for Captivated by Attached to Devoted to Adoration Loving Infatuated Enamored Cherish Idolize worship	Desolate Dejected Hopeless Alienated Depressed Gloomy Dismal Bleak In despair Empty Barren Grieved Grief Despair Grim	Worthless Good for nothing Washed up Powerless Helpless Crippled Inferior Emasculated Useless Finished Like a failure Impotent	Terrified Frightened Intimidated Horrorified Desperate Panicky Terror-stricken Stage fright Dread Vulnerable Paralyzed

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## THE VOCABULARY OF FEELINGS *Continued*

LEVEL OF INTENSITY	HAPPY	CARING	DEPRESSED	INADEQUATE	FEARFUL
<b>MODERATE</b>	Cheerful Light-hearted Happy Serene Wonderful Up Aglow Glowing In high spirits Jovial Riding high Elevated Neat	Caring Fond of Regards, respectful Admiration Concern for Hold dear Prize taken with Turned on Trust Close	Distressed Downcast Demoralized Discouraged Miserable Pessimistic Tearful Weepy Rotten Awful Horrible Terrible Blue Lost Melancholy Upset	Inadequate Whipped Defeated Incompetent Inept Overwhelmed Ineffective Lacking Deficient Unable Incapable Small Insignificant Like Casper Milquetoast Unfit Unimportant Incomplete No good Immobilized	Afraid Scared Fearful Apprehensive Jumpy Shaky Threatened Distrustful Risky Alarmed Butterflies Awkward Defensive
<b>MILD</b>	Glad Good Contented Satisfied Gratified Pleasant Pleased Fine	Warm toward Friendly Like Positive toward	Unhappy Down Low Bad Blah Disappointed Sad Glum	Lacking confidence Unsure of yourself Uncertain Weak Inefficient	Nervous Anxious Unsure Hesitant Timid Shy Worried Uneasy Bashful Embarrassed Ill at ease Doubtful Jittery On edge Uncomfortable Self-conscious

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## THE VOCABULARY OF FEELINGS *Continued*

LEVEL OF INTENSITY	CONFUSED	HURT	ANGRY	LONELY	GUILT-SHAME
<b>STRONG</b>	Perplexed Confounded In a dilemma Befuddled In a quandary Full of questions Confused Trapped Bewildered Puzzled Baffled	Crushed Destroyed Ruined Degraded Pain(ed) Wounded Devastated Tortured Disgraced Humiliated At the mercy of Cast off Forsaken Rejected Discarded	Furious Enraged Seething Outraged Infuriated Burned up Pissed off Fighting mad Nauseated Violent Indignant Hatred Bitter Galled Vengeful Hateful Vicious	Isolated Abandoned All alone Forsaken Cut-off	Sick at heart Unforgivable Humiliated Disgraced Degraded Horrible Mortified Exposed
<b>MODERATE</b>	Mixed-up Disorganized Foggy Troubled Adrift Lost At loose ends Going around in Circles Disconcerted Frustrated Flustered In a bind Ambivalent Disturbed Helpless Embroided	Hurt Belittled Shot down Overlooked Abused Deprecated Criticized Censured Discredited Laughed at Mistreated Ridiculed Devalued Scorned Mocked Scoffed at used Exploited Slammed Slandered Cheapened	Resentful Irritated Hostile Annoyed Upset with Agitated Mad Aggravated Offended Antagonistic Exasperated Belligerent Mean Vexed Spiteful Vindictive	Lonely Alienated Estranged Remote Alone Apart from others Insulated from others	Ashamed Guilty Remorseful Crummy To blame Lost face Demeaned
<b>MILD</b>	Uncertain Unsure Bothered Uncomfortable Undecided	Put down Neglected Overlooked Minimized Let down Unappreciated Taken for granted	Uptight Disgusted Bugged Turned off Put out Miffed Irked Perturbed Ticket off Teed off Chagrined Cross Dismayed Impatient	Left out Excluded Lonesome Distant Aloof	Regretful]wrong Embarrassed At fault In error Responsible for Blew it Goofed Lament

2. **Get real with emotions.** Don't promise what you can't fulfill. The most valuable emotions are one that the customer grants you though the customer experience with the brand. It is part of the brand equity. It's important to harvest these and reflect them back to the target-customer through your marketing initiatives.
3. **Connect on a subconscious level with customers.** In other words, don't tell them what they should be feeling, let them feel it through the stimulus (i.e., communications, merchandising, packaging, public relations, etc.) you share with them.
4. **Be aware of where you are in the product lifecycle.** While your BPS may point the way to an emotional benefit, be cognizant that it may take time to get there. Don't forget to communicate your product rational benefit in those cases where you have clear superiority versus competition.

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