



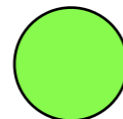
*The End Of Marketing
And The Rise Of
Engagement
In A Land Of
250 Million Personalized
Invitation-Only
Geo-Fenced
Micro-Economic
Mobile Brand Owners*

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1

Bi

Before iPhone

1

Branding is and always will be about eliciting **positive emotions**. In the Bi era, this was done via traditional advertising techniques like television commercials and print ads. In theory it was: make an emotional connection, make the sale. **Simple**.

But there was **too much distance between the ads and the sale**. Too much time for consumers to forget the ads, requiring endless impressions to keep the emotion alive, and frantic **research** and **focus groups** to discover whether the effort was working at all.

Even so, it was still the brands who were in **control**. **Consumers had no recourse**.

The Wave and the Sand

Think of it this way:
Everything we did back then--
branding, advertising, direct
mail, et al--was like the
waves crashing on the beach.
Over and over. Endlessly. The
only purpose, to soak the
grains of sand with emotion
for our clients' brands and
hope for the best. And the
grains of sand? A passive,
anonymous, helpless, voice-
less mass market of
individual consumers.

**And then Apple introduced the
iPhone.**

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Ai

After iPhone

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The **iPhone** ushered in an era virtually unprecedented in commercial history, with the most far-reaching sociological and psychological effects. Effects that have not only altered the consumer landscape but **consumers' very psyches.**

The marketing world has not yet come to terms with this new era. Its collective psyche is **fractured** and **confused** and under siege from the convergence of the Ai era with the digital revolution.

And no wonder.

Back To The Beach

The Ai era did not arrive with fanfare. **It crept up on us all**, its effects unnoticed. Think of it this way:

While marketing continues **pounding the beach** in relentless waves of branding and advertising, those individual grains of sand have become **individual castles of hardened, impregnable sand**. Each one with its own drawbridge, only lowered to those it recognizes and approves.

Apple had invented **the drawbridge**.

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Altered Carbon

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In many ways that should matter to any marketer or brander, we have become a kind of **new species**, sociologically and commercially speaking.

In the era of Ai, in a land of 250 million smartphones, **all human interactions are now mediated by a device that did not exist before June 29, 2007.**

Interactions between people and between people and brands **have no resemblance to life Bi.**

Consider one of those priceless anecdotes that seem so odd yet **reveal deep trends:**

Most people live in houses with **doorbells**. Yet in the era of Ai, people are afraid to open the door when the doorbell rings. Why? Because the **doorbell ringer was not invited**. It's a rude intrusion by a stranger that friends would never commit. **Friends would text "I'm here"** while standing next to the doorbell--**an anachronism from a long-gone past.**

Marketers and branders persist in thinking that being personal is ringing the doorbell, also known as **targeting**, or the wave breaking against impregnable sand castles.

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**Love Is All
You Need**

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But what exactly is going on inside those sand castles?

Here is the irony of ironies.

They're building their own individual brands.

Human interaction as we have known it from time immemorial has become brand interaction. Human communication has become brand communication.

Welcome to Brandland.

Like traditional branding, for the sand castles nothing is spontaneous and unplanned. Like traditional branding, everything is devoted to the image the sand castle wants to project outward, as it filters brand (or any) communications coming inward.

They Act Like Brands...

What is an **Instagram** feed, after all, if not a form of branding?

What is **Twitter** if not a form of PR?

What is **Facebook** if not a form of targeting and even Billboard advertising?

And what is the **brand strategy** if not to be **loved** precisely as marketers and branders Bi sent waves onto the beach in hopes their clients' brands would be **loved**?

...Even Though They Don't Realize It

No wonder the castles so
jealously guard the entrance
via the smartphone/
drawbridge. For the same
reasons brand marketers
likewise guard their brands'
position and integrity.

**BECAUSE SPONTANEITY IS A
BRAND DESTROYER.**

**NOTHING IS MORE PLANNED,
RESEARCHED, TESTED,
MONITORED, AND PROTECTED THAN
A BRAND.**

Whether it's Ford Motor
Company of Detroit or--in
Brandland--Ms. Ellen Ford of
Memphis.

And this is the world brand
marketers have been living in
since **June 29, 2007.**

5

**Sorry
Invitation
Only**

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Why are people dumping on **Instagram**? This favorite of the Ai era decided to **insert** advertising into users' feeds. **So Bi of them!**

The drawbridge is **not** permanently up to keep out **all advertising messaging**. It opens readily if advertisers can **secure an invitation** from inside the sand castle. **Instagram ads were not invited in**. Instagram rang the doorbell instead.

"They messed with my brand."

This a **radical departure** in the history of branding.

Previously, nobody could mess with a business's brand. Each one was a carefully built **pre-cursor to today's sand castles.**

But in Brandland, **250 million smartphone owners** are messing with traditional brands in ways **no brand** has ever experienced.

The sand castles own the beach and the waves are increasingly **irrelevant.**

In fact, does branding even matter anymore?

Imagine you're inside your carefully constructed sand castle. Do you watch TV that isn't streaming TV? Do you watch the evening news or get your 'news' from Twitter? Do you listen to commercial radio or Spotify/Apple Music/Prime Music?

Virtually **everything** we used to think of as the crucial blocks of brand-building is leaking **relevancy** today.

If you can't get into the castle without an invitation, then it's not too much to say that advertising doesn't matter, branding doesn't matter, direct mail doesn't matter.

Without an invitation, you don't matter.

But how can you get an invitation **without ringing the doorbell?**

What other way is there?

Get a referral from those already inside the sand castle.

It's called **word-of-mouth**. And since the dawn of the Ai era and the rise of individual brands, it has become the single **most powerful marketing tool** in Brandland. Why? Because **it isn't marketing.**

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**Marketing
Is Dead
Long Live
Engagement**

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Remember: sand castles are brands just like the brands you work for. They each want to be loved and approved and appreciated for who they are--**which is not the same as their true identities.**

Sand castles are **not populated by real people.** Each individual brand is a carefully nurtured construct or projection **of who the brand owners want you to think they are.**

And because they have so much psychic energy invested in these constructs, and are **constantly reinforcing** them through social media, they are **morbidly sensitive** to the slightest slight.

Consequently their lives are spent seeking to **avoid** anything that disrupts their **creation.**

From their insular point of view then, these castles become **safe spaces**, and the drawbridge is only dropped for **the most trusted communications.** Which is why word-of-mouth, always effective, is now the Ai era's **most powerful tactic.**

So marketing to these new constructs is hopeless. Only engagement is possible. And **engagement can only reliably begin through word-of-mouth.**

Or the 21st century version of it.

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**The
Goldmine**

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The Little Jeweler That Could

Once there was a little family jeweler with a store that had been in business in the same location for over 100 years. The owners, two brothers who were the 3rd generation, did well enough. Yet, they wanted to grow.

They hired an ad agency to re-brand their store and do cool new ads which they loved. And then, like good marketers, they waited, because as we all know, retailers are impatient and nothing happens overnight.

Nothing happened over **weeks**.

So the agency, not wanting to lose the account, recommended a different approach using a **digital platform** for email engagement which they had discovered. The brothers agreed to upload their client email list to the platform, which promptly and automatically began to engage back-and-forth with their clients through staged emails.

In less time than it takes to approve a marketing plan, the little jeweler was seeing more and **more 5-star reviews** on Google and Yelp.

Today, they are **#1 on Google** for "jewelers in (their city)" with **85 5-star** reviews. And **#1 on Yelp** with **29 5-star** reviews for the same search phrase.

No 1's, no 2's, no 3's, no 4's.
Every review a 5-star.

Please note:

- They did **no advertising** (in fact, they stopped magazine and cable tv advertising)
- They did **no SEO**
- They did **no SEM**
- They did **no direct mAi1**

The secret?

A digital platform that empowers **21st century word-of-mouth.**

But that's really not the secret. That's only the implementation of **thinking as an engager, not a marketer.**

The secret is, they had **already been invited inside** many, many sand castles and didn't even realize it.

**Every satisfied
client was a
sand castle
that had
dropped the
drawbridge for
them by having
made a purchase
at their store.**

By appealing to their **current satisfied customers**--through an email engagement platform--to write reviews of them, **they discovered a gold mine.**

New people from the area who had **never set foot** in their store (though it is situated in the center of the business district and who must have passed it by without a thought for years) are **showing up daily.** Today, the brothers are swamped on Mondays--a traditionally dismal business day for retailers--and **every day of the week.**

They are now **expanding** their in-store engagement ring boutique and **enlarging** their Rolex section.

There is **not a retailer alive** who would invest such a large sum **on the if-come**. Only because their business is **booming** are they willing, even eager, to plow money back into their store.

Their story is another one of those anecdotes that hold **deeper meaning**.

Whether B2C or B2B, if you have customers

**you are
already
inside
multiple
sand
castles.**

**Therefore, you
are sitting on a
goldmine of**

- repeat sales
- new sales
- multiple referrals
- 5-star reviews
- new customers
- increased ROI
- increased positive brand awareness

Which begs the question

**How crazy do you
have to be to go
prospecting for
gold before
you've mined the
goldmine you
already own?**

(And please don't tell me you're already doing that with Constant Contact and Mail Chimp. One-way communication is not engagement! The fact of having made a purchase may have lowered the drawbridge for you but it won't stay down. How many customers do you think are beginning to regret they gave you their email addresses?)

After all this build-up,
no doubt you want to know
what digital platform we
used to **drive** such
remarkable outcomes.

The platform is called
Signpost. Read about it
and some of our other
digital platforms in the
Appendix.

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**A Last Word
(And An
Apology)**

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For over **30 years**, I worked in advertising, branding, and strategy, ostensibly to help clients **make a sale**. I say ostensibly because it didn't take me long to learn that I would never be able prove I was successful. I could never track my efforts from 30,000 feet to **a single sale at sea level**, in a store with an actual customer.

So my focus inevitably left the customer and fastened on my client. How to make the client successful emphasized every metric **but** sales. Positive brand imaging. Clear brand positioning. Evocative, engaging brand messaging. Interruptive, persuasive advertising. **Sales?**

When a client insisted on pushing us for **sales results**, we knew **we had landed a bad client**. We wanted to work for clients with **marketing cultures**, smart people who understood that sales on the ground would eventually follow in the wake of our 30,000-foot air cover. Of course they would. **We were that good**. **Sales-culture** clients were the kiss of death for creativity.

We were quite happy to leave this kind of client to the **'retail' agencies** and **sales promotion shops** (who BTW made a lot more money than we did).

I realize I have been hard on brand marketers and their ad agencies in this book. Which causes me **real pain**, since I am one myself, or I should say, have been one.

But the **exhilaration** I experienced over that little local jeweler's **incredible sales explosion** has convinced me that success is not a trip to the Cannes Film Festival or a lavish dinner at the One Show Awards.

It's flooding an actual, real-life retailer's store with actual, real-life customers.

This is **not** an isolated case.

My jeweler's success can be the **future of any business.**

If you think we have a booming economy today, try to **imagine** the effect of hundreds of thousands of businesses **digging into the goldmine** that is their existing customer base.

The potential for every business that begins to **focus strategically** on its existing customer base is **huge**. You have already achieved the most difficult feat in the era of Ai. You have been invited into hundreds, thousands, maybe millions of sand castles, each one fortified against your best traditional marketing efforts-- simply by having customers!

Focus on that. What (more) have
you got to lose?

(Sorry)

APPENDIX

"We're moving to a digitally focused model, and we're going to target our advertising on a more individual basis using advanced analytics and the new digital platforms."

Jim Farley, President
Ford Global Markets
WSJ Apr 21, 2018

Aside from the fact that Mr. Farley still talks in terms of advertising, he is certainly correct in his strategy. Fundamentally, engagement is personalization. What was unachievable in the Bi era is made possible today by **The Rise Of The Platforms**. Only digital platforms can efficiently and affordably deliver **positive individual online experiences** to 200 million+ individual brands. Platforms scale. People don't.

(BTW in this article, Farley prefaced his change in strategy as coupled with a **cut** in agency fees of **\$200 million**.)

Digital Platforms like the ones you'll see here are each designed to do a specific task, work independently and automatically in the background, and require little or no time to implement and manage. We call them "Flip-The-Switch" solutions.

Disclosure: The following products are among those sold in our Product Store. They give you the best idea of what a digital platform is and what it can do.



Signpost

Signpost is built to digitize and optimize the two fundamentals of retailing: 80% of sales come from existing customers, and 80% of new customers come from referrals from existing customers. This platform is the way to extract gold from an existing vein of customers for sales, reviews and referrals. In fact, our clients average a 12% increase in revenue and a 2-star increase in review ratings.



SEONetwork

SEONetwork harnesses Google's top ranking determinants to propel sites to the top or near the top in organic search. It continuously and automatically generates authoritative backlinks from a 30,000-business network, and authoritative articles from a network of professional SEO writers. This powerful combination has moved thousands of sites from #999 to #1.



Site Visitor Attribution

Turn anonymous visitors into qualified prospect mailing lists, emails, and phone numbers on a scheduled basis. Each Business Lead includes a company name, address, phone number, industry code, page URLs, and a count of visits. Each Consumer Lead includes name and address, email flag, gender, age, and income – allowing you to segment leads and personalize messaging.



Max My Customers

Every week, MMC automatically sends out 20,000 emails to a business's ideal new customer profile. Custom designed landing pages feature a video with company branding and video testimonial, plus company selling points and a pre-loaded sign-up form with the target's info. Businesses get immediate email notifications. Full activity reports come every Monday morning including a list of every business that opened the initial email, even if they didn't click through for the offer—so businesses can build their own targeted list of interested contacts for further outreach.



StoryTap

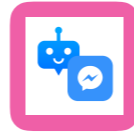
StoryTap is a video platform that makes it easy to collect video reviews, video content and more.

USER-GENERATED: This means real, authentic and believable video by actual customers. Customers can record using their phone, tablet or desktop. Users don't download anything to record from their phone, tablet or desktop.

RESULTS: Authentic video can drive up to 80% in conversions and will outperform better than any other type of social content by 1200% (Forbes).

REACH: Imagine friends sharing to friends a video review? Unpaid media that touches an influenced market that your media budget could never access. AND the videos drive a call to action.

SCALED: Users can record anywhere, in real time. There are no apps to download or plugins required. They receive a link and go!



Facebook Messenger Chatbot

Increase conversions from Facebook Destination Ads and Sponsored Message ads. Instantly engage visitors, answer common questions, book appointments and route hot leads to your staff automatically. Facebook Messenger Chatbots templates are mimic the business's branding. There is no programming or custom development required and the Chatbot is on 24/7. Facebook Messenger Chatbots have less friction than email with 80% open rates and 30% click through rates. The average email open rate is between 6% to 18% (Statista). Never miss a lead with artificial-intelligence-powered agent handoff. Questions without a programmed response are routed to your staff so they can answer in personalized two way Messenger chat.

About The Author



Steve Crane is Managing Partner at mobilecultures.com, a virtual aggregator of digital platforms for B2C and B2B businesses of all sizes.

Steve Crane has worked in advertising and branding for more than 25 years. But with traditional marketing techniques seeming to leak relevancy for clients of all types, in 2016 he decided to do a deep dive into the mobile culture phenomenon. How had it arisen? What does it mean for society and marketing in particular? How should marketers and branders be thinking of it now, and how can they address it? And in what new ways is this phenomenon linked to the digital revolution? His insights eventually led him to found MobileCultures LLC (mobilecultures.com) with partner Peter Post. His timing was auspicious, as the use of digital platforms was proving the inefficiencies of traditional marketing and communication tactics and targeting. He encountered this most starkly in the Signpost email engagement platform, the firm's first digital platform offering, which far out-delivered for his early retail clients in 5-star reviews, referrals, new customer acquisition, and loyalty. Today, his firm is committed to helping businesses understand and exploit the huge new opportunities in the new world of Brandland.

