
Microsoft Partner Network – Thought Leader Podcast Series
Interview with David Meerman Scott

VOICEOVER: Welcome to the Microsoft Partner Network Thought Leader Podcast Series. Today, we're talking with David Meerman Scott, the author of 11 books, including *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*. David discusses how old rules of marketing don't apply to the new way people buy. Consumers now use search engines and social networks or ask friends and colleagues for buying advice. David explains that marketers need to engage their buyers in real time and create content that helps buyers solve problems.

DAVID: I'm David Meerman Scott, and I am so psyched to be here chatting with you, Shantel.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and I'm Shantel Gascoigne, part of the Microsoft Partner Network Team. And I'm thrilled that we get to talk to you today, actually. I've been a huge fan of yours for a while now.

DAVID: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: I love the way that you talk about marketing in the new world and how all the rules have changed. And so this is something that's a huge topic with our partners. In particular, can you talk about how the customer buying journey has

changed?

DAVID: Oh, my gosh. It's completely changed. And that's why it's so important to have these new rules and to pay attention to them. Because the old rules are that you could buy attention by buying advertising. You could try to get attention from the media. You could hire a team of salespeople and do cold calling. And if that's working for your business, that's totally cool. I'm not suggesting you have to change. But most people tell me those old rules aren't working so well.

So the reason that they're not working so well is because the ways that people are buying have totally changed. And you know that and I know that. And everybody listening in knows that because we all use different ways of buying than we used to. If we need a hotel, we don't go to a travel agent to get a hotel. We go online, we find out which hotels are nearby, what are the price points, what are the features that that hotel has. We figure out how to get the best deal and we're good to go.

And so that's what's happening today with all products and services, especially with B2B technology products, and the whole partner community. Because when somebody has a problem that they're trying to solve, they almost always do two things. They go to the search engines and research their problems. And they're looking for content that will help them.

And the second thing that they do is they ask their friends, and family members and colleagues for advice. And when they do that, they're typically going on social

networks. They're going on LinkedIn, on Twitter, on other social networks.

So to reach buyers in this new world, there's two things that you have to do. Number one, you have to be focused on creating the content that people will find. And number two, you have to be engaged in real time, instant communications. And that means being -- using social networking -- it means being aware of what's happening out there in the wider world.

Because if somebody's interested in you right now, or somebody has a question right now, or if somebody is doing their research right now, tomorrow's not good enough because they've already made decisions. It's got to happen today. There's a long answer to a simple question.

INTERVIEWER: No, it's a really good answer and you had a lot of really great points in there. For a lot of our partners, they're just starting off in this new kind of world. What would you recommend as some really good first steps for people who are trying to make this change and take advantage of this opportunity?

DAVID: Well, I think one of the most important first changes, and the most important fundamental aspects of getting this kind of marketing right is to understand the people that you're trying to reach. And what I see the biggest problem that people do, especially technology companies, is they get so excited about hire wonderful products and services that that's what they talk about. "Oooh, look at our flexible, scalable solution for improving business process." It's like, what the heck does that

mean, right? They're talking about their products and services.

The difference that I see is if you understand your buyers, the people who might be interested in your products and services. And instead of talking about what you do on your websites and in your social networks, you instead create content that helps solve problems for buyers. Your marketing comes alive.

So my very strong suggestion for people who are trying to get started is don't even begin to screw around with social networks or begin to change your website until you first understand what I call buyer personas, but the people that you're trying to reach. And how do you do that? You do that by interviewing them.

And it's important not to interview existing customers.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, interesting.

DAVID: I mean, obviously talk to existing customers, but you should focus much more on those who are not yet your customers.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so why?

DAVID: Why? Well, because your customers already have a perceived notion of your company. And when you ask them about their problems and how a product or service like yours might be able to help them, they're going to come with a bias of what you already do.

So for example, if you were doing buyer persona research to get people -- to learn about people who might come to the partner conference next year, who aren't

here at WPC 16, you want to attract them to 17, sure you should talk to people who are here. But that's not going to give you your greatest insights because they're gonna say, you know, "It was really good, but I wish that lunch had started at 11 instead of 11:30 because I was getting really hungry by 11." And like, oh, okay, so if I do my marketing saying lunch starts at 11, I'm going to attract more people to WPC 17, which is not going to happen, as you know.

INTERVIEWER: And that's so important for our partners because so many of our partners are going through this change in their business models and looking for a whole new type of customer they've never had before.

DAVID: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: So going to those same customers they have today isn't going to happen them into that new market, right?

DAVID: That's exactly right. So if you've got a one percent market share in your marketplace, or in your geography, or whatever it is, and you focus only on understanding those existing customers, you can grow your market a tiny bit, perhaps.

But if you have a one percent market share and you focus on understanding the 99 percent you don't have, you have potential to grow much more quickly because you might be able to come up with an insight that helps you to get to 10 percent, or 20 percent, or 50 percent market share.

So, very important when you're starting out to focus on your buyers and less so

on your existing products and services.

INTERVIEWER: And I love that you say that, focusing on your buyers instead of your products. A big piece of that helps you drive a really great story, right?

DAVID: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And it's all about storytelling these days.

DAVID: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: It's one of the things we tell our partners is differentiating your business is one of the most important things you can do. And doing that through -- doing that through storytelling and having that great idea of what is most important to them is going to be the best way to do that, right?

DAVID: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Because humans love stories. We don't love to be sold to. And I remember when -- I've written ten books. One of my first writing teachers -- this is probably 20 years ago -- said to me that a story without conflict is propaganda.

INTERVIEWER: I love that.

DAVID: So when you think about storytelling, you have to build it like a story -- like a movie, or like a novel. There has to be conflict in that story. And you have to create something that genuinely becomes interesting.

But if you just say, "Hey, we're great, you should check us out," that's propaganda because there's no conflict in it. So an example of that would be how companies create

case studies. You know, because a lot of companies do case studies. And it's important in the technology business because it helps people to understand how a product or service works.

So if you do a case study and you say this company had a really big problem and we solved it, which is what almost every case study in the world is.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Every case study I've read.

DAVID: Every case study I've read, almost.

It's terrible because it's propaganda. But if you have a case study that says -- first of all, puts your buyer in the role as the hero, and you say that Mary Smith at XYZ company had this big problem. And she wanted to solve it. But her bosses said no, she's not allowed to do that because it's too much of a challenge or it would cost too much money. So she had a big challenge on her hands. She talked to a number of people how to fix this problem, and what she chose to do was to implement this kind of solution and it totally failed.

And then that led her to the Microsoft partner in the Toronto area that helped them to do this, this, and this. And then everything is happy and healthy and everyone lives happily ever after. And that's the story that practically every movie is. It's boy meets girl. They fall in love. There is some conflict that drives them apart. And then you see the story from the boy and the girl perspective where they're doing stuff independently. And then at some point there's a way that brings them back together

and they fall in love again and they get married. Great story.

INTERVIEWER: Great story.

DAVID: But if it's like boy and girl meet each other, fall in love, get married, that's really boring. So the story needs to have conflict.

INTERVIEWER: It has to have conflict. That's great. I love that.

So you had a lot of really great advice. Any last tips you would give to our partners in this B2B industry that's changing all the time?

DAVID: Absolutely. I actually have two. The first one is stop using gobbledegook because this is a gobbledegook-laden industry. So stop using flexible, and scalable, and mission critical, and cutting edge, and best of breed and all of that crazy language because it doesn't mean anything.

And the second thing is, this is fun stuff. Creating marketing in the new world in 2016 is exciting, and fun, and interesting. And you should make it that way. Because if you do, you create the sorts of things that people think are interesting and fun, and they will pay much more attention to than if you say, "Oh, my god, I've got to do marketing. This is going to be terrible, and I hate it," well, it's gonna show.

So if you personally cannot get to the point where you think marketing is fun, you need to find someone who does.

INTERVIEWER: So no more gobbledegook.

DAVID: No more gobbledegook.

INTERVIEWER: Have fun and be interesting.

DAVID: Have fun. You got it.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

DAVID: That puts it together.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate it.

DAVID: Oh, my pleasure, Shantel.

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