

No, that's marketing witchcraft at its finest. Apple found a way to position the iPad not as another rather cold, utilitarian piece of technology but rather something with which one could have both a physical and also an emotional connection.

Sigmund Freud once described intense emotional attachment as fascination. Romantic love is a state in which an individual becomes so submissively engrossed in his object of fascination that he becomes hypnotized. People found themselves hypnotized by the iPad, turning it from a rational purchase into a fascination. (Who would have guessed that Sigmund Freud and Steve Jobs understood fascination in the same way?)

As we've said before, fascination goes beyond rational thinking. It transforms customers into fanatics, and your brand's products into must-have purchases.

You probably don't have millions in ad budget dollars, or world-class R&D. That's okay. You can stand out, and sell more without spending more, as long as you understand your brand's Advantage, and apply smart tactics. (You'll learn about tactics, and how to do this, in parts II and III.)

The goal here is not to spend more money on marketing. It's actually to spend *less* money by marketing more effectively. Spend less but see better results. Outthink instead of outspend. If you don't have the biggest budget, then be the most fascinating.

Fascinate the Goldfish

Back in the days of the Salem Witch Trials, the average attention span was about twenty minutes long. (An estimated one minute for each year of age, up until age twenty.)

But later a little thing called "the Internet" happened. And then Wi-Fi and the explosion of the smartphone, a distraction we can take with us wherever we go. Now we have messages coming at us from every direction: voicemails and videos, emails and apps, updates and upgrades, tweets and retweets.

So how do our brains respond to all this stimulation? Turns out, we're learning to process information differently. We think more quickly, change direction more often, and get distracted more easily. The BBC has described the effect of technology on the human brain as follows: "The addictive nature of web browsing can leave you with an attention span of nine seconds—the same as a goldfish."

In fact, the attention span might not even be nine seconds these days. It might be eight seconds, or seven, or six. A recent Microsoft study says the attention span is now eight seconds. But for now, let's go with nine, in the spirit of positive thinking.

If you get only a few seconds to capture your customer's attention before it turns toward a new topic, you'd better act quickly. In this distracted environment, you have only an instant to communicate, convince, and convert.

You've surely watched the goldfish swim away, right in front of your eyes. It's when you're in the middle of a conversation, and someone whips out an iPhone and begins checking emails. It's when you're making a presentation, and you can see people having a side conversation in the back of the room. It's when you find out through the grapevine that your loyal client is now working with someone else.

In my national market research, I learned that if a brand earns a customer's interest during this critical nine seconds (in other words, if it can fascinate them quickly), the customer will be more likely to respond to the marketing. However, if customers become distracted or confused, they will simply "swim away" like goldfish.

If you communicate with a slew of haphazard and conflicting messages, it's difficult to develop a clearly established route. You'll seem confused, or inauthentic, and the audience will be less likely to understand what you stand for.

In other words, you must learn how to fascinate the goldfish.