

Op-ed: the person in the mirror is not your customer

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A personal word about diversity, equity and inclusion

I/we have been guilty of unconscious bias in our work that unnecessarily excludes people. Not only is this bad karma it's also bad for marketing. We're trying to do better.

- **Names** (e.g. 'Marketing Mary')
- **Default genders** (e.g. assuming CIOs are male)
- **Stock photography with bias**
- **Irrelevant biographical detail** (e.g. for B2B tech, who cares if the persona has kids or not?)
- **Inappropriate tokenism**

Executives

Person

Human

Accessory

Suit

Entrepreneur



Group Photo

Group People

Group Of Friends



Together

Friendship Images

Group Of Friend



Suit

Paris Pictures & Images

People Working



But this talk is not about DEI

This is about helping marketers connect, inform and inspire better.



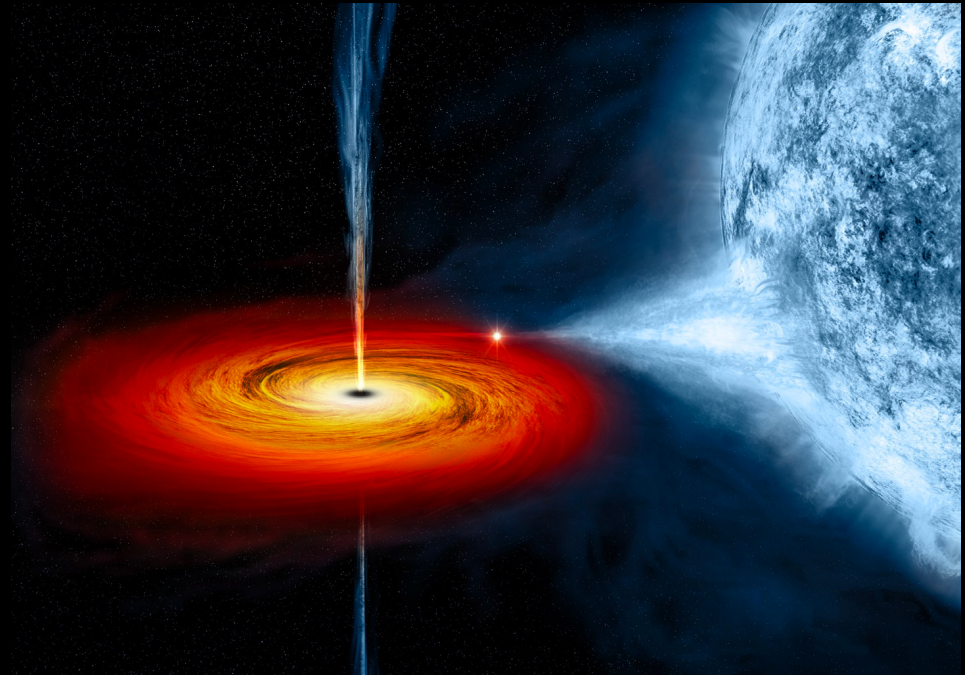
What is the 'person in the mirror' problem?

Your customers are not necessarily like you

- They're not necessarily interested in the same things you are.
- They don't buy your products and services for the same reasons you created them.
- You might need to be an expert to deliver your work but they don't need to be an expert to consume it.



The danger is a huge gravitational pull towards talking about yourself, your products and your services and missing out on potential opportunities.





The origins of the 'person in the mirror' problem



We feel confident and in control when we experience familiarity

Our self-image is built on the foundations of what we do well.

When you learn to fly it feels scary at first but with training, your skill and competence becomes a source of confidence and pride.

We invest heavily - financially, emotionally, psychologically - in our own expertise.



Experience creates unconscious heuristics to help you understand the world

These are the people I went to university with back in 1991. It all looks very posh, very white and mostly male, doesn't it?

It takes me a lot of work to remind myself constantly that clever people don't have to look like that.



The world is not full of geeks

But if you spend your time hanging out with geeks, e.g. at Microsoft Inspire here, and your career is built on technical know-how then it's easy to assume that everyone thinks the same way.

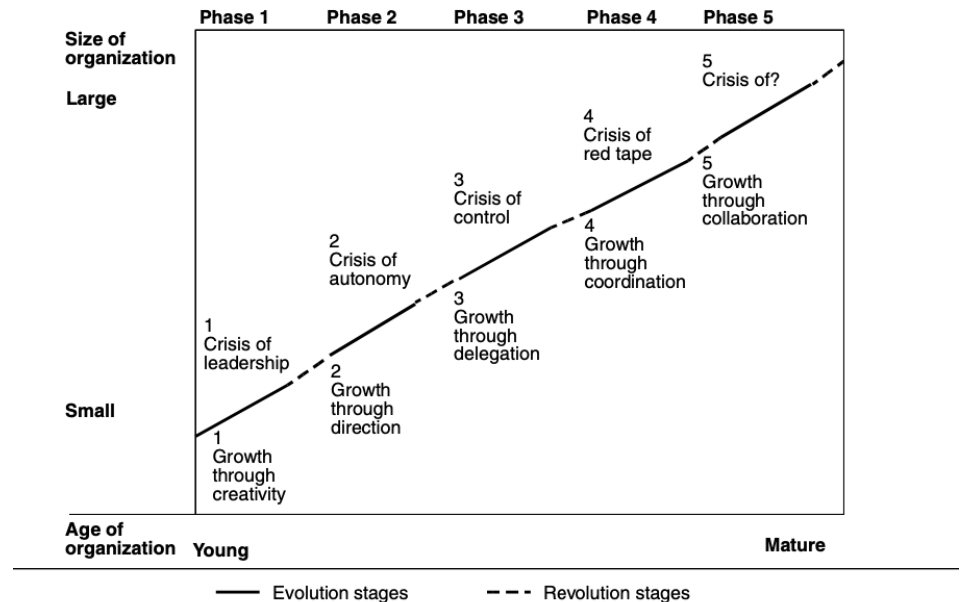


What got you here won't get you there

A lot of smaller tech companies get started because they can sell their passion and expertise and grow by reputation and referral.

A lot of ambitious tech companies' growth stalls when this process becomes impossible to scale.

(Diagram from The Five Stages of Small Business Growth by Neil Churchill and Virginia Lewis, Harvard Business Review May-June 1983)





Why it matters



Marketing is fundamentally about talking to potential customers about their issues in their language, not about your products using your jargon.



All marketing is targeting

Unless you are Coca Cola and you have a universal product and very, very deep pockets

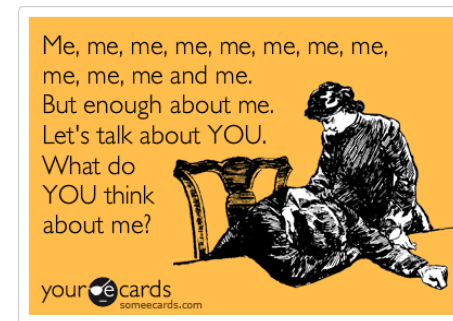
You might want to sell Microsoft Teams to every business in the world, but that's Microsoft's job.



How to be boring

Introducing the 'cocktail party effect'

- If you go to a party and you only talk about yourself, everyone you talk to will think you are utterly boring.
- If you ask them intelligent questions, show a real interest in them and their world, they will think you are charming and intelligent.
- It's the same with marketing.



Inform

To **inform** people is to help them understand their world and make better decisions. Information is at the heart of content marketing but also our desire to share generously what we learn. It is better to be well-informed than ignorant.

Connect

To **connect** is to create an open channel for communication between the reader and the writer and between a company and its clients. It also brings to mind EM Foster's saying, 'only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted'.

Inspire

To **inspire** distils the idea of 'inspiring epiphanies' for our audience - flashes of insight that illuminate the whole scene and which lead to meaningful, positive change. If we do our job right, inspiration is our gift.



**"Here's what our product can do"
and "Here's what you can do with
our product" sound similar, but they
are completely different
approaches.**

- Jason Fried, Basecamp





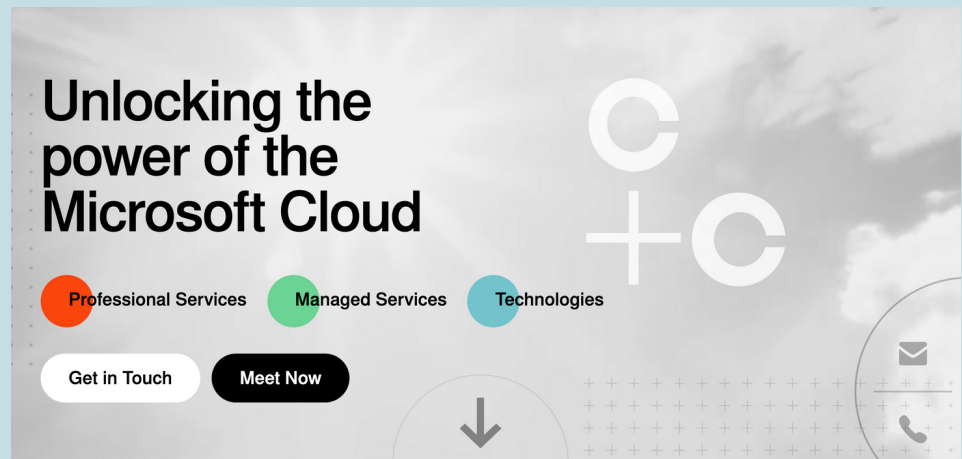
Examples of the 'person in the mirror' problem



Websites that are all about you

Look at all this stuff we sell. So much Microsoft. Here are our engagement models.

To be fair to Content+Cloud, they have more outcomes-focused content below the fold.



We deliver secure technology solutions, services and support with particular focus on Microsoft 365, Azure, and Dynamics 365. Our aim is to help your organisation achieve tangible benefits, whilst improving the experience and effectiveness of your people at work.





Azrael's Tear

Released 1996

An adventure game designed by people who loved first-person shooter games.

Sales: square root of diddly squat



Tomb Raider

Released 1996

A 3D platform game designed for people who didn't play Quake that much.

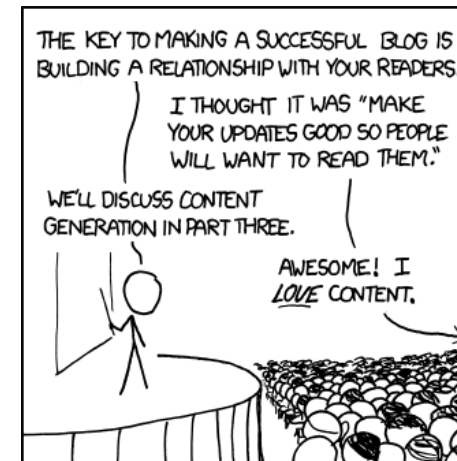
Sales: OMG



The only content on your site is case studies and product literature

If only people really understood what we are selling, they would automatically have to buy from us.

Cartoon hat tip: xkcd.com





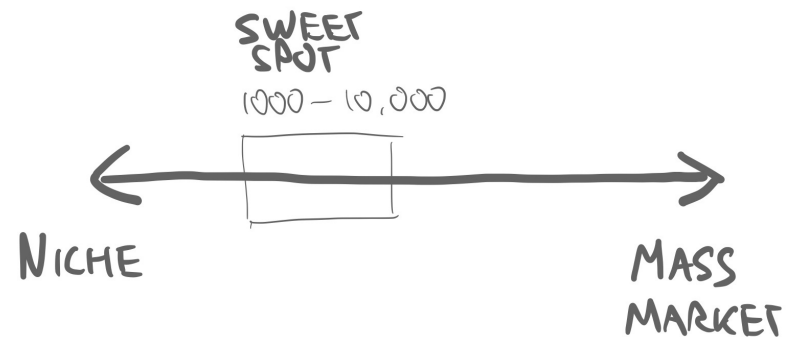
How to resist 'the person in the mirror' problem



Find your sweet spot

- How many customers do we need?
- What is our total addressable market?
- For what proportion of our TAM are we uniquely, indispensably valuable

See David C. Baker, *The Business of Expertise*

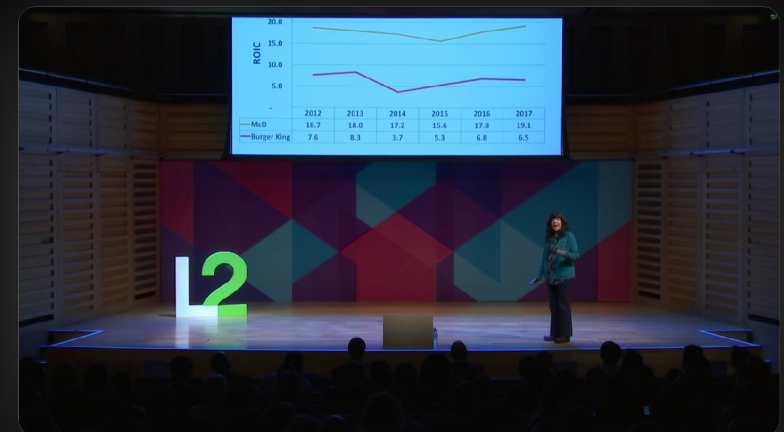


Nail your positioning

See my previous webinar on the difference between 'Real positioning and me-too blah blah'.

Watch Sonia Marciano's talk about strategy and enterprise value here: <https://vimeo.com/253402779>

Hint: it's not what the OEMs and software companies say it is. modern workplace, digital transformation and other cliches are not the answer.



Resist the rounded pebble

Embrace opportunities to look and sound different. Lean into your opinions. Demonstrate real expertise not just conventional wisdom.

'It's better to be a pirate than to join the navy.' - Steve Jobs



Work harder on your personas

One of our core values is to: 'Solve for the client by deeply understanding their real, validated needs and goals.'

The more work you do on this, the better your positioning will be. Demographic and biographical details can be misleading (which is why we avoid them now).



Prince Charles

- Male
- Born in 1948
- Raised in the UK
- Married twice
- Lives in a castle
- Wealthy & famous



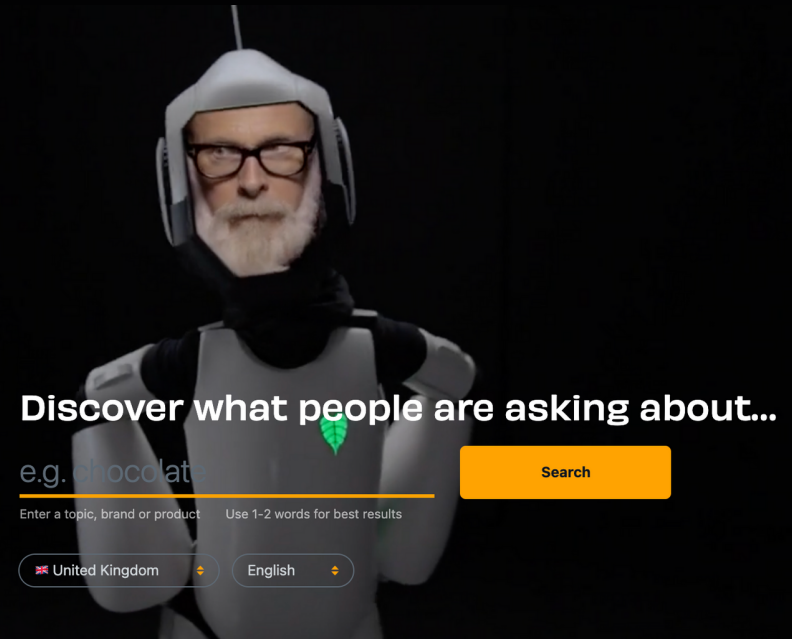
Ozzy Osbourne

- Male
- Born in 1948
- Raised in the UK
- Married twice
- Lives in a castle
- Wealthy & famous



Look at the real questions people ask

- Quora
- Ask the public
- Google 'people also searched for'
- FAQs in your own sales process



Escape the echo chamber

- Find dissenting voices
- Read new things
- Don't ask the usual people
- Resist the consensus
- If you ask for feedback, you'll get criticism
- Search your feelings, Luke

Check out 'How Spies Think'. Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman and Charlie Munger's Harvard lecture on the Psychology of Human Misjudgement (Google it - it's on YouTube).



And finally...





Let's talk

Video and slides appearing soon on articulatemarketing.com

Email me with questions at matthew@articulatemarketing.com

Book a call with me: www.articulatemarketing.com/meet

