

It's Not Phone Sex! Telemarketing to Men!

"Is man no more than this? Consider him well: thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume: Hi! Here's three of us are sophisticated! – Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art." – King Lear by William Shakespeare

As a woman, I've spent a good portion of my professional and personal life trying to understand men better and therefore have a few ideas about "marketing" to men. For this article, I've focused on the uniqueness and differences of men to women and how this affects the non face-to-face world of contact centres.

DISCLAIMER: *It's always dangerous to generalise and objective one sex over another, especially when it comes to men, who after all, haven't had as many years to develop their sense of humour in this area as women have.*

Nevertheless, in a world where more attempts are made to regularly sanitise, standardise, politically neuter, androgynise our identities, our work, our customers and workforce; human nature will prevail no matter what force is pressed against it in the name of political correctness and discrimination. Some things remain self-evident.

However, the application of "gender" as an adjective to marketing presents a potential minefield of dangers not so obvious as with "marketing to women". So in the hope of escaping too much controversy I've take a bit of a lighthearted approach to some of this to avoid offending my male readers.

What can you learn about using the phone to satisfy men enough to ensure they keep coming back for more and are always ready when you call? What do staff and management in customer contact centres need to know about handling men - whether customers or staff -- to increase the likelihood of strategic, sustainable and profitable business success?

Begin with Difference

Let's begin by agreeing men are different from women (or there would be no concept as "gender marketing" in the first place). The major differences are more pronounced and dramatic than physical equipment -- and include genetic programming, behaviour, personality, unique wiring, internal communication speed and the dynamic of information processing.

Genetic Programming

“In cricket, if a woman has to choose between catching the ball and saving an infant’s life, she will choose to save the infant’s life without considering if it’s the last batsman at the wicket.”¹

Since Craig Venter first completed mapping the human genome,², there’s been a stream of interesting facts, articles and books emerging about the innately-programmed differences between men and women from the moment of conception.

Some is not too surprising: boys actually do like toys, weapons, competition and action better than dolls, romance, relationships and families. Genes “program” certain preferences into our lives (that can be temporarily “stunted” by nurturing), and males do come with some ineffable preferences to identify with boyish things. Additional genetic differences show up in behaviour and personality.

Behaviour

There’s one way behaviour seems to *evolve* differently from anatomy. With anatomy, most similarities result from common descent - “like father, like son”. But this isn’t true of social behaviour. By and large there seems little “like father like son” inertia in our social systems and behaviours.³ Where two people have common ancestors, it’s the pressure of their environment that shapes them more than common descent.

The true expression of culture is apparent in “natural” behaviour, which is why people from different countries must be approached and marketed to differently (certainly a topic for a future installment.). This also makes the entire industry of customer service and sales far more complicated and challenging in Australia, that prides itself as multi-cultural and diverse - because “one size does not fit all”.

“The biggest behavioural difference between men and women is the natural, innate aggression of men, which explains, to a large degree, their historical dominance of the species [and business]. Men don’t *learn* aggression as one of the tactics of the sex war. We don’t *teach* boys to be aggressive - indeed most parents try vainly to un-teach it.”⁴

¹ Barry, Dave, comedian, rewritten quote about American baseball by Paul E Kossally 2005

² UK Observer, 11 February 2001

³ Malik, K, 2001, *What is It To Be Human?*. Institute of Ideas.

⁴ Moir, Anne & Jessel, David, 1989, BrainSex, Mandarin Paperback (UK)

Nevertheless, the differences exist and affect advertising, operations, customer service and sales strategies in ways we all too often miss.

Personality

Research with twins over decades continues to provide clues to differences between men and women and prove personality is highly inherited. Character and personality exists in a child from the moment of conception, rather than being “formed” during the long years of childhood.

“Similarity is the shadow of difference. Two things are similar by virtue of their difference from another; or different by virtue of one’s similarity to a third.” -- Matt Ridley

Parents reinforce nature (what’s inherited) with nurture (upbringing), but they don’t create the difference in the sexes. They don’t force gender stereotypes down unwilling throats; instead they react to their own pre-existing prejudices. Although no doll- or gun-preference gene has ever been found, parents of either sex know instinctively that boys and girls are “satisfied” by one type of toy or activity over another.

Even in cases where parents have purposefully raised girls as boys and boys as girls or to raise them androgynous, the natural preferences surface once the pressure to conform is removed (boys for guns, risk, adventure over dolls, conversation and stability).

Unique Wiring

Men are like light bulbs and women are like an iron. A man has the capacity to “light up” or “close down” completely in an instant. A woman, on the other hand, gradually warms up and closes down over time. A tremendous clue when marketing or selling (among other things)!

Women’s brains are wired for multi-tasking (even though some studies indicate multi-tasking can be 40% less productive than simply focusing on a task until it’s finished, I suspect this refers more to men trying to multi-task). Women can listen attentively to a conversation at the same time they scan a report, keep an eye on ABC TV news all the while noticing which employees are sneaking off for yet another smoko.⁵

⁵ Carey, Kirstin, “Powerful Communication Skills for Women” 24 May 2005, Small Talk Marketing and Communications Inc., East Norriton, Pennsylvania, USA

Men have different listening skills and tend to concentrate on just one thing at a time. This provides a valuable and practical clue in gender marketing: with men, stick to one thing at a time in a conversation, have a purpose for the dialogue and stick to it!

Internal Communication Speed

In conversations over the phone, women rely more heavily on non-verbal clues: the “verbal nodding” and invisible smiling as they listen. Men tend to think it’s more polite to remain silent as they listen and fail to provide much, if any, non-verbal encouragement, which, if the contact centre rep is a woman can be frustrating and annoying.

Women interpret a man’s silence as loss of interest and begin to clam up; determined to wait for a “proper” response. When women do this, men assume it’s because of their brilliant, insightful comments and talk all the more. At which point the woman rep decides the man is rude, withdraw or simply “up themselves”.

Dynamic of Information Processing

In general, men’s brains are better at processing visual tasks: maps, mazes, three-dimensional rotation and sense of direction. Women are better at language skills, fluency, verbal reasoning, written prose and reading.⁶

Men’s thought processes are more linear while women’s are more wholistic. “Think of it as a file that’s alphabetized versus one that’s cross-referenced. A man has to retrace his steps to remember where he left his glasses; she seemingly pulls the information out of nowhere.”⁷ This type of sensitization could be critical in staff training!

Another dimension discovered from my research is that men may actually have a greater capacity to use their imaginations than women over the phones to “see” the unseen - well at least in regard to some things (see sex, below). But it’s a difference in the way they process information and if we pay attention and are wise, we can leverage the differences between men and women to our own business advantage!

⁶ Tanenbaum, Male and Female Realities: Understanding the Opposite Sex

⁷ McCall’s Magazine, April 1992, pp. 104-151

What Do Men Want?

To appeal to men, your just have to remember the three little keys: Sex, toys and freedom.

SEX

They say men have a sexual thought about every 40 seconds. Now I don't know how they did the research or who had the time to focus on it, but sex remains the number one, most effective way to get and keep a man's attention. Let's start with a few statistics. Did you know that:

- Sex phone lines attract more than one million calls a month and generate over \$150 million in annual revenue in just Australia alone?⁸
- Across the world, adult content on the Web was just a \$1 billion industry in 1999 but has more than tripled to reach a \$3.1 Billion industry in 2002.⁹
- 69% of all activity on the Internet concerns "adult content"?¹⁰ (*No, I did not make up that statistic!*)
- (Although not technically "non face-to-face") there are 150 different magazines targeted as adult content for men and only one for women.¹¹

Most women want romance, not indecent exposure. Women think guys in Speedos are gross. Genitalia aren't nearly as attractive to most women as romance. Women like flowers, bike rides and picnics; men like women in Spandex, sport and eat steak from the grill.

Although it's not logical to make any scientific assumptions on any one of these statistics, taken together they seem to be saying something we can use. From the tender age of just three months, little boys can detect a difference between male and female babies; whereas female babies don't show any preference for either sex at that age.¹²

I even came across a new publication: "An Encyclopedia of Male Sexual Fantasies from Different Professions". This e-book is the first of its kind, supposedly "an easy read", as well as "an in-depth exploration into sexual

⁸ Milsom, Rosemarie, "Who Kills a Fly with a Cannon" p.9, 6 September Newcastle Herald

⁹ "International Data Corporation, 23 February-04, Datamonitor Research

¹⁰ Datamonitor, CNN article, Digital Jam 21 May 1999

¹¹ Sims, Rodman, "Marketing to Men", Marketing News, v28n25, p.4, 5 December 1994

¹² Campbell, Anne, Durham University Study, published in New Scientist, 22 November 1997

fantasies from the prospective of occupational type."¹³ - sort of like getting hold of a man's diary!

Toys

There used to be a shop in North Sydney called "Boy's Toys" and the showroom was filled with the most remarkable cars I've ever seen made by: Ferrari, Porsche, Maserati, Lotus, Aston Martin, etc. It was a perfect name for the place.



If a "toy" is powerful, big, totally impractical, complicated, costly, challenging or filled with options, buttons and lots of accessories men lust after it second only to sex.

Freedom

For men the third strongest and effective appeal is for freedom. That's why they like toys such as boats, motorcycles, musical instruments (especially noisy ones) and computers. They watch almost any sport, want to take "rustic" vacations, go to car and boat races, see demolition squads pull down buildings, anything they can mentally or actually engage in that gives them even momentary freedom from the drudgery of their lives.

Men, (more than women), want financial freedom to do whatever their little hearts desire (which helps answer the question of why women live longer than men). Men only want to work when they want to -- not because they have to. It's the "*shoulds*" that thwart them -- Men *should* work. Men *should* pay the mortgage. Men *should* take out the garbage. Men *should* be taking care of themselves, their spouse, their parents and/or children better, etc.

41 Ways Men & Women Speech and Voice Patterns Differ

So what does all this mean in your customer contact centre? I do a lot of work with my clients in teaching managers and staff how to use their words and voices better -- with customers and within their business teams.

In one exercise we review and compare the 41 key differences.¹⁴ In speech and language between men and women. We then look for ways to

¹³ McGinn-Spring, Kathleen, 23 May 2001 edition of "U.S. 1 Newspaper"

¹⁴ Glass, Lillian, Ph.D., He Says, She Says, 1997, Bantam Books

overcome, accommodate or work with these differences rather than against them. In general, when it comes to men, they:

1. Interrupt more and allow fewer interruptions.
2. Use more filler words ("like", "um", "uh") during speech.
3. Mumble words more and have sloppier pronunciation
4. Sound more nasal (they open their mouth less when speaking).
5. Are more likely to leave off endings from words.
6. Use less intonation and vocal inflection.
7. Have more monotonous speech - tend to keep to three tones when talking (women use 5).
8. Have lower pitched voices.
9. Speak louder in general.
10. Use more choppy and staccato tones - sound more abrupt and less approachable.
11. Use loudness to emphasise points (women use pitch and inflection for emphasis).
12. Talk slower than women.
13. Use fewer soft and breathy tones.
14. Talk more and monopolise conversations.
15. Talk about things and activities such as: cars, sports, jobs and mechanical or electronic things that they like.
16. Disclose less personal information.
17. Refer to basic descriptions of colours (red, green and blue).
18. Make direct accusations ("You didn't call back").
19. Make more direct statements -- beat around the bush less often.
20. Are less verbose -- get to the point more quickly.
21. Say "um hum" less often and "verbally nod their heads" less frequently when listening (so you don't know if they are actually paying attention - this happens when talking face-to-face as well).
22. Say "Right" or "OK" as interjections.
23. Are more silent during conversational lulls.
24. Use fewer intensifiers and adjectives.
25. Raise fewer topics of conversation.
26. Ignore topics women raise to talk about the subjects they bring up.
27. Use less correct grammar.
28. Answer questions with a declaration (Women answer more questions with a question).
29. Give more command terms and don't worry about using terms of politeness with their commands.
30. Make more declarative statements ("It's a nice day"); women make more tentative statements, looking for agreement.
31. Use fewer psychological or emotional-state verbs ("I feel", "I love", "I hope", etc.).

32. When answering questions offer minimal responses - use fewer adjectives and descriptive statements.
33. Rarely use or are interested in adjectives of "adoration" ("cute," "precious," "charming," etc).
34. Use more interjections when changing the topic or when shifting the conversation ("Hey!", "Oh! By the way!" "Listen!").
35. Use more quantifiers such as "always," "never," "all," or "none."
36. Ask fewer questions to stimulate conversation.
37. Rarely discuss their personal life in business situations.
38. Make more simple requests (i.e., "I need help with this.").
39. They use stronger expletives (i.e., "Damn it!", etc.).
40. Use more slang words and jargon.
41. Tend to lecture more often and tend to have more of a monologue to the other person (whereas women dialogue: listen, speak, listen, speak, etc.).

Benefiting from Gender in the Contact Centre

*"If women did not exist, all the money in the world would have no meaning."
– Aristotle Onassis*

Marketing to men is a growth industry, with some estimates that the market will grow to \$8 billion within the next two years.¹⁵ Yet 80% of consumer products are purchased by women, and 70% of these women ignore campaigns aimed at them because the ads are geared more toward a male mindset than a female one!¹⁶ Why?

1. Men write and create the majority of ad and telemarketing strategies, campaigns, creative and scripts
2. Campaigns and budgets are approved more by male marketing executives than female
3. Fewer men work as reps, team leaders or managers in customer service and sales in the non face-to-face industry (statistics vary from 10% to 40% within vertical industries)
4. Most organisations and their executives fail to cater for gender differences in marketing efforts (except using pink for something that suppose to appeal to women) whether face-to-face or not!

Today, it's critical to consider business drivers, strategy, products, pricing and customer gender mix or preferences before selecting staff to work on

¹⁵ Peale, Cliff, Packaged Facts (American market researcher), Cincinnati Enquirer, 2005.

¹⁶ Strong, Leslie, The Gender Gap - How Marketing Experts are Missing the Mark, 2005, Barbara Annis & Associates Inc., Toronto Canada

the phones or in particular campaigns - whether inbound or outbound.
NOTE: one of the dynamics I rarely see monitored and measured is how gender relates to results.

For instance, if you're a large financial institution or a technical help desk supporting high-level hardware or software, you may find, depending on the pricing and the details of the products, that your customers prefer and react more positively to having men handling their calls (increased closes and repeat orders, etc.). This, by the way, has nothing to do with competence or expertise levels being less in women, its customer perception that makes the difference.

Having women, rather than men, responsible for certain elements of your contact centre campaigns may result in higher revenues. For instance, women typically have more demonstrable results when making outbound calls to set up appointments in two-step selling campaigns.

One gender alone won't necessarily get more beneficial results overall, but together, if "applied" wisely may increase results. As with all classic and successful direct marketing you have to test this. If you're not managing your centre with this additional dynamic, you may not be getting full benefit from your staff.

Consider the illustration from my January 2005 article about customer perception. Your customers tell you what they need. Your challenge is to match their needs with appropriate skilled people, sensitive of gender benefits.

Always remember that on the phones:

1. Men look for a good solution to their needs, women seek "perfect answer".¹⁷
2. Men are typically visually oriented, so carefully lay out precise "visual breadcrumbs" to your desirable or imaginary outcomes.
3. Men want facts and figures to be the primary driver of their purchase decisions, women ask many people for input.
4. Men go into a transaction knowing what they want, women seek more information, investigate more options and take longer to make the transaction.
5. Men are outcome focused - not process oriented - you must take a no-nonsense approach to any phone-based service or selling opportunity with men.

¹⁷ Grabow, VO Marketing NEBS, PRIMEDIA Business Magazines & Media Inc, 2005

6. Men accept a woman's voice easier on the first call, but they do better when the discussion is continued or closed by a man.¹⁸
7. Know your stuff --Talk to men about facts, performance, power, promotion, money, speed, gadgets - quickly and clearly, in an uncomplicated, direct way.
8. Men are interested in closing a transaction, women want to establish a relationship.
9. Don't waste time talking about history or the past, focus on benefits, goals and outcomes of the now and/or paint the future (see 2 above).
10. Men prefer to try before they buy, so consider sampling or sending a factual fulfilment package --then follow-up before the iron grows cold.
11. Don't "box" a male prospect or customer in - he must have openings through which he feels he can escape.
12. Always do what you agree to do (call back, send more information) when or before you say you will (remember men turn off immediately.)
13. Bottom line, make it EASY for men

Finally and most importantly, always make sure the person representing your organisation on the phone, whether a man or woman has a "good" voice and uses it well and appropriately. Because you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

C:\Documents and Settings\DSE\My Documents\Writing\MarketingMag\NotPhoneSexApr-05\NotPhoneSexMktngMagArticle2-18-05-4Web.doc

¹⁸ Roxanne, Marketing Profs, 2 April 2002