

It's a Give and Ask Business World

I have written a few blogs from David Meerman Scott's [books](#) and [blogs](#) because they relate so much to the social media world we are in today. Scott's work is all about creating a worldwide rave around what you offer, by putting valuable content out on the web that will build credibility and create value for others. He also discusses using current events to leverage more interest and exposure around what you offer the world.

<a title="Amanda Palmer: The Art of Asking" href="

Amanda Palmer: The Art of Asking

So I will ask you, are you giving away content on the web that is valuable to others – especially your clients – that attracts them to you? That is the focus of a recent [blog](#) that Scott wrote that was based on a TED talk titled "[Amanda Palmer: The Art of Asking](#)." In this very interesting TED talk, she discusses her experience of going from a bridal statue and giving out flowers for money, to an alternative rock singer giving her music away for free.

From the experience of learning to ask for money on the streets, she gains an awareness of a connection with people that, to her, was profound. This connection, she realized, overflowed to how she blogged and related to her crowd in that they just gave her money. She then peeled away from her label and did a crowd-funding approach. She hoped to raise \$100k, and instead, she raised \$1.2 million. She realized that people just want to help when you build a connection and just trust them.

So from a marketing approach, what David recommends is that

you give your value content – like blogs videos, infograpahics and full-length ebooks. He says give your best stuff away for free, and build the relationship that comes with being vulnerable.

Next, do as Amanda does and ask them to help you. She says, “Give and receive fearlessly. Ask without shame.” Then, just like the video discusses, David asks if you need a speaker at your next conference.

What are you giving away and asking for help from those whom you provide value?

Price vs Value

As business owners, customers, and people, when we buy something, we like to think we are getting the same amount of value for the money we are spending. This is true if we spend \$50, \$500, or \$5,000. We don't care as much about the dollar amount as we care about the value. If we were only concerned about the price, we would all stay at \$59 per night hotels, and obviously that doesn't always happen. In fact, we will spend \$100, \$150, or \$250 for a hotel to have a high-quality experience. After all, we don't just want to sleep anywhere, right?

The same can be said for just about everything we buy. As a business, we must provide value relative to the cost of our product or service. This value is what would incentivize people to purchase from our business rather than another. Most of the time, it doesn't matter if the cost is significantly higher than competitors because people know they are paying

for the value. A customer's reasoning behind a purchase is not always logical and can be based on emotions such as pride, vanity, competitiveness, fear and pleasure.

What elements of your business are appealing to customers and stimulate their desire to buy your product or service? Knowing this and working to increase awareness to one or more of these elements could increase the attraction, discussion, sharing and purchase.

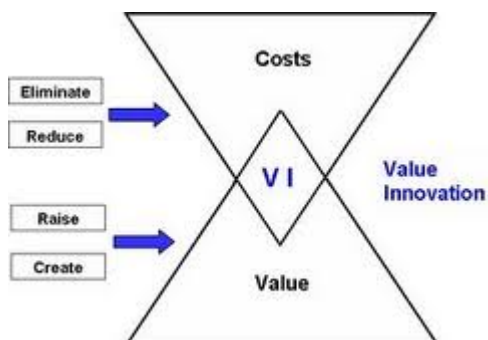
At Efficiencie, we build custom websites for people that are looking to work with our experienced creative director, Tori Rose, to create a unique, visually appealing website that fits their specific brand. Other options are available for people to purchase an out-of-the-box website at a relatively lower cost. Sometimes, though, this option limits aesthetic qualities and functionality, but it still provides basic web presence. Some customers only value web presence, while others value an attractive and compelling site that resonates with specific emotions they want to connect with.

Is your company focusing more on value or price? How are your products or services providing value to your customers that is worth the price?

[Can you find value in a blue ocean?](#)

In last week's blog I discussed what it means to create value, and mentioned that simply asking your customers what they want is a viable way to determine value opportunities. When your

customers don't know what they want, an alternative is to use the [Blue Ocean Strategy](#) (BOS).



The cornerstone of the BOS is what they call Value Innovation. It stems from the idea that by combining value and innovation you can make the competition virtually irrelevant. This is done by simultaneously driving cost down and

buyer value up. Take a look at the chart. The point where they meet in the middle is spot where value innovation is created.

It may not make much sense yet, but stay with me. Start with increasing buyer value by introducing offers not seen before in the industry. At the same time, identify factors that the industry currently competes on and see how you can either reduce or eliminate costs associated with those factors. To track this, use what BOS calls a Strategy Canvas. Along the X-axis you plot the factors that the industry competes on, and along the Y-axis you track the value received from those competing factors. See Southwest's Strategy Canvas below.



Once you know the factors that the industry "currently" competes on, you dive into what BOS calls the [Four Actions Framework](#), which consists of these four questions:

- 1) Which of the factors that the industry takes for

granted should be eliminated?

- 2) Which factors should be reduced well below the industry standard?
- 3) Which factors should be raised well above the industry's standard?
- 4) Which factors should be created that the industry has never offered?

The first two questions assist in reducing cost, and the last two are meant to help generate value.

By doing this exercise and taking it seriously, you have the potential to break the mold and create something new and special. Think about historical breakaways, like Ford's [Model-T](#) car for the masses back in 1908, [CNN](#)'s 24/7 news in 1980, [Starbucks](#) coffee – a higher price but higher quality or [Cirques du Soleil's](#) Broadway performance/circus, using people instead of animals.

The book offers several examples and explanations, so if you're serious about breaking the mold, it's a great way to open your mind to the endless possibilities you can find in the vast blue ocean.

I have had my eyes on a blue ocean opportunity for a long time. As a software company, every new product we create that fills a void has BOS potential. Soon we'll be launching a tool for requirements gathering called [SluiceIt.com](#), as well as a company meeting software tool that helps to create an environment of execution around goals.

Life is Business and Business is Life

I have recently been contemplating how different peoples' models are of how the world works. I hear how some feel that [capitalism](#) neither works nor benefits the world, and I hear how others worry about technology taking away jobs. Lately I keep hearing stories about how "business is bad" and people doing business are just out to get you. Is that really the case?

In a [recent blog](#) I talked about value creation, and explained that in order for people to give you money, you must offer them something of value that makes them want to pull out the green. When was the last time you went into a [Starbucks](#) to get a "Fourbucks" coffee, then yelled at them for being evil and taking your money? The more likely scenario was that you willingly walked in and handed them your four bucks, then enjoyed every sip of your "Fourbucks" while you took a moment to get away from the hustle and bustle of the world. It was worth it to you...right?



When businesses provide something we want, why do we consider them the bad guys? Do you feel like service people that keep operations going, just to make a few bucks and pay their bills, think the business should be squashed? If that were to happen, then the service they provide would dissipate and we wouldn't benefit from it anymore.



If you've read any of my blogs, you know that I'm a huge advocate of freedom and the opportunities it provides. But do we really value our freedom, or do we take it for granted? Let's say those "evil" oil companies disappeared. How would you get to work, school, the hospital, the grocery store...anywhere for that matter? How drastically would your life change? What if your job was one that required people to come to you and they couldn't anymore? What would happen to your job? I know that, personally, this loss of freedom would have a huge impact on my life.

I value the goods and services that entrepreneurs have gone out and risked their time, energy, debt and savings to bring to the market. Their businesses benefit me and help me to increase my standard of living. When they are successful at giving me something I want, they benefit, and when they don't, they lose. So why do we make them the enemy? If I benefit from what they do, why should they not be able to enjoy their success and be rewarded by earning a profit?

The daily interactions that take place in our lives are a large part of what makes the world go 'round. By living and contributing to our lives, we are contributing to others' lives. By exchanging with their company, we are helping others earn a paycheck.

It is on this 4th of July weekend that I want to not only thank our four fathers and the creators of the Declaration of Independence, but also thank all of the entrepreneurs out there for the freedom they create in our lives every day!

HAPPY 4th of JULY ALL and a shout out to all those protecting our Freedom around the world!