

## Arrrr! Discovering Buried Treasure in Your Organization

By Kathleen M. Hosfeld

What IS IT about these Pirates of the Carribean movies? Is it only that Johnny Depp looks “so hot” as one middle schooler I know says.

I think one of the allures is the archetype of buried treasure, which seems to capture everyone’s imagination. If you’ve been running a business or a non-profit for more than five years, this archetype can have some life in that context as well. The sense of untapped potential in your organizations is compelling because it’s an intuition almost always based in truth.

While there may be all kinds of buried treasure in your organization (cost savings from better process or resource management, improved morale, etc), there’s one very large treasure from a marketing perspective: Find out what customers value most.

Most organizations don’t know what customers value. They mistake what *they* think is important for what customers value. Or they have a cynical view of what customers value that isn’t accurate.

At the beginning of new client relationships we conduct assessments, a portion of which includes interviews with clients, colleagues and constituents. The results of these interviews are always enlightening. Sometimes they highlight a big gap between what the organization thinks is important and what the customer values. Frequently, organizations discover something that they are doing “right” in the customers’ eyes that they didn’t notice or appreciate about themselves. Treasure!

Finding out what matters most to your clients also enables you to build memorable brands. Chuck Pettis, a noted brand expert, teaches that in order to connect with customers, brands must speak to both the conscious and unconscious, primitive mind. Many people assume that appealing to the “primitive mind” means appealing to selfish instincts.

Recent research is uncovering, however, how deeply human beings are hardwired for instincts about life. These include instincts about sustaining community and relationships, not just about “me” but rather instincts about “us” driven by empathy.

There are two kinds of treasure in connecting marketing and brands with deeply held beliefs and values about what matters to all of us. First, there’s the opportunity tap new potential for growth. Second, there’s a chance to create the kind of commerce that uplifts rather than degrades the human spirit.

If you’d like to know more about how we can assist you in developing and communicating effective messages, please contact us.



Kathleen Hosfeld is the President of Hosfeld & Associates, Inc. Since 1989, Hosfeld & Associates' marketing expertise and services have launched, grown and inspired visionary for-profit and non-profit organizations and



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