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Are you selling solutions or products – Do you sell to satisfy a need or ~~to satisfy~~ a demographic?

We have had an incredible amount of feedback from last week's article. Those of you who had a chance to read it will know that right here on this column we announced the coming of the end of the 4Ps. Yes, yes we know so what will happen to all those years of study some of you have taken at marketing school?

Well no need to panic as what we shared was the evolution of the 4Ps to align more closely with our current commercial reality, not the death of marketing. Just like we all have email addresses today while fewer and fewer of us have land lines at home... the world is moving on and so too have our sacred 4Ps. Just to recap for those who are not familiar with what the 4 Ps were. On day one of Marketing 101 professors would write the 4 pillars that a student will need to understand in order to become a Marketing professional. These were Product, Place, Price and Promotion this quartet is famously described as the Marketing Mix. This Mix has served us well for decades unfortunately for this cocktail of Ps the Information Revolution has found them wanting. More and more we find that the Ps yield narrow, product-focused strategies that are increasingly at odds with the needs for companies to deliver solutions. The one size fits all era is over. Consumers want products that are tailored to them not to a demographic, think about the iTunes store we chatted about last week. You can now buy just the song you want not the entire album. This meets my need for a song I love and does not force me to buy stuff I don't want/need in order to get that one song... It really is a game changer. We all know how it is to buy a CD and only love one song.... Or buy a car that has an AM tuner in it. The car dealer will say it comes with the car, but you are paying for it and you don't want/need it this is not value or a great solution the consumer.

"In a five-year study involving more than 500 managers and customers in multiple countries and across a wide range of B2B industries, we found that the 4P's model undercuts B2B marketers in three important ways: It leads their marketing and sales teams to stress product technology and quality even though these are no longer differentiators but simply the cost of entry. It underemphasizes the need to build a

robust case for the superior value of their solutions. And it distracts them from leveraging their advantage as a trusted source of diagnostics, advice, and problem solving.” say our friends from the Harvard Business School.

It’s not that the 4P’s are irrelevant, just that they need to be reinterpreted to serve today’s realities. There has been a shift of the emphasis from products to solutions, place to access, price to value, and promotion to education—**SAVE**, for short.

Motorola Solutions used SAVE to guide the restructuring of its marketing organization and its go-to-market strategies in the government and enterprise sectors. Along the way the firm identified three requirements for successfully making the shift from 4P’s thinking to SAVE.

First, management must encourage a solutions mind-set throughout the organization. Many B2B companies, particularly those with an engineering or a technology focus, find it difficult to move beyond thinking in terms of “technologically superior” products and services and take a customer-centric perspective instead.

Second, management needs to ensure that the design of the marketing organization reflects and reinforces the customer-centric focus. At Motorola Solutions, this led to the dramatic reorganization of the marketing function into complementary specialties, allowing focus on each element of the SAVE framework and alignment with the customer’s purchase journey.

And third, management must create collaboration between the marketing and sales organizations and with the development and delivery teams. Motorola Solutions required that specialist teams concentrate on solutions and coordinate their approaches to specific customer needs. This ensured that functional boundaries did not determine the firm’s solutions.

Marketers who continue to embrace the 4P’s model and mind-set, risk getting locked into a repetitive and increasingly unproductive technological arms race. The SAVE framework is the centerpiece of a new solution-selling strategy—and firms ignore it at their peril. (Sources HBR & CPR 2012)

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