

Kerry: Welcome back to [Marketing Smarts](#), a podcast brought to you by MarketingProfs. This is our special yearend episode for 2015 where we're talk to a dozen of the smartest marketers around. I'll ask them all what's on their holiday wish list for 2016, what would they like marketers to stop doing and what they would like to see you do more of in the coming year.

My co-host again this year is one of my absolutely favorite guests of all time, Mack Collier. He's a well known social media strategist, trainer, and speaker, and author of the book *Think Like a Rock Star*. He also hosts the [Fan-Dam-Tastic Marketing Show](#), a podcast about how companies can better connect with their customers and convert them into passionate fans. He also hosts BlogChat, a weekly conversation about blogging that takes place every Sunday night at 8:00.

Mack, thanks so much for joining me again.

Mack: Thank you for having me. You forgot to add that I have the best opening of any business podcast in the world done by Kerry O'Shea Gorgone.

Thank you for having me and thank you for doing that. I am thrilled to be back and I'm looking forward to making this a holiday tradition.

Let's get into it. I'm looking forward to it.

Kerry: Great. Our first guest that we're going to hear from in this special holiday episode is Tim Hayden, Vice President of Marketing at [Signal Labs](#). He's also the coauthor of *The Mobile Commerce Revolution*, that book co-written with Tom Webster.

He speaks a lot about data and about mobile marketing, so I was interested to see that his answer to the question was a little bit different than I might have predicted. Let's give it a listen.

Tim: I wish we could all get this attribution thing figured out. I wish the CRM folks would talk to the marketing automation folks who would talk

to the media folks in a way that we would understand what's working and what's not. I think too many of us are overspending and misspending our marketing budgets right now based on the data that we get from the top or the middle of the funnel, or maybe just the bottom of the funnel, and it's not showing us the full story. I think we have a long way to go. I'd love to make that happen as soon as possible.

I would love to see people stop living on social media the way they are today. I would love to see people so evidently spending so much of their time off Facebook and Twitter because there is just so much more to enjoy offline. As you know that would come from me, I would still love to see more and more people use their new found wireless liberty to go out and explore the world instead of being parked in front of a screen.

Kerry: That's a bold statement from someone whose business is data.

Mack: It's something that I think you're seeing more and more people talking about, this idea of is it more important to share your life or to actually live it. I think a lot of people are just getting to the point where they're creating this content and sharing this content and then you realize, especially when it's something like a breaking news or something spectacular happens and "I have to take a picture of this real quick," and then after you take the picture and share it you get X number of likes or whatever social gratification you were hoping for and then you realize I didn't actually see it when it happened because I was too busy taking a picture or whatever.

Kerry: I thought that was a great message, especially for the holidays.

Mack: Exactly.

Kerry: What about his initial point of spending your marketing budget correctly?

Mack: I think that's important. This is one of the things that as I was going through this and hearing some of the expert's opinions I think it's kind of a reoccurring theme because there are so many things that we're

pushing on marketers telling them they have to do. For example, with the data we were talking about you have to have better data because better data makes more informed decisions, but if you have an imperfect understanding of the data, and to Tim's point where the data is coming from and what is moving this particular needle, you can make bad decisions.

Kerry: Mark Schaefer had some interesting thoughts about data, we'll get to his answer in a little bit. Before we do, Dr. Carl Marci, the Chief Neuroscientist at [Nielsen Consumer Neuroscience](#) is another data guy. Nielsen of course providing really rich consumer data for years now, so he knows his stuff when it comes to people and what motivates them.

When I asked him this question he actually talked about offline experiences as well. That ties into some of the things that Tim was saying.

Carl: I think the trend is pretty clear that more and more holiday shopping is happening online and less and less in stores. I think one of the things that marketers need to do is understand how to create emotionally engaging experiences in the online world as well as in-store.

I think the bar is higher than ever for brick and mortar retailers to create experiences to make people get in their car and go have them, whether that's with events, better decorations, music, or some way of emotionally engaging people to entice them to come.

Then online I think we've all had experiences shopping online where you can't find something or you can't find a review. I was on eBay the other day looking for something and I couldn't find the size. I spent 10 minutes, I was incredibly frustrated and I eventually just moved on. This seems like something in the modern era that should be very easy to do.

My point being that we need to think about the emotional experience of shoppers and their busy lives regardless of what environment they're shopping in.

Mack: I think it's important, too, to consider holiday shopping when a customer goes to your website, for example, what stage of the buying process are they in. If it's a more expensive item, to his point he had mentioned the need for more reviews and I think that's important, but by the same token if I'm researching or if I'm in the decision making phase about a particular product, deciding whether or not I want to buy it, I'm going to be researching and getting more information about that product but it may not be coming from the company website. It will probably be third party sites, I may go to Amazon, I may look for those reviews, but I may be looking from independent sites.

Kerry: For sure the motivation of the person coming to your website has to be considered, just like the motivation of the person coming to your store. You can tell if they're browsing and they just popped in versus if they're a serious shopper.

What made me think that Tim and Carl's answers gelled together is this idea that we need to take our lives offline. With that new found set of priorities we have to get away from our computers is this desire to have real experiences, not just personal but also branded to a point.

When I do go to a retail store I expect it to be an enjoyable experience. It for sure, shouldn't annoy me. Just because we're offline doesn't mean there's no data to be had, so even in the era of online marketing we need to be aware of the importance for some brands of a physical kind of home.

Mack: I think that's a really good point you just made. If you're talking for example right now holiday shopping, and let's take it offline and think about going to the shopping mall right now. There are so many other activities that they'll have set up in the shopping mall, stuff like the section where your children can meet Santa, and they'll have other stuff going on. All of this is designed to keep you in the shopping mall longer.

If you're thinking about how could you put this in an online setting, back to Carl's point, maybe you could think about understanding what stage your buyer is at, are they ready to buy right now or maybe not.

If they're looking for more information maybe you could put stuff on the website that would help move them closer to being ready to make that purchase, like a whitepaper or whatever. I think you can apply the same logic of what can we do to help keep them here longer and help move them closer to being ready to make a purchase from us.

Kerry: Definitely. One of the things when we're talking about data and revisiting measurements of success as we go on throughout the year so that we spend our money correctly, Mark had a great point about updating your metrics. Let's listen to what Mark had to say.

Mark: In terms of what needs to stop this is going to sound like a really strange answer, but I still see so many companies that are still using some cookie cutter social media solution that is not connected to strategy or results. Even big companies. I just find this so unusual because social media is more or less a mainstream channel, it's been around for four or five years now at least, but I still see so many companies that are checking a box, they're producing content for the sake of content, they're engaging for the sake of engagement without real connection to a business strategy and measurable results.

What I'd like to see them do more of is to stop this complaining all the time about the ROI of social media. Let's face it, would we like to measure ROI, of course, but can we measure it, not all the time. Not just for social media, but for any kind of marketing or advertising that we do. However, there are many great nonfinancial indicators and KPIs that can show that we're creating important and measurable value for our stakeholders.

What I want to encourage companies to look at is aligning these activities with some of these KPIs. I'd also like to see companies as we move forward to begin to think about what they're measuring and also when they're measuring it. This is an unusual way to think about things, because I come from a big company where you pick a metric and then you measure that same metric this year and the year after because you'll want to compare it.

Social media, a lot of it, is about building relationships and those relationships change and grow over time, our capabilities change and grow over time. My wish for companies is to start thinking about actually changing metrics over time to reflect their progress on the social media journey, to start looking maybe at the beginning. It's important to build an audience, to publish on a regular schedule, it shows you're creating a content creating culture. But maybe after a year or so you have to move into the next set of metrics, mentions and sentiment, and are you connecting with influencers in a meaningful way. Then some time down the road, yes, you better be seeing some indication of a financial benefit, sales, leads, cost savings, loyalty, hopefully sales conversions. But in the social media world that may not come for a few years down the line.

Kerry: Mark is just brilliant, I've had him on the podcast a couple of times. He's really well known all over the world, he's a speaker, educator, [business consultant](#), and he has written several books, including *Social Media Explained: Return on Influence*, *The Content Code*, which is a fantastic content marketing book, and *The Tao of Twitter*, which is the bestselling book on Twitter.

When he talks about the way that companies gauge their success being wrong, I'm inclined to listen.

Mack: I don't know that I took he was saying it was wrong, more so that they need to be continually reexamining what they do and make sure that they're still looking at and measuring the relevant metrics and they still have the right KPIs in place. I think, to his point, just because you measured and just because you looked at your data a certain way back in 2011 doesn't mean that's still relevant in 2015.

Again, the end of the year is the perfect time to do sort of a self-audit to go back and look at and put your metrics on trial and look at why are we measuring this and is this still relevant today.

Kerry: It's really important to continue putting that data in context in terms of the organization as it evolves and your goals as they evolve. I think

his point is well taken that social media in particular is about relationships, which by definition evolve over time.

Jay Baer has some interesting things to say about that. He's a marketing strategist, speaker, author, president of the content marketing consultancy [Convince & Convert](#). He co-hosts the [Social Pros Podcast](#), so I don't know where he finds time to write books but he's the bestselling author of *Youtility* and he has a new book coming out called *Hug Your Haters*.

When I asked him what he would like people to stop doing and what he wishes marketers would do more of, this is what he had to say.

Jay: What I really wish marketers would stop doing in 2016 is thinking that social media is now after many years magically become this fantastic customer acquisition vehicle. I thought we were past that point, but apparently we're not because I keep seeing people talk about it and try harder to make new customers out of thin air using social media.

What we have to understand is that the relationship between a consumer and a brand, a consumer and a company, in social media is a trailing indicator of a relationship. It's not a leading indicator of a relationship. It's not a first step, it's a last step. Nobody goes to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, or anything else and says, "I have no idea what this company does, I've never heard of them before, but I sure do like them so let me sign up to see their messages all the time."

We like in social media what we actually like in three dimensions. In fact, there's some research that shows that approximately three-quarters of all business fans of a company's social media page are current or former customers of that brand. Of course that stands to reason, we like what we like.

We have to start in 2016 thinking about social media in the right way, which is as a customer loyalty and retention vehicle. The role of social media with customers is to take people who like you and make them love you. It's not about making people buy stuff from you for the very first time. We have to start thinking of social more like we think of

email, which is permission to stay top of mind with people who said, "Yes, I want that from you." Social media has the very same mechanics and I hope we figure that out this year.

There's lots of brands who understand that when you think about social you always have two sides of it. You have proactive, which is let's talk about us, and you have reactive, which is how can we help you. The brands that I think are particularly amazing are those that almost take a customer care, customer service focus first and then in so doing sometimes try to further those relationships.

Discover Card, for example, is amazing at customer care in social media. They're so good at it that they also then try to almost sell you things accidentally, which is very much the way to do it.

Kerry: I thought his point was well taken that people are treating social media like it's going to generate demand for your product or service when that's not necessarily the case.

Mack: I think it's kind of interesting. I was listening to his answer and I was agreeing with his answer, but at the same time I was kind of thinking in the back of my head that we, thought leaders or whoever, have been telling brands for such a long time that social media is a great way and a great channel that you can use to build awareness for your brand in that you can reach new customers.

To Jay's point, he's coming at it more from the point of view – and I think he's talking mostly about established social media channels, sites like Facebook and Twitter – where you're more likely to have interaction with existing customers versus new customers. I mention that because I'm really cognizant of how companies can look at what we're telling them, but I think we give them too many conflicting messages. I think this is a good example of that because we're constantly saying social media is a great way to build brand awareness. I think that's true to an extent, but I also think Jay's point is true to an extent in that a lot of times when you have customers that are coming and interacting with you via social media they're more

seeking you out. The customer that's more likely to want to seek you out is going to be the customer that's already familiar with your brand.

One of the recurring themes I'm hearing as I'm listening to these answers is I want companies to listen to what "thought leaders" are saying but at the same time understand that just because a thought leader says it that doesn't mean it's right and that doesn't mean that they absolutely should do it. I think consider what thought leaders are saying, but don't consider it the Bible, I guess you could say.

Kerry: One of the people that I interviewed for this special yearend episode, which is always one of my favorites, is Jon Miller. He's the CEO and cofounder of [Engagio](#), which is a company that offers account based marketing for businesses. Talk about data, they help you target the accounts that are the ones that are going to pay off the biggest when you focus your attention and energy on servicing or attracting those accounts.

This is what he had to say when I asked him about his holiday wish list for marketers.

Jon: Two sides of the same coin. I think I'd love to see marketers stop doing just lots of content of questionable quality and instead spend more of that time creating fewer pieces of really good stuff but, more importantly to the accounts based marketing topic, spending more time thinking about how to make content that's going to be really hyper relevant and personalized to their target audiences.

Mack: I don't want to sound like I'm trying to beat up on Jon, because I didn't hear the rest and he may have brought this up in the episode earlier. This is one of those things going back to the idea that companies should pay attention to what we're telling them but maybe not treat it as a Bible, in that one of the recurring themes you always hear people telling brands is they have to make better content. Don't just focus on making more content, but focus on making better, more relevant, more awesome content for your customers.

The problem I see with that is we tell companies this, but then they go "I need to make more relevant, more awesome content. How do you

do that?" You're actually making the problem worse because they're going to go out there and they're just going to start creating more content because they're trying to learn as they go along. Then we come back and tell them, "You're making too much content. There's too much crap content out there." Well, a lot of the reason why there is a lot of crap content out there is because we told all these companies to go out there and make more content.

The more you make content, the more you get better at making content. It's all about experience. That's just part of the process.

I understand from my experience working with companies, I can see both sides of the coin on this one. They know they need to make content that is relevant and interesting, but they have absolutely no idea how to do that. It's just frustrating to them because you're telling them and we're telling them what to do but not telling them how to do it.

Kerry: It's funny how this year's crop of interviewees' answers for the episode, even though I talked to people at completely different times, kind of dovetail one another. In this case, thinking about what you've just said about Jon sort of criticizing the content that's out there and people for making too much content, Matt Grant, who is the Director of Content Strategy at [Aberdeen Group](#) (and who previously worked at MarketingProfs as our Managing Editor and he launched this very podcast), said when I spoke to him that he thinks we're being too hard on marketers.

Matt: My holiday wish list for what I want marketers to stop doing is feeling bad for themselves. When I spoke at MarketingProfs B2B I started out my talk by saying I wasn't going to tell the people in the audience that they sucked – and people clapped. I couldn't believe it, I was surprised.

B-to-B marketers especially can feel very beaten down. Sometimes there's not a lot of respect within their own organization, sometimes there is a lot of frustrations they feel dealing with their organization or leadership with their organization. Frankly, there are a lot of marketing

speakers who will basically yell at them and tell them they suck and show a lot of examples of work that sucks and stuff like that. It makes people feel really bad about themselves.

In the new year, if marketers could stop feeling bad about themselves that would be a big step forward. Of course, that is easier said than done. That's why I also have a wish for what they would start doing that I think will help them stop feeling bad about themselves.

I know I've been banging this drum for several years now, but I think it's really critical that marketers get out of their offices, go out in the world and actually meet face-to-face with customers.

It's funny, in marketing we spend all this time trying to get leads or generate demand. We send out these emails, we run webinars, we do all of this stuff and we get people to raise their hands and say, "Yes, I'm interested, I want to talk to you guys about what you're doing," and at that moment we hand them off to somebody else, "Great. Talk to Jim or Sally over here and they'll take care of you." Right at the moment where we could be engaging in a conversation and actually getting to know people better, we hand it off to sales or whomever.

You really need to get out there. I know every time I've had the chance to get out and get in front of a living breathing customer and talk to them about what they do, not only do I feel better about myself, my capabilities, and what I have to offer, but I learn so much more about them, what they're trying to do, and how my service, product, or solution fits into their life.

So stop feeling bad about yourselves and get out there, or even just get on a phone call with the salesperson to be part of a conversation with the customer. It will do you a world of good and you'll just feel better.

Kerry: You must love that, because you've just said stop telling people that they need to do something without telling them how to do it. He just told you how to do it.

Mack: That was a great answer by Matt. I think his point is very valid. This is what I was just talking about in response to Jon's answer. I can see how it's easy for companies to feel beat up because they're constantly being told what they're doing wrong.

You have to remember that a lot of the people that are telling them that they're doing stuff wrong are consultants or agencies. In other words, they're people that have a vested interest in telling companies what they're doing wrong because they want you to hire them to help fix the problem. That's part of it.

Also at the same time I think we need to create better content, but at the same time everybody is also focused so much on creating more content. I think whenever you have any type of little hiccup by any company that has anything that resonates on Twitter or Facebook you will immediately see "five marketing lessons you can learn from how" blah blah blah, like the Starbucks red cups that we're going to hear about, it doesn't matter, there's a new instance every single day and there's something coming up.

That's part of it and it can seem like piling on. Part of it is and part of it is simply because we've all been trained that we need to create more content, better content, more content, and better content. It's almost like we're just becoming content farms.

I also love Matt's point about actually taking the time to interact with your customers. Especially, to his point, to see that interaction through. Don't just think that just because this is now becoming a sales conversation I need to hand you off to someone else.

Kerry: That's actually something that Tom Webster had said when I talked with him about this. He's the VP of Research and Marketing at [Edison Research](#), the firm that does the exit polls for all the major TV networks during presidential elections. He also writes a blog called [Brand Savant](#) and hosts [The Marketing Companion](#) podcast with Mark Schaefer, and he co-wrote *The Mobile Commerce Revolution* with Tim Hayden.

Let me just play his answer and you can give me your thoughts on it.

Tom: I recently saw a keynote from Dan Pink, who wrote *To Sell is Human*, and he talked a lot about how marketers should become servant sellers. Because consumers now have almost perfect information about the things that they're buying and selling, there's no information disparity between the two, or a sort of asymmetrical information flow.

People come to us armed with lots of information, so it's the job of the marketer to help curate that information, help them find it, and so on. I thought about that and I realized that what he just asked the room full of 13,000 marketers to do essentially was take the things that salespeople say and write them down. I wonder if that's really enough.

What I would like marketers to do in 2016 and beyond is to think more about what I think is the central reason for a marketer to exist, and that is to create demand. To either uncover or create demand. I think so much of what is passing for marketing today is really just sales in marketing clothing. We've sort of become smarketalesers. If that's a word, I just made it up. I'm a Webster, I just made it up.

Content marketing is fine and we can produce helpful, useful content all we want, but that's not going to move the souls of men and women. So for 2016 I think marketers should get back to their roots, focus on demand, put themselves in situations where they can actually influence the product and not simply how an existing product gets sold, and put the voice of the consumer back into everything that they do.

Kerry: Move the souls of men and women. We're lucky if we can get them to click a link.

Mack: He has high goals for marketing.

Kerry: He has very noble aspirations. So what did you think? He's a smart guy.

Mack: Tom is brilliant. He has this wonderful radio voice, he has a voice made for podcasting, which is perfect because he does a great job with his podcast with Mark.

I think it's also about maybe rethinking what we mean by marketing. I think it was Jay that made the point earlier and was talking about how social media can be a way to connect more with your existing and loyal customers. What I would like to see is marketers consider more their loyal customers. But, that doesn't mean that they can't generate more business via becoming more loyal to your brand, having a deeper connection with your brand.

Think about if we were creating marketing instead of trying to acquire new customers what would it look like if we were focused on establishing deeper connections with our existing customers. Then it's more about maybe their lifestyle and how your product fits into their lifestyle. It's a completely different conversation to have, but in a marketing content I think the marketing becomes a lot more interesting, a lot more relevant, and a lot less like marketing.

Kerry: Interestingly, I talked with Tom Webster's significant other Tamsen Webster, who is brilliant as well. She's the senior vice president for executive communications and Chief Marketing Officer for [Oratium](#). She works with people and companies to recognize and powerfully articulate what differentiates them in the marketplace. She heads Oratium's one-on-one coaching practice and she's the Executive Producer for [TEDx Cambridge](#) where she selects and coaches each year's roster of presenters.

When I talked with her she had mentioned how we need to focus our efforts. We're kind of coming back again to this question of focus and who are we talking to and what's going to resonate with them.

Tamsen: The thing I most wish marketers would stop doing is trying to be all things to all people. The best example I can give to you of that is what I like to call (though my husband coined the term) seasonal advertising disorder, SAD. This idea that because it's Veteran's Day we're going to somehow make some incredibly tenuous connection to our product or service and make you think that somehow that connects to you and therefore to us and somehow that will work. No, it doesn't. For any number of these different holidays, frankly, it gets quite offensive.

What I wish marketers would do more of is know who they truly serve and focus all of their attention not just from a marketing perspective but even from a product design perspective just on that. Don't try to capture all of the market. Let's do the math. If you have a one million person market and you try to get all one million of those potential people to love you, you're not going to get there. You're going to get maybe some small percent. Let's say you get 10,000 of those people. I'd much rather take a much smaller market, let's say 100,000, and get many more of that, a much higher percentage, so that I get closer to 8,000 or 9,000 people but I know that I am by definition excluding 900,000. I'd rather do it because my total numbers end up better. That's what I want.

What are companies that do that well? There's this great company called Brook Linens that decided very clearly they wanted to focus on young, wealthy but not ridiculously wealthy, men who wanted great beds. And I'll let you draw your own conclusions as to why. They decided to develop really high quality sheets, but using a very Warby Parker model. The cost for those sheets are far less than they would be for the bed, but they were looking very squarely at young affluent men who wanted great sheets, and it works for them.

There are a whole bunch of examples, but ultimately it comes down to that. Stop trying to be all things to all people and focus on capturing more of a smaller market.

Kerry: That makes great sense. Tell me, do you get those sheets?

Mack: No, I don't. Apparently I've led a sheltered life, I didn't know about that. I'll have to check those out.

Kerry: I get my sheets at Target.

Mack: I think she makes a good point. It's kind of like if you're trying to sell to everyone you're not really selling to anyone. Maybe also thinking about would you rather have 100 customers that know who you are or 10 customers that love you?

She mentioned something and I think this is really relevant now as we're heading through the holidays, we just went through Veteran's Day, we've had Thanksgiving, we're heading up on Christmas, these companies try to leverage a particular holiday and often it falls flat.

For example, a couple of years ago around Veteran's Day where Randi Zuckerberg had some kind of new technology book coming out and she tried to run some type of contest on Facebook saying something like "give me your best example of what it was like for you to serve and I'll give away a free signed copy of my book." Everybody immediately panned it, "Give me a break, you're trying to leverage Veteran's Day as a way to promote your book."

There was another company, I believe it was a bakery that sells premium dog food for dogs, and they left a Veteran's Day themed update saying, "We appreciate and support all of our Veterans today, the four legged kind and the two legged kind." Everybody loved that update because it wasn't putting the focus on the brand, it was putting the focus on Veterans and also reminding that some of those Veterans are actually service dogs.

To Tamsen's point, and I think it was a really good point, she worked it in really quickly but I think it was worth pulling it out and examining, especially right now as we're heading into the holiday season; think about what you're doing and the connection you're trying to make between a particular event, holiday, etcetera, and your brand and how your customers are going to take it.

Kerry: Part of that has to do with the fact that people are very sensitive nowadays. Gini Dietrich raised this point when I talked to her. Part of it has to do with your being careful and thoughtful in how you approach something like that, but on the other hand perhaps you came from a good place truly and people just took it the wrong way because we're so used to piling on.

Gini is the founder and CEO of [Arment Dietrich](#), she's also the author of the PR and marketing blog [Spin Sucks](#), and she co-hosts [Inside PR](#), a weekly podcast about communications and social media. This is what

she had to say on the subject. This is what I thought of when I was listening to Tamsen talk about how some brands get their holiday messaging wrong.

Gini: More of; measurement, measurement, measurement, please, please, please.

From a PR perspective, I would love for people to stop taking everybody down every chance we get. We all glom onto the latest crisis and we all talk about it and armchair quarterback it, and I'm sick and tired of it.

The Starbucks red cups are a great example. Either everybody is going, "Oh for heaven's sake," which is what I am, I even went into Starbucks and said, "So, your red cups," and they all just groaned. But then you start to see the "marketing lessons you can learn from the Starbucks red cups controversy," or the PR lessons, or the crisis this or the crisis that. We're just not in it every day and it's really easy to sit back and armchair quarterback it. I've certainly been guilty of this myself.

We don't know the decisions that have been made, we don't know the process that people went through, we don't know what else is affecting, we certainly don't know strategically what people are doing. Everybody seems to glom onto "oh my gosh that was horrible" just because we get that very top bubble information and we don't have the details to support our thinking.

I think we're so overly sensitive and we're getting offended so easily about things that have nothing to do with anything. I'll go back to the Starbucks red cups again. Really, Christians are upset because it doesn't have snowflakes on it, really?

Mack: It's always interesting when you ask people the same question spread out over the entire year and you start to see certain themes and certain answers bubbling up to the surface. I think that's always valuable to get a sense of this is what people are thinking and what they're talking about.

I think Gini's answer about how we need to stop beating up marketers really goes in well with Matt's answer earlier. I think, to her point, it's more about putting yourself in the shoes of the person you're criticizing. It's easy to say that this particular company shouldn't have launched this particular campaign, "What were they thinking?" Well, you weren't in on the planning meetings.

I think Gini is exactly right, we need to slow our roll, calm down, and just think about what's the point of view of the person we're criticizing. Maybe they did something that should be called out, but at the same time we need to consider both points of view.

Kerry: One of the people that I talked to for this episode was Ekaterina Walter, who I know you're familiar with, you're very alike in the way you think about brand advocates and fans. Brandarati, the startup she cofounded, was acquired by [Sprinklr](#) where she now serves as global evangelist. She's written two books, including The Wall Street Journal bestseller *Think Like Zuck*.

You in particular will find Ekaterina's answer interesting just because you're both so likeminded about brand advocacy.

Ekaterina: To really stop doing short term marketing campaigns and focus on building tribes, sparking movements, and inspiring your customers to building really deep relationships with them. Not just connect or reply to their tweet, but really truly building relationships.

One of the things that I think we need to get better at is personalization. With the amount of information and noise out there personalization and relevance become critically important ways for people to filter out your information over somebody else's in building that relationship's health.

How do you do that, how do you personalize? One of my favorite examples that I always use is REI. First of all, a really amazing brand all the way around. A number of years back I was looking for additional Christmas gift ideas and it's a store in the northwest where I am and I just tweeted at them. Instead of tweeting back and saying, "Here's a link to our catalog," they come back with a personalized

video. It was really short, really quick. One of their green vests on the ground looked me up, did some quick research, and said "Based on what we know about you, Ekaterina, here is something that you might want to buy." Back then that was a GoPro camera which I didn't yet have, it was a great suggestion.

Some of those personal touches might not necessarily be scalable, and that's okay, but when you delight even a small percentage of your customers, when you make their day better, when you really show that you care through relevance, through personalization, you get an amazing army of advocates behind you. We need to stop targeting and start thinking through how do add that relevance.

Kerry: I love her point about these personalizations that aren't necessarily scalable but do you surprise and delight some small percentage of your customers because those do serve in the aggregate to build this army of advocates for you.

Mack: I agree with her point. Again, she's talking about more marketing to existing customers, and this is what Jay was talking about as well. The bottom line is that a lot of companies are just not as focused on marketing to their existing customers. They don't understand the idea of letting existing customers drive new customer growth, they think that it's more effective for them to market directly to these new customers.

Ekaterina is coming from the point of view that she has worked with companies and she has worked at companies that prize the value of brand advocates. She knows from firsthand experience, either working with other clients or working at companies that did this, the value of those advocates and she knows that these little personal touches that companies can make to respond to one particular customer, that one interaction can have a ripple effect.

Just look at it right here. This one brand had an interaction with her and it's reaching all the way to the point that she is talking about it on this podcast and it's getting hundreds of thousands of views. And this is something that she's probably going to continue to talk about.

When companies are thinking about “how do we market” I know that they don’t always consider the potential of marketing to existing customers, but I do think they need to think about the ripple effects of doing so.

Kerry: One of the things that is scalable and that very few people continue to talk about is email, but that was the first thing that Nick Westergaard mentioned when I asked him about his holiday wish list for marketers. Nick is a great guy, he’s the Chief Brand Strategist at [Brand Driven Digital](#) and he speaks on marketing topics at industry events. He also teaches marketing at the University of Iowa. He’s host of his own podcast, [the On Brand podcast](#). I just love Nick.

Nick: My holiday wish list is a seasonal favorite, you can wrap it up and put it under the tree or whatever each year, and that is more email marketing.

It sounds a little bit old, a little bit lame, but it is a timeless gift. One that, especially when we’re distracted by all of the shiny new things around us, I think it’s easy to forget about the value of email. Beyond all of the numbers that are going to keep telling you how great email is, that it still has the best ROI among most things digital, is a fact that it’s a way for all of the headlines, all of the big talks about being more human, I think it’s one of the easiest ways to do that.

To do that we have to – this gets to the stop doing part – we have to stop sending sucky email. Even before we started talking I took a quick glance at email and I had to delete out five things that were just more of the same old, same old. If you think about this moment not as – that’s why I hate the term email blast – a broadcast and more like a personal note that you’re writing to your people, I think you’ll be well on your way. That’s actually the mindset I use every week when I sit down and write my “In Case You Missed It” email newsletter.

Kerry: He brought email back, because nobody talks about it and yet it’s the bread and butter for so many, particularly individuals that run their own business, but even for larger businesses. Yet no one talks about it.

Mack: It's kind of interesting because listening to all of these answers I was a bit surprised at how many times social media kept coming up, I was expecting a little bit more diversity in the answers.

To Nick's point concerning email, I think a lot of companies may not understand how to use social media but email is something that is more in their wheelhouse. This is something that they've been using for years. Even if they don't get the Twitter and they don't get Facebook, and all this stuff, they get email probably.

My hat's off to them, I don't personally. I've tried it with my business and consulting and I get very mixed results. Nick, I love his emails. Chris Brogan, we both love his emails as well. It's definitely an art.

Kerry: I adore Chris. I actually interviewed him for the podcast because he was doing so well with email marketing that I thought, "We have to talk about that."

Mack: It's not email by itself. He has this ongoing relationship that maybe was started on social but then it moved to email and that's when it converted into a purchase. It's all working together and he does a great job with his emails.

Kerry: Just to bring it back around and wrap up our canvassing of a dozen smart marketers for the yearend episode, let's talk with Dorie Clark. She's a branding expert, [marketing strategy consultant](#), professional speaker, she contributes to *The Harvard Business Review*, you might have seen her work there. She's also the author of *Reinventing You*, about personal branding, and *Stand Out*, which is a great leadership and branding book. This is what she had to say.

Dorie: For 2016 there are two things I would love for marketers to stop doing.

The first is the incessant drum beat about authenticity. I indict myself in this because I do think authenticity is great and it's something that I talk about a lot. But, I think that it has become too much of a thing, it's become almost a cliché at this point. I think that we need to find new language or new ways to think or talk about it.

Of course brands need to be authentic, of course people need to be authentic, but when language becomes so overused as to become hollow then there is a problem. We need to find a way to shake people back into the realization of what we are actually talking about.

What I think marketers should focus more on in 2016 is focus. The era of ubiquity is being exposed for the impossible never-ending charade that it has always been. Large companies can still continue to play that game, but for the vast majority of companies and certainly for individual professionals that are trying to do things there's always going to be another social platform, there's always going to be another thing you should be doing, there's always another shiny new toy to be chasing. Instead of the dopamine fueled gratification that comes from it, I think that we need to drill down to make decisions – and they're hard decisions – about things that are actually good things to do, valuable things to do, but we're just going to choose not to do them anyway.

Kerry: That is a very interesting point. She's acknowledging that certain things could have some value for your business, but if they don't have enough value to justify the efforts then you just have to leave them off.

Mack: Also, I liked her point about she's tired of brands trying to push too hard to be authentic. This is another situation where we keep telling brands they have to be more authentic. I've never really understood that, telling a brand that they need to be more authentic is kind of like telling someone they need to plan on being more spontaneous. They are or they aren't. I agree with her point, I think we need to all just let the brands find their own comfort zone. I think that really is what the heart of being authentic is, it's communicating in a way that is comfortable to you.

Kerry: What's on your holiday wish list for marketers, Mack? What do you wish people would do more of and what do you wish they would stop doing?

Mack: What I would like in general, I would like to see more marketing communication that is focused less on the product and focused more on how the customers use the product or how the product relates to their particular lifestyle. Have it be less about the product and more about the customer.

Let me give you a few examples.

Everybody loves RedBull's content marketing. It's one of the case studies I talked about in my book *Think Like a Rock Star*. I also talked about Patagonia. Everyone loves them because the focus of their marketing, their content, and their marketing messages is not focused on the product. RedBull isn't selling an energy drink, it's selling what happens after you drink it. Patagonia isn't selling winter clothing, it's selling the activities you engage in while wearing their clothing. Pedigree isn't selling dog food, it's selling happier and healthier dogs.

I would like to see marketers rethink their marketing efforts and focus less on the product, because if you focus less on your product and you focus instead on how the product relates to your customers and fits into your customers' lives, you're going to make marketing messages that are more meaningful and more impactful.

What's your answer, what do you think?

Kerry: My two go together. I want marketers to stop writing bland salesy content. I hope that in 2016 marketers can find their brand's voice, really hone it and develop it, because that's the differentiating factor when you're looking at content online.

There's a reason I don't just go to Wikipedia or Google for everything. I go to certain blogs because I feel as though I have a connection to the person writing the content. I should feel that same way about brands.

Mack, this is fun every single year. That's why I keep having you back. Thank you again for joining me and being my co-host.

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Multiple Guests

Mack: Thank you for having. Any time, my door is always open to you, Kerry, you know that.

Kerry: Thank you. I hope people will check out Think Like a Rock Star and also your own podcast, [the Fan-Dam-Tastic Marketing Show](#). They can learn more about you at [MackCollier.com](#).

Thanks for listening here to the very end. This has been the Marketing Smarts Podcast, brought to you by MarketingProfs. I'm your host Kerry O'Shea Gorgone. Talk with you next year.