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Tuned In

Uncover the Extraordinary Opportunities That Lead to Business Breakthroughs

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Hit products and services like the iPod, Starbucks and FedEx were seemingly embraced by the market overnight. But it wasn't luck, creativity or marketing that led to their success. Any organization can create hits that resonate if they stop guessing what people need and start building deep connections to what their buyers value most.

With a strategy for achieving market resonance that has been developed over 15 years, the authors show readers how to find unsolved problems in the marketplace and create breakthrough experiences that people want to buy.

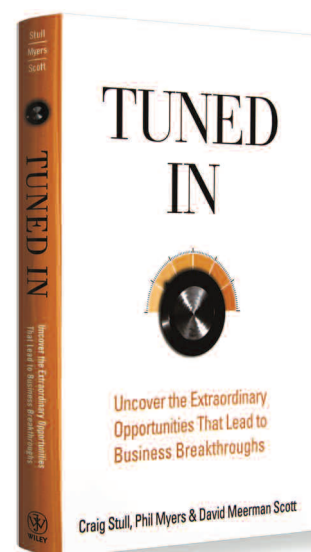
This summary shows you how to find overlooked marketplace problems that, when solved, bring in customers who willingly buy your products and services without being coerced.

Any organization — companies large and small, nonprofits, government agencies, entrepreneurs, and independent professionals, even churches and authors — can benefit by getting tuned in, because they'll create the products and services that people want to buy.

The experts from Pragmatic Marketing Inc. explore what it takes to transform your organization by cultivating a tuned in culture and how to become and remain a market leader.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to create products and services that resonate with customers and noncustomers.
- How to apply a six-step method for creating a *resonator*: a product or service that so perfectly solves problems for buyers that it sells itself.
- How other companies have tuned in to their markets and created resonators.
- How to apply the Tuned In Process to find unsolved problems in your marketplace.



by Craig Stull, Phil Myers and David Meerman Scott

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: TUNED IN

by Craig Stull, Phil Myers and David Meerman Scott

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Why Didn't We Think of That?

The Tuned In Process is a six-step method for creating a *resonator*: a product or service that so perfectly solves problems for buyers that it sells itself. Starbucks, *American Idol* and Google are resonators. Real success in the marketplace is not based on creativity or clever marketing. Anyone can create products and services that resonate. All you need to do is stop *guessing* what people need and start spending your time building real and deep connections to what your buyers value most.

Getting tuned in is not difficult. But creating a resonator does require a new way of thinking about how you build products and services and how you introduce them to the marketplace.

Common Mistakes of the Tuned Out

Most organizations are *tuned out*. In fact, all kinds of organizations make the same common mistakes again and again.

Here are a few common mistakes that cause products and services to fail:

- **Guessing:** Assuming *company insiders* know more than buyers about what they want to buy.
- **Assuming:** Basing products and services on what *current customers* request rather than on an understanding of unsolved problems that other people will pay money to fix.
- **Telling:** Trying to *create a need* in the market by relying on expensive advertising or an army of salespeople.

The Tuned In Process

The process for replicating success starts with getting tuned in to potential customers. Understanding your market and your buyers through in-depth interviewing is by far the most effective way to discover *unresolved market problems* that people will pay money to solve. Meeting with potential buyers on their own turf (in their homes or workplaces or even on the street) is the starting point for identifying a resonator, that breakthrough product or service that buyers immediately understand has value to them, even if they have never heard of your company or its products before. The iPod is a resonator. When it launched, FedEx was a huge resonator, and it still is.

The tuned in company constantly listens to, observes and understands the problems that buyers are willing to pay money to solve instead of holding endless meetings of company insiders all trying to guess what people want. The tuned in organization is always looking for more opportunities to create resonators.

The most successful organizations get tuned in to their markets. Leaders at these companies largely ignore the competition. Instead, they focus their energies on the problems that buyers are willing to spend money to solve. The concept applies to any business, product or service. ●

Tuned Out ... and Just Guessing

In the late 1960s, Woodstream Corp., parent company of the Animal Trap Company of America, announced that it had built a better mousetrap. With great fanfare, the company launched the new product into the marketplace,



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claiming that it was even better than their own classic Victor-brand spring-based wooden mousetrap. At the time, the Victor model had sold more than 1 billion units in nearly 80 years since its introduction in 1890. Alas, the world did not beat a path to the company's door. The new, "better" mousetrap was a flop, and the company had to revert back to its "old-fashioned" wooden model.

A company spokesperson said, "We should have spent more time researching housewives and less time researching mice." Today, the product that people want to buy — the Victor mousetrap — is still the most recognized brand name in rodent control.

Executives, product development people and marketers all want to believe that they've got all the answers. They're like the guys at Woodstream Corp. who thought that they could make a better mousetrap because they were the experts. Going by intuition, buying your way in with expensive advertising or begging your way in by hoping for media coverage simply does not work as often or as well as being tuned in.

If We're Not Tuned In, What Are We?

After analyzing hundreds of companies to understand the process of becoming (and staying) tuned in, experts have determined that most have a single dominant focus that drives their approach to business. Think of it as a "company personality" that determines how an organization structures itself and behaves in the market. The most successful organizations are tuned in. Whenever leaders create products and services — for potential new customers or entirely new markets — they seek to solve buyer problems first.

Debunking the Myths

There are three common organizational cultures. When an organization allows one of these three cultures to dominate, the resulting approach to business is very different from the one outlined in the Tuned In Process:

- **Innovation is everything.** Only when an innovation solves people's problems does it become a potent force.
- **Revenue cures all.** The revenue-driven organization worries about individual sales opportunities one at a time, rather than what resonates with a large marketplace.
- **Customers know best.** Because the customer-driven organization relies on existing customer requests for endless extensions to existing product lines, the company can't develop breakthrough products and services that resonate with non-customers.

While most companies exhibit at least a small amount of each of these driving behaviors, one usually dominates. And the choice directly correlates to their success (or failure).

Stop Guessing

The best predictor of business success is a focus on the Tuned In Process — an outside-in, market-driven approach. It isn't always easy to be tuned in.

Your business must be continuously problem solving for your market.

Once we accept that definition for our business, it becomes evident that to survive we must understand the problems our prospective clients experience. These problems are what should drive companies. ●

Get Tuned In

Intrigued by a membership-based car-sharing concept they encountered while on vacation in Berlin, Robin Chase and Antje Danielson returned home to the Boston area and interviewed city residents about their driving habits. They asked these residents about car ownership and their use of rental cars. And they *tuned in* to the urban lifestyle and how it dictated car use — daily, during weekends and on holidays. What was the market problem identified by Chase and Danielson? Urban drivers who did not want the hassles of owning a car didn't find it convenient to use existing rental car companies. But they still needed a set of wheels for an hour or two every now and then.

Armed with a wealth of new knowledge, Chase and Danielson launched Zipcar in 2000. They built their new rental car company around an innovative membership system that resonated with the market. Zipcar members log on to their accounts online to reserve cars and authorize use automatically using wireless technology. Members pay a monthly fee, plus a usage charge each time they use a car for a run to Home Depot or Costco.

How Zipcar Created a Resonator

The process of getting tuned in relies on six steps, each providing a foundation for the next and building toward launching a resonator, the perfect solution to a market problem.

Zipcar is a wonderful example of a tuned in organization. The leaders of Zipcar identified an unsolved problem in the marketplace, a problem that people were willing to spend money to solve. They built a successful product experience around this problem, and they communicated to prospective customers, using language that resonates with them.

Here are the six principles:

Step 1: **Find Unresolved Problems** to know what market and which product or service to focus on. Robin

Chase, co-founder of Zipcar, says that the idea for Zipcar “was exactly what the Internet was made for and what wireless technology was made for. I did a lot of online research about other rental car companies, and I also did a lot of research into car ownership in Boston to understand who owned cars and who didn’t.”

Step 2: **Understand Buyer Personas** to identify who will buy your offering. Zipcar appeals to a number of buyer personas: city dwellers and students who occasionally need to use a car for a few hours; mayors, city councilors and police who deal with parking constraints in major cities; and university administrators, landlords and business managers who want to set up a car-share service.

Step 3: **Quantify the Impact** to know if you have a potential winner. For Zipcar, it was fairly easy to get additional basic information about populations in cities such as Boston, Vancouver, London and Chicago from census data.

Step 4: **Create Breakthrough Experiences** to build a competitive advantage. Building a true competitive advantage that allows you to succeed even in a crowded, established market (like the rental car business) requires you to create a breakthrough experience by leveraging your company’s *distinctive competence*: that special way you solve customer problems that the competition is unable or unwilling to solve.

Step 5: **Articulate Powerful Ideas** to establish the memorable concepts that speak to the problems buyers have. The Zipcar experience resonates with buyers. One city government official writes, “With every Zipcar replacing over 20 privately owned vehicles, we’re changing the urban landscape.”

Step 6: **Establish Authentic Connections** to tell your buyers that you’ve solved their problems so they buy from you. Zipcar’s Robin Chase says, “We purposefully chose cars that were not in rental car fleets of the big car rental companies — no Ford Taurus, for

example — because we needed to be hip and cool.”

Your organization’s distinctive competence should help you make decisions about how to focus on creating your own resonator. ●

Step 1: Find Unresolved Problems

How do we know what market and products to focus on? While it is possible to “luck into” success, the best way is to be *tuned in* to your market, creating a breakthrough product experience that addresses an unresolved market problem, one that people are willing to spend money to solve.

To be really skilled at finding unresolved problems, you should consider two kinds of needs within your buyers — expressed and unexpressed problems, sometimes called “stated needs” and “silent needs.” If you can uncover silent needs through skilled interviewing, they can end up being the golden nugget of information that results in creating a resonator.

Customers and Non-Customers

There is a fundamental flaw with relying exclusively on your existing customers for input, because your existing customers have different market problems than do non-customers (buyers who don’t yet do business with you). **Buyers** are the entire universe of people whom you might do business with. Buyers include three major subgroups:

- **Customers.** Your organization is already solving problems for your customers, so by all means, build great customer support and terrific customer communications. However, don’t rely exclusively on customers to help you identify unresolved problems.

- **Evaluators.** People who are actively reviewing products and services like the ones you sell and are in some way already in your sales cycle are your evaluators, and you should leave them alone and not interview them as part of the Tuned In Process (you don’t want to jeopardize a possible sale).

- **Potential Customers.** People who are not yet your customers — but who have market problems that your products and services can (or could) solve — are your potential customers, and they are the most important category of people to spend time with.

Meeting With Buyers

By far, the best way to collect unresolved market problems is to visit buyers face-to-face in a non-selling situation. Meeting people on their own turf, in a place where it is

How to Set Up Buyer Interviews

Setting up buyer interviews is simple. Contact representatives of your target market by phone, e-mail or in person. You can find people who are part of your buyer personas by using lists of people who have visited your company at a trade show or from names of people that you purchase from industry magazines or from inquiries to your Web site.

Say that you have nothing to sell but are simply asking for 30 minutes of their time to better understand how they live.

conducive to talking about your market category, is best.

As a secondary source of information about unresolved problems, you can meet people at conferences and other events and read the publications and blogs that they read. But don't let these methods become a substitute for doing face-to-face interviews. ●

Step 2: Understand Buyer Personas

Tuned in organizations understand that the best way to develop products and services that resonate is to identify the unresolved problems for a particular group of people, called *buyer personas*. Buyer personas are a tool you can use to develop empathy with and a deep understanding of the real people for whom you solve problems, instead of using a nameless, faceless “prospect.”

By breaking down buyers into distinct groups, understanding what problems they have and how to solve them, and then cataloging everything you know about each buyer persona, you make it far easier to create breakthrough experiences, articulate powerful ideas about what your company can do and establish connections with your customers. This approach is utterly different from what most organizations do: either not segmenting the market at all (creating non-specific offerings and marketing them to everyone) or segmenting based on their own egotistical view of the world.

Write It Down

For each buyer persona profile you create, you should develop a written document with as much information as you can gather about this group of people. What are your buyer personas' problems? Are they willing to pay money to solve these problems? What is the ideal product or service that can help them? How can we reach them? What media do they rely on for answers to problems?

Simply put, you want to know, in detail, the things that are important for each buyer persona. The best way to learn about buyers and develop persona profiles is to interview people.

Then, name your buyer personas. No buyer persona is ever complete. Your goal is to commit to an ongoing process where you continue to learn more and gain deeper insight into your buyer personas. ●

Step 3: Quantify the Impact

How do you know if you have a potential winner? There are three important criteria for you to consider as you measure the potential market for your product:

- Is the problem *urgent*?
- Is it *pervasive* in the market?
- Are buyers *willing to pay* to have this problem solved, and if so, how much?

Quantifying this information is a critical and often overlooked step that you should perform before developing any products or services. Having the discipline to answer these three questions will keep you from having to guess about whether a product can become a success.

Three Filters

You need to run your ideas for a product or service through the “urgent,” “pervasive” and “willing-to-pay” filters. The answer to all three questions must be “yes” before you begin to create a product or service. If you encounter any negative answers, you should consider dropping the idea and moving on to something else.

Quantifying the impact of the problem will provide the data you need to build a business case. A simple one- or two-page tuned in business proposal encapsulates the essence of the product or service that you want to build and will help you make “go/no-go” and “buy vs. build” decisions.

Tuned In Impact-Continuum

The Tuned In Impact-Continuum provides a simple method for buyers to plot existing and potential new offerings against each other to determine relative value from low impact to high impact.

On the far left of the continuum are products and services that have very little or no impact on your buyers' lives or jobs. On the far right are products and services that represent a breakthrough. These products have a real and meaningful impact on buyers — like a medicine advance that could save your life. Of course most products lie somewhere in between, so you'll want to speak to a large enough sampling of buyers to accurately place your new product or service idea on the continuum.

Measure What Matters

When creating a tuned in product experience, recognize that you should only measure what matters. Measurement will serve as the dashboard for how you run the organization and will help to answer questions such as: Should you spend money to create a new product or service? Should you expand your marketing programs to reach a new buyer persona? Should you develop a new channel to reach the European market?

Tuned in leaders keep track of the meaningful information they need to drive the business forward, not a bunch of trumped-up data used to justify employees' tuned out work. ●

Step 4: Create Breakthrough Experiences

As you develop product and service experiences, remember that word *experience*. There is much more to their products or services than most companies realize. The most successful organizations understand that customers buy a total experience, and so they do their best to create one that resonates. There are five common parts of the buyer experience that people care about:

- **The discovery experience.** Buyers need information to make rational and informed decisions about how to solve their problems.
- **The buying experience.** It doesn't matter if you're selling a \$5 deli sandwich or a \$30,000 boat, making the buying experience as simple and pleasurable as possible will lead to more sales.
- **The packaging experience.** A very popular corporate gift in Japan is beautifully packaged fruit. The fantastic packaging allows the fruit boxes to sell for more than 10 times the price of the fruit itself. Other buyer personas appreciate a minimalist approach to packaging and prefer to buy fruit in bulk to save money.
- **The “using” experience.** Simple improvements can make huge differences to people.
- **The service experience.** Many products and services need to come with some form of after-sale customer care.

Your breakthrough experience is likely to include each of these five areas, but you may end up focusing on several. Your choice of how to focus will be based on your distinctive competence.

Your Distinctive Competence

Don't confuse distinctive competence with “core competency.” Your core competency is simply what your organization is good at. Distinctive competence is what you excel at that your competitors do not.

Your organization's distinctive competence could be virtually anything that helps you create breakthrough experiences. Your distinctive competence should dictate how you build products and services. The product development department must build your distinctive competence into the product design. For example, if Volvo were to build a new sports car, the design team and R&D people would need to go about their work with the stated understanding that they were building “the safe sports car.”

Your distinctive competence drives your marketing communications initiatives because you use it to create connections with your buyers based on the products and services that your organization uniquely provides. ●

Step 5: Articulate Powerful Ideas

The most powerful ideas are those that draw on your company's distinctive competence and map perfectly onto the unresolved problems of your buyer personas. For example, in just one phrase, “Tell me how you live,” a leading architect captures the needs of someone who is in the market to build a custom home. But the phrase also reflects the architect's distinctive competence: designing houses perfectly suited to an individual family's lifestyles. Finally, this phrase also sets the architect apart from his more famous, “award-winning” competitor, who is now boxed into a position of only caring about awards, not his clients' lifestyles. Powerful stuff.

While the process of identifying the powerful ideas that will resonate with buyers is straightforward, it does require that you meet with them to learn about their problems. This process takes time. Meet with as many buyers as it takes to get answers that converge around both a common problem and a way to articulate the ideal solution that your company will deliver.

A Four-Step Model

Then you need to turn these concepts into a powerful idea. Rather than trying to develop a powerful idea through inside-out thinking via a committee, use a four-step method:

1. Affinity mapping. If your offering saves your buyers money, document the small problems you can solve that will save buyers money. The more buyers you interview, the longer the list will be. Notice the commonalities among them. Sort them into categories of similar problems. Name the groups that you've identified. What you're looking for now is convergence around an idea (or ideas) you can use.

2. The elevator speech. Once you have mapped and named the groups, distill the essence of the message about these groups of problems into a sentence or two of about 25 words. Many people refer to these statements as an “elevator speech,” the answer you'd give if you were asked about what your company's product or service does, but you only had seconds inside an elevator to do it.

3. The acid test. Locate some people who represent the buyer persona you are selling to and run your elevator speech by them. Your elevator speech should become an important component within all your marketing materials, including your Web site, brochures and press releases.

4. Refine the elevator speech into a powerful idea. Distill it into a hard-hitting and memorable concept. Lexus automobiles: “The relentless pursuit of perfection.” Miller Lite: “Tastes great, less filling.” Bounty paper towels: “The quicker picker-upper.” Burger King: “Have it your way.” All these ideas are much more than catchphrases: They’re rooted in a set of problems that these products solve for buyers. ●

Step 6: Establish Authentic Connections

The next step of the Tuned In Process — establishing authentic connections — takes place when your organization communicates with your buyers to show them that you have a product or service worth considering. While establishing connections with your buyers is a form of marketing communications, it is *not* the same command-and-control, message-driven, one-way advertising approach that most organizations are used to.

For decades, tuned out companies have focused on two ways of getting noticed: Buy your way in with expensive advertising or beg your way in by courting the media.

Tuned In Companies

Successful companies focus on buyers and the best ways to reach them, and they develop compelling content and programs accordingly. If you’ve conducted interviews with buyers, then you should already have developed buyer persona profiles and know the problems that your product or service solves for each buyer. You should also have identified the powerful ideas that articulate these solutions to your buyers.

Now you need to identify the media that your buyers turn to for answers. When they visit Google and other search engines, what words and phrases do they enter? Which blogs, chat rooms, forums and online news sites do they read? Are they open to viewing audio or video content? Do they attend events or conferences? You need to answer these questions before you continue.

You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned

To be successful, you need to unlearn the marketing habit of constantly pitching your product. Instead, create information that helps your buyer personas to answer their questions and solve their problems. Your materials (the company Web site, brochures, literature, programs and other marketing materials) should all be created from your buyers’ perspective. Forget about your products and services, and instead work from your buyers’ point of view, drawing from the powerful ideas you’ve

already articulated.

Tuned in companies reach people who are eager to buy their products and services without being coerced.

Five Bad Habits to Unlearn

Here are five bad habits you must unlearn and what you should do instead:

- You must unlearn the habit of interrupting people with “messages.” Instead, publish online content they want to consume.
- You must unlearn the use of meaningless gobbledegook phrases (such as those used in a typical mission statement). Instead, focus on the problems and needs of your buyer personas.
- You must unlearn spin. Instead, understand that people crave authenticity and transparency.
- You must unlearn egotism and the desire to force buyers to adapt to your terms. Instead, create online content that puts the buyer first.
- You must unlearn the assumption that you have to buy access. Instead, create content that goes viral and let millions of people tell your story for you for free.

Tuned in companies think like a publisher and create compelling online content in the form of online news releases, blogs, podcasts, YouTube videos and other online media to reach their buyers directly. Each of these forms of media also has an opportunity to go viral, which means others could join up to spread the word about your company. ●

Cultivate a Tuned In Culture

Getting tuned in seems easy at first, until you realize that you need to change your habits. Here are some important first steps that will help you get started. As you begin to live the tuned in culture, these things will become natural for you.

Top 10 Actions to Create a Tuned In Culture

1. Get out of your comfortable office and talk with buyers about their unresolved problems.
2. Identify your buyer personas. In order to make them real for you and your colleagues, name each buyer persona, build a profile for each and cut a representative photo from a magazine to represent each.
3. Define your distinctive competence. Make certain everyone on your team understands what it is.
4. Don’t go to an internal meeting if you’re only going to give your own opinion. Instead, be the person

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who goes to the meeting armed with data.

5. Always ask where “facts” come from, to disqualify mere opinions from your decision-making process.

6. Map your products and services on the Tuned In Impact-Continuum. Build a plan to increase the impact.

7. Tell customers which of their problems the product or service will solve, not what your product or service does.

8. Count the number of times you say “our” and “we” on your Web site. Write for your buyers by using “you” and “your” instead.

9. Remove corporate gobbledygook such as mission statements from your external communications.

10. Become a thought leader in your market and industry.

You Can Do It Too

In 1993, before the introduction of the iPod, Apple (under then Chairman John Scully) released the Newton MessagePad, a product that many within the company thought would reinvent personal computing, to great fanfare. Of course, we now know that the Newton was a dismal failure. In April 2007, *Computerworld* nominated the Apple Newton one of the 21 biggest technology flops of all time. The product was not built to solve problems, and therefore it did not resonate with buyers.

Just a few short years later, Apple introduced the iPod, a tuned in product if ever there was one. The company has been tremendously successful since then. For Apple, the value of getting tuned in was a 22-fold increase in company stock price!

If a large company the size of Apple can execute a complete turnaround and get tuned in, so can your organization. It doesn't matter if you're part of a big company or a small one. You could work for a nonprofit or a government agency or as an independent consultant. *The Tuned In Process applies to you.* ●

Unleash Your Resonator

Executives and staff at many companies already think they are tuned in. Yet, when analysts go into these organizations and actually measure the things that people do all day, they inevitably witness problems and missed opportunities that originate from *inside-out thinking* (think Apple Newton) rather than *outside-in thinking* (think iPod). In other words, companies are ineffective because their field groups and customer-facing organizations spend more time postulating and pontificating around scenarios that support their offerings than listening and learning about problems their customers actually

have (and are willing to spend money to solve).

Real Measurements for Tuned In Organizations

There are some real measurements that may be used to assess how tuned in your organization is right now. Objectively answer the following questions. If you answer “yes” to all of them, congratulations, because you're already tuned in!

- Does someone other than sales staff routinely visit buyers and potential customers?
- When you have a meeting with a buyer, do you spend most of the time listening instead of talking?
- Are your products and services created to solve problems in the market?
- Are your communications based on the specific and quantified problems of a well-defined market and buyer?
- Does your Web site focus on market problems faced by your buyer personas and solutions to those problems (instead of egotistical nonsense about your products and the “mission” and “vision” of your company)?

Tuned in companies answer these questions in the affirmative.

A Better Place

You don't need to be the CEO to get tuned in. As you begin to trust the market to deliver the signals to you, as you learn to discover the deep and real connections that your market values most, as you focus on your buyers and their problems, you'll become tuned in. And as the market sends out messages, you'll pick them up to create your very own resonator. Your business, and you yourself, will be in a better place.

The Tuned In Process produces success. It has been the basis for transforming thousands of companies and the individuals who work for them. What those who use the Tuned In Process usually find out is that it's not about being smarter, better funded or endowed with an abundance of unique assets ... it's about systematically following a proven path to success. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Tuned In*, you'll also like:

1. ***How Customers Think* by Gerald Zaltman.** Learn how the subconscious and conscious minds of the consumer work and how to use that information.
2. ***Change Function* by Pip Coburn.** Those fearful of technology need a compelling reason to change. Learn how to provide that reason.
3. ***Free Prize Inside!* by Seth Godin.** Godin explains that if you make your product, service, school, church or career worth talking about, the word will spread. Make customers feel like there is something small yet precious waiting for them inside your offering.