Michael Solomon

### ****Food for Thought:  Consumer Behavior in the New Normal****

The food value chain includes organizations that span the gamut, from chemical and fertilizer producers at the beginning of the chain to grocery stores, restaurants, and hospitality services at the end.  Regardless of where a company sits in this chain, it is essential to align production and marketing priorities around the needs of the end consumer (a “market back” perspective) rather than the far more typical “molecule forward” approach that focuses on the production capabilities of the vendor.

In this presentation, Michael discusses how today’s “postmodern consumer” uses food and beverage products/services to express their ever-changing social identities.  He also reviews pathways to heightened consumer engagement for food marketers who are ready to adopt a “market back” view of what they sell.

### ****Walk a Mile… in Your Guests’ Shoes****

The dictionary defines a hotel as an establishment that provides food, lodging, and other services to guests.  But of course, a hotel is much more than that to the people who stay there. A hotel stay can symbolize a range of possible experiences, such as romance, adventure, or escape.

Michael shares how consumers rely upon specific environmental cues to choose and evaluate a hotel stay, and how they interpret these cues to make sense of their lodging experience.  He reviews a set of fundamental changes in consumer behavior over the last decade (including the Pandemic) that should radically change how hospitality executives and designers offer new spaces to accommodate today’s “postmodern consumer.”

### The New Chameleons:  Unlock Marketing’s Old Cages to Profit from Disruption

Fundamental categories that form the bedrock of marketing strategy and customer insights simply no longer exist.  Today’s consumer is like a chameleon that changes its identity constantly, often with the help of the brands you (and your competitors) market. You need to understand “the new chameleons,” so you don’t get left in the dust.  Unlock the cages that marketers try to keep their customers in, and let those chameleons run free!

In this program you will learn:

* How you can reach today’s consumers, who plug into a “hive mind” that tells them what to buy.
* Why the debate about “offline versus online” marketing strategies is useless.
* How to market with rather than market to your customers.
* Why the boundary between our bodies and machines no longer exists.
* Why your customers rely upon your brands to tell them who they are.
* How to develop new killer products and services by unlocking your industry’s cages.

### ****Step on the G.A.S. (Gratification, Agency & Stability):  Consumer Behavior in The New Normal****

The Pandemic will change our world for years after the virus disappears.  We’ll have to rethink and modify our purchase decisions, large and small.  Some disruptions in consumer/marketer relationships that already were looming will come faster and more decisively. How do we define brand value?  How should companies talk to customers?  How do people function in an emerging gig economy where every encounter might be fatal? How do we redefine what it means to go to work or to socialize?

You’ll learn why you need to step on the **GAS** to modify your offerings in light of the new drivers of consumer behavior.

### ****The Many Faces of AI:****Persuasive Salesbots and Tomorrow’s Customer Experience

Everyone is buzzing about Artificial Intelligence these days, as well as they should. Machines that “think” for us already are transforming how we work, play – and shop. [McKinsey](https://www.mckinsey.com/spContent/connected_homes/index.html) tells us that some 29 million U.S. homes used some form of smart technology last year, and that number grows by over 30 percent a year.

Many organizations now deploy robots, avatars and chatbots to perform tasks we used to ask flesh-and-blood people to do. This suddenly makes the age-old question of what makes us human much less theoretical. Self-driving cars threaten to replace truck drivers. IBM’s Watson beats chess masters and veteran Jeopardy game show contestants. Movies and TV shows like Blade Runner, Westworld, and Humans that focus on the civil rights of synths, replicants and androids are center stage in popular culture. Alexa and Siri are our new guardian angels.

### ****Walk a Mile in Your Customer’s Shoes****

The customer is king (or queen).  Yet the best product or service will fail if consumers don’t have a positive encounter when they consume it.  That’s because what you sell is NOT a product – it’s an experience that consists of the core offering plus everything that goes with it. This includes the physical or digital environment where shoppers find it, the people who sell it, and even how others react to the purchase.  This experience is what attracts – or repels – the customer.  With so many options available, he or she will quickly walk away from a negative encounter.  But he or she also will reward organizations that provide satisfying experiences with long-term loyalty.

This fundamental insight is what is drives increased interest in **customer experience management** (CEM or CXM).  A growing number of organizations now recognize the importance of tracking every interaction with customers as if it is their last – because it could be. You’ll get a thorough overview of today’s consumer, and the major issues we need to understand in order to create and maintain a positive customer experience over the long-term.

### We Really ARE What We Wear: How the Psychology of Fashion Influences Consumer Behavior

That insight is crucial for **any** industry that touches consumers. Customers literally choose from thousands of options – and most of them have very little to do with functionality. However, that doesn’t make these decisions unimportant by any means. The selection of a watch, a bracelet, a pair of glasses or many other items reflects deep-seated values and beliefs about appearance and the consumer’s identity. We can think of the body as a canvas, where the shopper chooses from a “palette” of accessory items, apparel, footwear, cosmetics and other products to paint a picture s/he wants the world to see at a fixed moment in time. Marketers need to dig deeper if they want to sync their offerings with what their customers seek.

In this presentation, we’ll look at some of the powerful cultural forces that influence how consumers use a range of products to make “statements” about themselves.

### The Young and the Restless: Capture the Hearts, Minds and Wallets of Millennials

U.S. Millennials spend $600 billion per year, but their choices change faster than Lady Gaga changes her outfits. How can you adapt to connect with these “always on” but always changing shoppers?