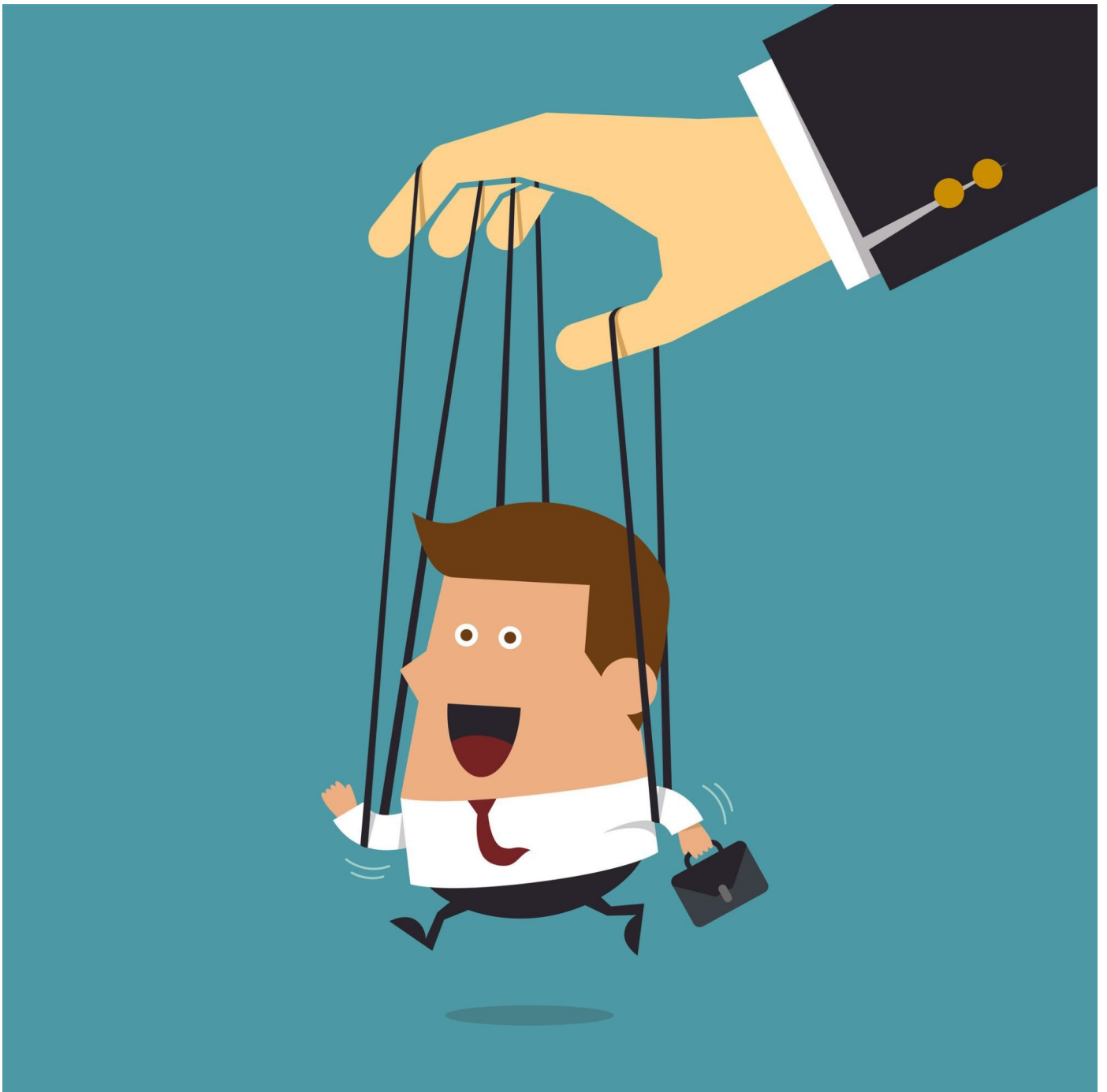


How to Use Manipulation in Marketing Ethically



Manipulation is the ability to change the behavior or perception of others in clever or unscrupulous ways. For many, the word has negative connotations, so the idea that manipulation can be used for marketing conjures up images of scare tactics and deception.

While marketing involves some manipulation, it isn't necessarily a bad thing. Done ethically, manipulation in marketing is an effective tool for boosting your brand. Done incorrectly, however, manipulation can hurt your long-term business goals.

Manipulation in Marketing



Your mind navigates through your day with a subconscious understanding of the world around you. There's so much information floating around that your mind must absorb, filter and process to make assumptions that guide your decisions. Because of this, your subconscious develops perceptions and beliefs on nearly everything you encounter.

In marketing, this fact is paramount. Large brands create omnipresence with traditional and digital media to nurture attachments between you and their products. When the targeting is correct, this can help brands earn lifelong customers and grow.

Manipulation has always been part of marketing, but the stakes are much higher now than they ever were before. With the widely accessible algorithms on search engines and e-commerce platforms, anyone can be targeted or retargeted easily for manipulation into buying.

For the marketer, understanding and utilizing targeting gives you a chance to **manipulate your audience** into choosing your brand and buying your product or service. Fortunately, you also have the opportunity to manipulate them in a way that is ethical and fair, rather than by deception.

Ethical Manipulation



Manipulation in marketing is just part of the equation, no matter how you choose to approach your strategy. It's not a question of whether manipulation will factor into your strategy, but rather how it will factor in.

Regardless of how you feel about manipulation on the whole, it's just a part of marketing that you must accept. There's no reason to feel guilty or feel as though you're deceiving anyone, because ethical manipulation has the ability to positively impact your audience and improve the lives of your customers.

As a consumer, you've likely experienced ethical manipulation. If you've ever been influenced by a campaign you saw, found new products that you liked or discovered new thought leaders on social media, it was a result of manipulation and targeting.

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Using manipulation effectively and ethically starts by knowing your product or service, as well as your customers, inside and out. You have to ask yourself what your product or service offers, how it helps, what kind of impact it can have and other questions that put

you in the mindset of your customers.

Then, you need to think like your customers. Who are they? What do they do? What problems do they need solved? What are their largest pain points? What do they need that has yet to be addressed in a meaningful way?

In doing this, you can learn a little more about your customer and what you can offer them. This not only helps you deliver the right message to the right audience, but it also gives you pride, passion and commitment in the product or service you're offering.

You may also need to show them their problems and pain points, just so they're aware of them and will begin to seek the solution you're providing. You're guiding them through the process and giving them the tools they need to overcome their problems.

Helping your audience requires a little bit of manipulation, but there's a way to do it that best serves your customers. The ethical way to approach manipulation includes:

- Keep it relevant. Don't offer overly sales-y information without much substance. Give your customers value that's more about what you can do for them, and not just what you can do.
- Work toward omnipresence. The process of guiding your customers through to your solution doesn't happen quickly, so you should try to stay at the forefront of their minds. Once it all clicks, your business is the one that's there and has been there.
- Earn and maintain trust. Each and every interaction with your audience should offer value to them, while also showing the authenticity of your brand itself. This will build their trust in you and address their problems along the way.

If you stick to these ideas, your marketing manipulation will always be ethical, putting the customer first and prompting them to take the action they need. Outdated marketing tactics used to rely on insecurities, scare tactics, deception or aggression to get the job done, but taking this approach doesn't serve your customers well and only diminishes their trust over time.

Tips for Ethical Marketing Manipulation

There are a number of ways to use manipulation and consumer psychology to ethically, legally and respectfully attract and engage your customers. Here are some tips to add ethical manipulation and influence to your campaign strategy and message:

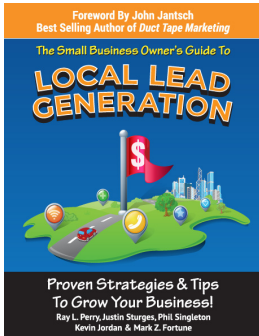
- **Emotional and psychological appeals** tend to resonate with consumers more than the features and functions of a product. Keeping the emotion in your campaign is as simple as focusing on the benefits of your product for your customers and how it can improve their lives, as opposed to touting the features your product has.
- Consumers are more skeptical than ever, so they're likely to doubt marketing claims. If you want your customers to trust your marketing message, don't be afraid to highlight some of your flaws and keep your message transparent and authentic.
- In addition to omnipresence, it's important to position your brand in the ideal place for your customers to take action, as well as repositioning your competitors in the customer's mind. You want your brand to immediately spring to mind when the customer thinks of a problem, and you want it to be the first choice among the competition.
- Exclusivity is everything, since most people want to feel like they're important and part of something special. This is more than just claiming that your customers have something special when they turn to you — you need to back it up with something substantial.
- Use fear, doubt or uncertainty, but not scare tactics. Instead of using dramatic claims to threaten and scare your customers into subscribing or buying, focus on ways to encourage your customers to stop and think about their choices and make necessary changes to solve their problems.

Conclusion

At its most basic, manipulation is a type of social action that seeks to influence the perception of behavior. Whether this is achieved through deceitful, deceptive or aggressive tactics is a different story, since these tactics only undermine a brand's image over time. In addition, there's little evidence to suggest that these tactics provoke action in consumers, despite their widespread usage.

Without deceptive or aggressive tactics, manipulation in marketing that focuses on value for the customer can be a useful strategy for long-term, sustainable business growth and success. By considering the customers' needs and desires, nurturing trusting relationships and weighing the long-term and short-term motivations and their impact on the audience, businesses can use manipulation to influence their audience and deliver exceptional value to the customer base.

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