

Best Practices in Upstream Marketing

How do the best companies consistently grow?



The strongest brands and businesses are built upstream, through the combined principles of insight, identity and innovation

What is Upstream Marketing?

Upstream marketing is the strategic process of identifying and fulfilling customer needs to drive growth. It occurs at a much earlier stage, in defining both where-to-play and how to win. It's one of the missing links for generating revenue growth at many companies.



Downstream marketing, by comparison, is what most people think of as marketing. It involves advertising, promotion, social media, search and other communications. While important, these activities are often less effective in driving long-term growth. Many companies over-spend on downstream marketing and ignore critical upstream marketing activities.



Upstream and downstream are two parts of the same stream. Both are necessary and need to work together.



Marketing's Two Streams	Upstream Marketing	Downstream Marketing
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principle-based through insight, identity, and innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionally-based, dependent upon advertising, sales, social media and PR
Customer Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The entire customer landscape, looking for segmented opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A defined target segment, based upon the product or service sold
Time-Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer-term planning (months and years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Near-term tactical (days, weeks and months)
Growth areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New products, new services, new channels and geographies, driven by deep customer insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing products and services with refinements in the offering, messaging, media
Unique Proposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Makes things people want" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Make people want things"

Upstream Marketing Framework: Four questions, key principles, seven best practices



Framing Question	Key Principle	Upstream Marketing Best Practices
Where to Play? 	Insight Use deep customer insight to define which products, markets and channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look Closer. Think Deeper. Ask: What do you know about your important customers your competitors don't know? Establish To Whom? For What? Create a customer framework and identify strategic opportunity areas
How to Win? 	Identity Maximize customer relevancy and competitive uniqueness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and Align Value Propositions. Obtain alignment on three dimensions: customer needs, benefit planks and operational strategies Build Strong Brands. Establish the brand positioning, architecture, touchpoints and growth extensions
How Might We? 	Innovation Challenge conventional thinking to unlock growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim 'Em. Develop an innovation strategy against identified opportunities Don't Tame 'Em. Build a supportive organization and culture that embraces risk taking
What Must Be True? 	Implementation Magnify upstream marketing impact through integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execute Upstream Marketing. Drive growth through combined effects of insight, identity and innovation Achieve 1 + 1 + 1 = 4

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