

7 Things a Go-To Does Differently

Secret Strategies That Will Allow You to Charge More Than
the Competition While Growing Like Gangbusters



Theresa Lina Stevens

What a Go-To Does Differently by Theresa Lina Stevens

First Edition

www.linagroup.com

Published by Randwick Publishing

www.randwickpublishing.com



Copyright © 2019 by Theresa Lina Stevens. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. This book or parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of the publisher, except as provided by United States of America copyright law. For permission requests, [write to the publisher](#) at “Attention: Permissions Coordinator.”

Every possible effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this book is accurate at the time of publication. The publishers and author cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, however caused. No responsibility for loss or damage occasioned to any person acting, or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by the editor, the publisher or the author.

References and links to source material were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the author nor Randwick Publishing is responsible for links that may have expired or changed since the manuscript was prepared.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
1.FOCUS	7
2.BEACHHEAD	12
3.OBSESSION	15
4.OWNERSHIP	18
5.CONVICTION	21
6.RESULTS	25
7.CHANGE	30
RECAP AND NEXT STEPS	33
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	35

Firms that achieve premium Go-To status in their chosen markets wield great power. They achieve this by following a particular set of strategies that undifferentiated me-too companies typically don't.

Google is the Go-To for sponsored search. At present, Google is on the far end of the market dominance spectrum, as witnessed by the fact that people clamor to work for Google and buyers don't haggle over pricing, because, well, no other provider even comes close.

Introduction

The Power of Being a Go-To

In contrast to commodity players fighting to preserve their margins, why is it that certain firms seem to command more margin, more attention, and more respect than others?

And why is it that they rarely find themselves in competitive situations, clients usually seek them out, and clients will pay almost any price for the privilege of working with them?

It's because they own their markets. Amazon. Facebook. Lego. They dominate their spaces. They are Go-To brands in their domains. Management consulting firm McKinsey & Co. is not the largest in its category, but it owns "boardroom strategy." Accenture owns "large-scale, high-risk systems implementation projects for large enterprises." Salesforce owns "salesforce automation." Gartner Group Inc. owns "IT market analysis." Heidrick & Struggles owns "CEO executive search." SAP owns "integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) software." Those firms have defined, committed to and established a unique market position. Anyone else in that space becomes an also-ran.

- ➔ Each is the first name to come to mind in its category.
- ➔ Each is regarded as the de facto standard in its respective markets.
- ➔ Each has survived during severe market downturns while competitors perished.

Market dominance simply means becoming the Go-To brand for a particular market need and being so unique and superior at filling that need that you are able to command premium prices, work with premium customers, and hire premium people. Any company, no matter its size, can pursue it.

IDEO is the Go-To for “design thinking” and innovative industrial design. People travel from all over the world to tour IDEO’s offices, and its design methodology is the basis for an entire design institute in the School of Engineering at Stanford University.

- ➔ Each is a premium provider that frequently finds itself in the luxurious position of being sought out by prospects, as opposed to fighting its way through a crowded, time-consuming and expensive competitive bidding process.

A Go-To often turns business away. It names its terms. Prospects sometimes even compete for its business.

It’s one thing to differentiate and focus. But taken a step further, it’s incredibly powerful and profitable to become the Go-To in your chosen markets. In addition to obtaining sustainable differentiation, your firm will maintain healthy margins and grow revenues over time.

What It’s Like to Be the Go-To

Your goal is to get people to seek you out and so firmly believe in your ability to make a unique contribution that they will pay you whatever it takes.

What does it really mean to be the “Go-To” for something? Go-to status sits on a continuum, but here’s the ultimate ideal: You know you are the Go-To when:

- ➔ You are the first one people turn to for solving a particular problem
- ➔ No one can deliver on this problem like you can
- ➔ There is wide recognition and respect for your brand

Apple Computer is the Go-To for “elegant, user-friendly technology.” In an industry of almost complete commoditization, Apple has continued to charge more for its products than category competitors. Apple stands alone. There are Apple products, and then there is “everything else.”

TED. There are thousands of conferences, podcasts, video lectures, and other thought-provoking content out there. Yet TED conferences command premium prices and always sell out, even though they offer the talks online for free!

- ➔ Your reputation precedes you
- ➔ Customers hope you’ll be willing to work with them
- ➔ You rarely, if ever, compete for business or develop proposals
- ➔ You never have to give anything away
- ➔ You, in fact, turn some business away, because it’s not the right business
- ➔ You name your price, sometimes even receiving success-sharing premiums
- ➔ You work with the most progressive, successful companies in your market
- ➔ You are viewed as the Harvard Business School of employers in your space – candidates vie to work for you

The Advantages of Being a Go-To

In addition to being sought out and able to name your price, as the Go-To in a particular field, you wield great power and influence in the marketplace. You aren’t just part of the fabric of the industry, you sit at the top of the pyramid. You help set the direction of the industry. You have a vision others want to follow. **AS THE GO-TO, YOU ARE IN A POSITION TO FUNDAMENTALLY ALTER THE DIRECTION OF THE MARKET.**



A Go-To Has Maniacal Focus

1

Focus

The first and most critical strategy a Go-To employs in its early days is to focus its resources on a singular strategic goal.

This may even be just one product or service, to begin with. Focus is not “a” way to gain market traction but “the” way. Andy Grove, the longtime Intel CEO who transformed the company from a me-too chip manufacturer into an innovative Go-To for microprocessors, had this to say in his book, Only the Paranoid Survive:

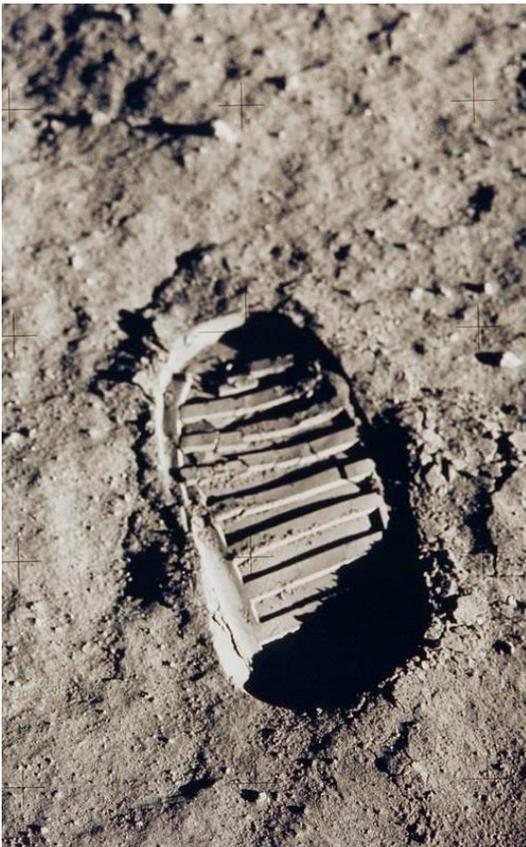
A question that often comes up at times of strategic transformation is, should you pursue a highly focused approach, betting everything on one strategic goal, or should you hedge?...I tend to believe Mark Twain hit it on the head when he said, 'Put all of your eggs in one basket and WATCH THAT BASKET.' It's harder to be the best of class in several fields than in just one...Hedging is expensive and dilutes commitment. Without exquisite focus, the resources and energy of the organization will be spread a mile wide—and they will be an inch deep.

-- Andy Grove

How Focus Won the Cold-War Space Race

I once had the opportunity to meet with Apollo astronaut Dick Gordon and asked him what the most significant lesson learned from the Apollo Space Program was. **"THE POWER OF FOCUS," HE SAID. "ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE WHEN YOU HAVE A VERY CLEAR DESIRED OUTCOME SHARED BY EVERYONE AND AROUND WHICH ALL ACTION REVOLVES. IN OUR CASE, IT WAS THE MOON."**

He explained that prior to Apollo, the United States (representing the free world at that time) was losing the space race to its Cold War opponent, the former Soviet Union. U.S. space exploration consisted of a hodge-podge of initiatives, none of which worked together. There were numerous independent projects in progress, spread among multiple government agencies and contractors, involving thousands of people and investments of billions of dollars per year.



With four words, “man on the moon,” John F. Kennedy instantly focused the resources of all involved in the space program on one specific goal, one specific domain.



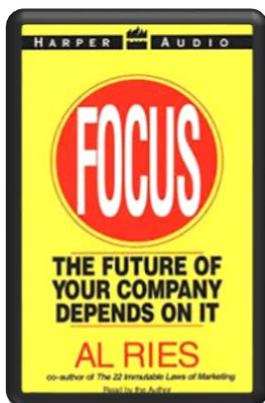
"The only driving theme was speed, to be the first at something, anything," Gordon said. "All of that time and money was being expended while the Soviets kicked our butts with one historical achievement after another."

In his bid to win the Space Race of the 1950s and 1960s, John F. Kennedy didn't go broader, he went narrower. He said, "...I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth."

He didn't set this goal quietly either. He branded the initiative as the Apollo Space Program and launched it with a grand gesture in the most public way possible: A historic speech to Congress on May 25, 1961 that the entire world heard. He put a stake in the ground with a proud declaration of a singular goal. No one knew at the time how to do it; but if achieved, this feat clearly would establish the U.S. and the rest of the free world as the dominant force in space.

Sun Rays Vs. Laser Beams

The book, Focus: The Future of Your Company Depends On It, by legendary marketer, Al Ries, is considered a marketing classic and makes a strong case for focus. Bill Gross, the famed serial entrepreneur and founder of startup incubator, IdeaLab, has raved about how this book turned around his thinking, strategic approach, and fortunes. This excerpt from the book's introduction sums it up:



The sun is a powerful source of energy. Every hour the sun washes the earth with billions of kilowatts of energy. Yet with a hat and some sunscreen you can bathe in the light of the sun for hours at a time with few ill effects.

A laser is a weak source of energy. A laser takes a few watts of energy and focuses them in a coherent stream of light. But with a laser you can drill a hole in a diamond or wipe out a cancer.

When you focus a company, you create the same effect. You create a powerful, laser-like ability to dominate a market. That's what focusing is all about.

When a company becomes unfocused, it loses its power. It becomes a sun that dissipates its energy over too many products and too many markets.

-- Al Ries



How Going "Back to the Brick" Saved Lego

In 2003-2004, Lego was in a state of crisis, with falling revenues following a long period of stagnation. When new CEO Jorgen Vig Knudstorp came in, he declared Lego would go "back to the brick" by concentrating on core products and core customers. As detailed in the book, Brick by Brick, the company cut back on many of its brand extensions, cut the number of brick designs by 46%, and re-narrowed its market focus to kids ages five to nine. The next year, sales increased 12% and LEGO had come back from a \$292 million loss in 2004 to a pre-tax profit of \$117 million in 2005. In fact, as stated by the Financial Times, Lego enjoyed 12 more straight years of revenue growth and "long defied gravity as other toymakers succumbed to the trend of children spending more time playing digitally." In time, the company briefly lost focus, and revenues took a hit in 2017, though Lego still dominated with a two-thirds share of the "construction toy" market. After a quick course correction, however, growth resumed in 2018.

Recap: The Power of Concentration

Focus lets you concentrate your resources. It lets you concentrate your message, so that it speaks directly to your targets' pain points and needs in their own language. It helps unqualified prospects self-select out, before they waste your precious selling energies. It tells employees what you don't do, so they stay focused on the right priorities.

So, make it your mantra: Focus, focus, focus.

Act Now: Start with These Three Questions

1. In what market space do you ultimately want to be the Go-To?
2. In a couple of words, what do you want to be known for – what's your end-game moonshot?
3. What offerings, activities and markets currently sit outside your Go-To objective, which may be diluting your efforts and resources?



2

Beachhead

A Go-To Starts with a Beachhead Market and Central Theme Before It Broadens

Closely related to focus, the next thing a Go-To does differently is build from a base of strength.

It does this by initially concentrating on a specific market that is large enough to provide opportunity but specific enough to allow the company to concentrate its finite resources in order to capitalize on synergies.

Rather than a mish-mash of messages, products, services and activities, a Go-To builds its brand around a central theme/market, and every fiber of its being revolves around that theme until the company has enough of a dominant

position to broaden from there into adjacent markets. Its activities aren't all over the map. They are highly, highly focused. Look around. Just about any large company you can think of started with a beachhead.

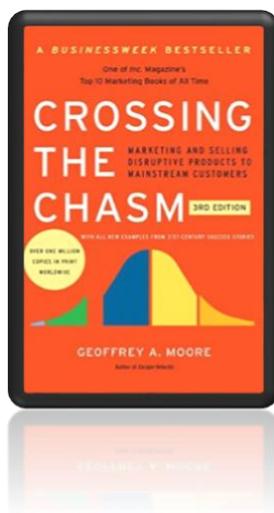
Oracle gained its footing as the Go-To for relational database technology before broadening into applications a full ten years after it was founded.

Salesforce.com built its foundation as a salesforce automation application before broadening into other sales and marketing applications.

Accenture is a \$30 billion company today but started in the early 1950s as a tiny consulting division of the accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, to meet audit client demand for financial and manufacturing process automation. The bulk of this division's business was focused on these two areas well into the 1970s.

Facebook was initially only available to Harvard students; once strong there, it allowed students from just eight other universities to join. Not until it had a firm foothold in those markets, with others asking to join, did it open itself to most universities and corporations before finally allowing anyone 13 and older to sign up. Even with Facebook's lightning-speed growth trajectory, this progression took two and a half years.

Geoffrey Moore discusses the importance of a beachhead in market dominance strategy in his seminal strategic marketing book, Crossing the Chasm, which I highly recommend as a terrific marketing primer or great refresher.



Using a D-Day analogy, he explains the importance of focusing your scant resources to secure a stronghold and then building from a base of strength. Much of what he talks about are principles many MBA students learned but have proceeded to ignore at their peril. It's truly excellent and is a

“The bunched-up paper represents your promotional budget, and the log, a major market opportunity. No matter how much paper you put under that log, if you don't have any target market segments to act as kindling, sooner or later, the paper will be all used up, and the log still won't be burning...this isn't rocket science, but it does represent a kind of discipline.”

-- Geoffrey Moore

quick read well worth your time. Buy your own physical copy, mark it up and keep it near your desk for frequent reference.

One of the metaphors he references in explaining market dominance strategy is the use of kindling to start a fire.

The key, then, is to figure out a beachhead.

Act Now: Start with These Three Questions

1. What is the core segment within your target market where you can seek traction first, before broadening?
2. In a word or two, what unique contribution do you want to be known for within that core segment as a way to gain traction?
3. What handful of target customers and target powerbrokers could help you establish credibility and traction most quickly?



3

Obsession

A Go-To Is Obsessed With Its Area of Expertise

A Go-To doesn't just specialize. A Go-To is a passionate aficionado, a devotee. A Go-To obsesses. And a Go-To is very opinionated when it comes to a particular market issue.

I used to have an ancient Mercedes diesel sedan and would take it to the San Francisco Go-To for these cars: Fred, at Silver Star Motor Services. Fred didn't just work on old Mercedes diesels. He *loved* them. He was an aficionado. He was constantly thinking about them, reading about them, learning more about them. And he had strong opinions about them. He could bend your ear for hours talking about the ins and outs of these cars. He wasn't showing off, he was waxing poetic about something he was passionate about. He would just light up at the thought of these cars. It wasn't a business or job for him – it was his life.



According to Former Apple product manager, Bob Borchers, “The idea was, he wanted to create something that was so instrumental and integrated in peoples' lives that you'd rather leave your wallet at home than your iPhone.”



Steve Jobs was obsessed with distinctive design.

He insisted that Apple's mantra be simplicity. In his mind, consumer technology was too complex, hard to use, and ugly. As a result, the company has always been obsessed with creating innovative, easy-to-use technology that people have an emotional connection with. When Apple started to work on the iPhone, Steve Jobs didn't instruct the development team to create a device that would put a computer in your pocket. His directive was: “Create the first phone that people [will] fall in love with.”

Steve Jobs was clearly passionate, obsessive and strongly opinionated about how people should interact with technology, and these qualities have informed everything Apple has created, even after his passing.

When Marc Benioff founded Salesforce in 1999, he was absolutely passionate about the need for companies to move away from installed software and to adopt the software-as-a-service (SaaS or “cloud”) model. On stage at a conference in 2006, he relentlessly and completely unapologetically pounded on his primary thesis that installed enterprise software was on its way to extinction. At the time, it was still an emerging idea, but Salesforce was so passionate about the idea that it put a “stamp” of the word “software” in a red circle with a slash through it on every ad, on its website and any other bit of material associated with the company. Benioff wore a trademark pin of the image everywhere he went, including on the stage that day. It is difficult to find an

article or presentation by him that does not espouse his point of view on this topic.

Act Now: Start with These Three Questions

1. Within the context of your central theme, what topic are you (or is your company) obsessed with? [Or what should/could it be obsessed with?]
2. What would literally and figuratively demonstrate your obsession with and passion for this topic (expertise, symbols and branding, uniforms, activities, etc.)?
3. Which trade organizations, publications, and other industry or consumer entities would you need to be part of as a person or company obsessed with this topic?



4

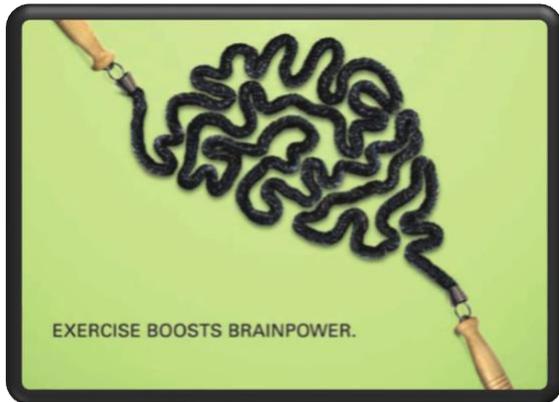
Ownership

A Go-To Has a Higher Purpose: It Takes Market Ownership of a Problem

A Go-To says, “I’ll take this one. I’ll own this problem.” And that problem becomes its purpose in life.

Companies basically exist to (profitably) solve problems, especially in the business-to-business world. But a Go-To *fixates* on that market problem (or opportunity) and declares intellectual ownership for it, effectively becoming the ringleader, the primary thought leader, for related discussions and market activity.

Cisco doesn’t talk endlessly about sensors and routers, it talks endlessly about how the “Internet of Everything” will save lives or reduce risk for companies.



This print ad showed an image of a jump rope curled into the shape of a human brain, with the copy, “Exercise doesn’t just make you feel better, offering a good defense against depression and anxiety. It helps you stay more alert and focused. Something you can think clearly about as you knock out just one last set. To learn more, go to kp.org/thrive.”

Kaiser Permanente, the large health maintenance organization (HMO), doesn’t just offer an integrated delivery system – where you and your family can get all of your health care in one place, with a single set of medical records and a multi-disciplinary team devoted to your well-being – it believes this model is the way of the future. Kaiser has been running its “Thrive” campaign for 15 years, offering tips for healthy living. Many of its ads don’t talk about Kaiser at all. They address Kaiser’s higher purpose.

According to Diane Gage Lofgren, a former senior vice president, brand strategy, communications and public relations at Kaiser, and Debbie Cantu, a former Kaiser vice president, brand marketing and advertising, the company aims to play the role of health advocate “completely dedicated to health and well-being with the fact that, no matter what their stages of life, people want to be as healthy as they can be.”

Salesforce was founded to solve the problem of expensive enterprise software implementations, with an initial focus on the salesforce. Facebook’s goal is to connect everyone on the planet. Apple created iTunes to make it easy for iPod users to legally download songs vs. illegal options that were rampant at the time. According to Amazon’s first employee, Shel Kaphan, the company’s initial, singular goal was to “make [books] available to everyone in the world.”

As part of owning the problem (or challenge, as some might state it), a Go-To engages the market. It creates forums for

interaction and stands at the center of those as the ringleader – not to put itself front and center but to drive the conversation toward continuous innovation and results.

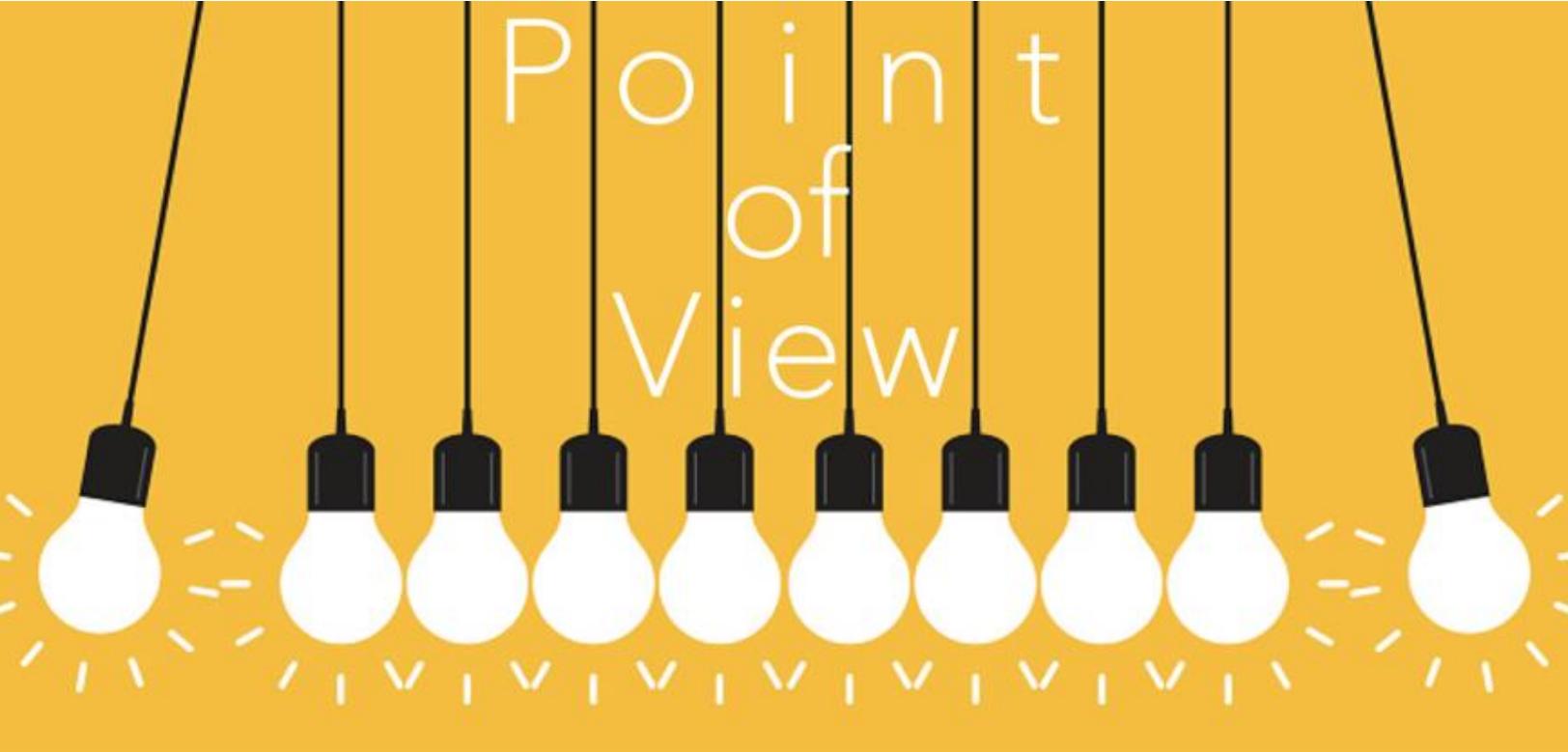
Discovery Education wants to “ignite student curiosity and inspire educators to reimagine learning.” To that end, it offers community and engagement programs like Siemens STEM Day and a partnership with the Tiger Woods Foundation.

So, it's not just about solving a market problem. It's also about keeping the conversation alive and working with the market to make continuing, collective progress against the problem.

Act Now: Start with These Three Questions

1. What specific market problem do you or will you/your company own?
2. Which key actions can you take to demonstrate your intellectual ownership of this problem?
3. How might you put yourself (or your company) at the center of a community focused on this problem?

Point of View



5

Conviction

A Go-To Evangelizes a Prescriptive Point of View on the Problem With Conviction and Builds a Following

The point of view is a genuine perspective on what needs to be done, with or without the Go-To's help.

Investor and start-up advisor, Guy Kawasaki, would describe it as a "cause." This is not a sales pitch.

The Stanford Technology Ventures Program (STVP), which is part of the Department of Management Science and Engineering in the School of Engineering at Stanford University has become the Go-To for technology entrepreneurship education, as evidenced by (among other things) the fact that the National Science Foundation chose it over numerous other institutions vying for a rare \$10 million

A Go-To understands the value and power of engaging audiences' emotions with storytelling and drama. The problem provides dramatic tension as the villain, and the prescriptive point of view saves the day as hero.

grant to help engineering students across the United States become more entrepreneurial and innovative. STVP firmly believes that all students can benefit from learning entrepreneurial leadership skills regardless of their major or intended career.

STVP faculty, staff and affiliates travel extensively and maintain close relationships with other leaders and influencers in technology entrepreneurship education and research. Almost everyone in entrepreneurship education around the globe knows or knows of STVP Professors Kathy Eisenhardt, Tom Byers, and Tina Seelig, who are fervent evangelists of STVP's point of view. They are so prolific in their "market," that all of them have won numerous awards for their work and impact. Kathy Eisenhardt's research is so influential that she was noted in 2008 as the most-cited research author in strategy and organization studies for the past 25 years, ahead of renowned Harvard management professor and author, Michael Porter. Byers and Seelig won the prestigious Bernard M. Gordon Prize for Innovation in Engineering and Technology Education for their influence in this area. Presented by the National Academy of Engineering (NAE), then-president William Wulf said the NAE created the award as "essentially the 'Nobel Prize' for engineering educators." And all of three of these professors have written books sharing STVP practices and insights.

In the early days of Salesforce, Marc Benioff clearly saw installed software as a villain. He firmly believed that software-as-a-service was the hero that could come to the

rescue. Everywhere he went, he got up on his soapbox and delivered the same impassioned message: Companies are better off with software-as-a-service instead of buying enterprise software packages that require dozens of people, millions of dollars and many months to install or even modify, once installed. This point of view was espoused in every facet of Salesforce's activities and interactions with the market.

A Go-To understands the soft-sell power of thought leadership.

When Frank Vain of private club industry go-to consulting firm McMahon Group stands up in front of an audience of private club general managers, he doesn't talk at all about McMahon Group. He educates the audience on the core problem facing the private club sector and McMahon's research-based point of view on what club leadership teams can do to solve this problem. By the time he's done openly and freely sharing his expertise, he's essentially given a credentials presentation while keeping the audience hanging on his every word. It's like standing outside a restaurant giving free samples of your most delicious dishes. Customers can't help but want more.

A Go-To also understands the power of building a following, so that others in the market place start doing your selling for you.

Apple has an entire army of rabid fans who spread the Apple gospel on its behalf. Mozilla, proud provider of Internet browser, Firefox, actually engages its users in helping to

maintain and improve the product - they work for free, because they believe in the cause: choice and control online.

STVP has created a “community of believers” throughout academia, who also share its passion and belief in STVP’s philosophy. For many years, STVP led a series of annual conferences in Europe, Asia, Latin America and the U.S. to bring together entrepreneurship educators from across these regions to advance entrepreneurship education. STVP would share its approach and encourage others to do the same. Professors around the globe have tremendous respect for STVP’s approaches and its role as a thought leader in this field. More importantly, there is incredible bonding that took place among the participants. There was a deep sense of camaraderie and mutual support. STVP provided these events as a service to their peers, but the events paid immeasurable dividends back to STVP in terms of what it learned, brand building, and other opportunities the events created for STVP.

Act Now: Start with These Three Questions

1. Why is the market problem you focus on so critical – what fallout does it cause for companies, individuals or society?
2. What do companies (or individuals) need to do in order to solve it?
3. How will you build a following around this point of view?



Results

A Go-To Doesn't Sell, It Solves

6

Results

In other words, a Go-To delivers killer results that have a profound impact on customers.

When pitching offerings, it's not enough to talk about the problem and what should be done about it. It's also not enough to share product functions and features or service capabilities. Instead, a Go-To delivers on its promises and provides value in the form of outcomes. By actively solving the problem for customers, it delivers astonishing impact.

- ➔ A Go-To provides not just a product or a service but also the **complete solution** required to give the customer a business or personal outcome.
- ➔ A Go-To leads the customer on a journey and **measures success in terms of results delivered.**
- ➔ A Go-To's sales activity is not transactional and "lead" oriented – it is **long-term relationship and account oriented.**
- ➔ A Go-To seeks to be the customer's trusted business partner and **has the customer's long-term interests at the center of what it does.**
- ➔ A Go-To approaches the market with a set of targets it sees itself as best suited to serve and **cultivates a presence among those targets** – it builds a community of believers in its point of view and approach to solving the problem.

If you need a meal, Target will sell you the pieces - food, plates, utensils, etc. - and send you along. A fine restaurant will sell you a complete, satisfying dining experience – and for that complete solution you're willing to pay more. Taking that several steps further, the *Go-To* local restaurant will do this *and* be a gathering place for birds of a feather, know you by name, know your food sensitivities, make a custom dish at your request and send you special offers.

A Go-To already understands your business problem and walks in with a prescription for solving it. A Go-To doesn't answer your question of "What do you do?" with their own question of "What do you need?"

A top-tier Go-To offers a very specific, and sometimes even quantified, value proposition. It talks in terms of specific business outcomes - e.g., how much more quickly, less expensively or more profitably you'll achieve your business goals and at what cost.

Which Would You Rather?

A service that will monitor customer dissatisfaction for your company

or

An offering that says, "We'll increase the net promoter score of your unhappiest customers by ___% within six months"

A public relations (PR) firm that charges a monthly retainer to manage your social media accounts

or

One that says, "We'll charge you \$XX to achieve 100% aided awareness and 60% unaided awareness among your top ___ prospects within the next year"

A law firm that charges you an hourly fee

or

A firm that says, "We're so confident we can win this case that you owe us nothing until we win a judgement for you, and then you pay us a percentage."

Side Benefit: Results Orientation Will Lower Your Costs

Because it is so focused, a Go-To is able to do all of this through efficient, behind-the-curtain operational excellence. It has a low cost of delivery relative to someone doing the same thing on a one-off basis through tools, processes and, technology. A Go-To hires and trains people focused on its area of expertise who can jump in and immediately add value. And it has a “trusted partner offering superior results” value system and culture.

Unlike retailers in the mid-1990s who jumped onto the Internet as a side business, Amazon made the online channel its only business, initially focusing just on books. In fact, its operation was so efficient that, rather than create their own online channels, companies like Toys R Us, Target, and Sears Canada, among others, contracted with Amazon at the time to run their retail websites. Another major key to Amazon's success is its fulfillment operation, which reduces its shipping, inventory and other operating costs. *Wired Magazine* once called it, “the world's most nimble infrastructure for the transfer of things....”

There is fascinating video footage on YouTube showing just how efficient their operation is, using robotics and analytics to fulfill an order with barely any human involvement.

Act Now: Start with These Three Questions

1. How do (or will) you uniquely solve the problem in a way that delivers outcomes with quantified results, rather than selling capabilities or mere products?
2. Are you currently transactional, or do you take a longer-term view of your customers and play a more ongoing, impactful role?
3. What can you do to create a “community of believers” among your customers - what can you do to build a following among them and between them, with you as the hub?



7

Change

A Go-To understands this: Companies that don't change or don't change fast enough often perish.

A Go-To Constantly Adjusts and Adapts

The world is continuously changing, and a Go-To keeps an eye on the horizon to constantly adapt to change.

A Go-To even reinvents itself, when necessary.

Nothing stands still: Market conditions, customer needs, and other factors that impact a company, like the economy, politics, regulatory policy, technology and so on.

A Go-To maintains humility and a healthy paranoia. I've been in meetings with the senior leadership at Accenture during periods of record growth and profits, and you'd have thought from the conversation that the company was on the verge of going out of business. The executives in the room understood that Accenture's fortunes, like those of any

“...the person who is the star of a previous era is often the last one to adapt to change, the last one to yield to logic of a strategic inflection point and tends to fall harder than most.”

-- Andy Grove, Only the Paranoid Survive (p 68)

company, could turn on a dime. The team had the same earnest attitude toward its strategic planning activity as a struggling startup. And rightly so.

A Go-To also realizes that, regardless of how unique its current offerings are, it will face competition. The market will invariably begin to fill with copycats going for a slice of that pie, so the Go-To must watch its back and work to stay ahead of the pack. Airbnb dominates the online home-sharing sector now, but can it stay ahead, especially if the hotel industry decides to enter that business?

Technology companies, in particular, can't stand still for three seconds before a competitor pops up or market conditions change. Oracle started as the only relational database company, but of course competitors came along, followed by new technologies. Though Oracle still maintains solid leadership in the overall database space with over 40% market share, it is no longer the same company. It has built on its strengths, broadening into many other solution areas, such as digital marketing technology.

As of this writing, Apple, Google and Microsoft are the world's three most valuable brands, according to Forbes, but you'd never know it from the healthy paranoia pulsing throughout the headquarters of all three. None look the same as they did in the early days, and they all know that their offerings could become obsolete at any moment. They are always working intently on their next innovations.

ACCORDING TO AN INNOSIGHT 2018 STUDY SUMMARIZED IN THE BRIEFING, "CREATIVE DESTRUCTION IS ACCELERATING," HALF OF TODAY'S S&P 500 COMPANIES WILL BE REPLACED OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS; AND WHEREAS COMPANIES IN 1958 STAYED ON THE INDEX AN AVERAGE OF 61 YEARS (PER THE 2012 VERSION OF THIS STUDY), THAT AVERAGE TENURE IS PROJECTED TO SHRINK TO JUST 12 YEARS BY 2027.

The "Creative Destruction" paper referenced above describes pertinent trends of universal interest and offers some pointed advice applicable to any company.

In recent years, some stalwarts like IBM have suffered for not embracing the trend toward cloud computing quickly enough. Toys R Us failed to properly adapt to market changes, including the rise of online shopping. Over the next decade, disruptors will include blockchain, the Internet of Things (think Nest thermostats but applied to nearly any kind of consumer or industrial device/product), changing consumer behavior, cleantech, widespread adoption of digital platforms for mature sectors (a la Alibaba, PayPal, etc.), the sharing economy (e.g., Uber), and the sheer speed of change in almost any industry.

What This Means for You

Whether you are part of a large company or a startup, be sure you are constantly monitoring market changes and trends on the horizon and then analyzing how they might impact you. Look at what you need to do to adapt.

Act Now: Start with These Three Questions

1. What major trends are on the horizon in your sector, and how will the market change as a result?
2. In what ways do you need to adapt or change your point of view and test it?
3. In what ways do you need to adapt or change your offering?

Recap and Next Steps

In summary, here are the seven ways in which a Go-To does things differently from the typical, commoditized provider:

1. A Go-To Has Maniacal Focus
2. A Go-To Starts with a Beachhead Market and Central Theme Before It Broadens
3. A Go-To Is Obsessed With Its Area of Expertise
4. A Go-To Has a Higher Purpose: It Takes Market Ownership of a Market Problem
5. A Go-To Evangelizes a Prescriptive Point of View on the Problem and Builds a Following
6. A Go-To Doesn't Sell, It Solves
7. A Go-To Constantly Adjusts and Adapts

So how does one implement these grand strategies, particularly when money and time are tight?

Methodically, and as efficiently as possible.

To aid those efforts, I've developed the four-part Apollo Method for Market Dominance, a structured, step-by-step approach to pursuing Go-To status in a highly competitive, target market. A forthcoming book lays it out in detail.

[SUBSCRIBE HERE TO BE ALERTED WHEN IT BECOMES AVAILABLE.](#)

In the meantime, you can do any of the following:

- ➔ Use the best practices, tips and action items in this book to perform a self-assessment and shore up weaknesses
- ➔ Check out the various links throughout this book to read inspirational stories and learn more detail about how the aforementioned Go-To companies executed
- ➔ Get tips, more examples and details on the Apollo Method blog: www.apollomethod.com
- ➔ Attend a workshop: Find the latest schedule at www.linagroup.com – scroll down on the home page
- ➔ Organize a private workshop: Contact inquiry@linagroup.com
- ➔ Subscribe to receive updates, exclusive event invitations and useful information on market dominance strategy

About the Author



Theresa Lina Stevens is the founder and president of Lina Group, Inc., a strategic marketing consulting firm that specializes in market dominance and differentiation strategy, primarily for technology companies. Her specialty is complex enterprise and analytic solutions in competitive or emerging markets. Theresa is a frequent speaker, workshop presenter and executive coach on topics such as vision development, strategy, marketing, thought leadership content, message development and pitching. She is involved in the School of Engineering at Stanford University and advises the student-led Stanford Marketing Group. She has served as chief marketing officer for Internet-related startups and began her career at Accenture. After several years there as a management consultant, Theresa helped found the firm's Communications Industry Group. She served as its Director of Worldwide Marketing and helped lay the foundation for what has become a multi-billion-dollar business.

