An important ANNOUNCEMENT for all category designers.

9 Reasons Why Category Design is NOT Marketing.

ENERGY DRINK

Dietrich Mateschitz

Photo Courtesy Red Bull

#1

LIGHT BULB

Thomas Edison

Category design is NOT MARKETING!

Sure, marketing communicates the category point of view and drives the messaging for the mobilization efforts. Led by the CEO, the marketing team provides momentum internally and externally for the category. But category design cannot be marketing as usual — it requires **altering** the way we think about marketing, and our marketing playbook.

Photo Courtesy Shutterstock

#2

Marketing does not build a category, EVERYONE does.

Category design is a whole company strategy. Company design, product design and category design all inform each other – it takes a **village**. Product teams need to build the category into the products. Sales needs to modify how they pitch. HR needs to instill the category in their recruiting and team oversight. The whole company ecosystem matters.

SOLAR TILES

Elon Musk

Photo Courtesy Brookfield Resedential

#3

ONLINE RETAIL

Jeff Bezos

Marketers accept decisions, category designers make **DECISIONS**.

The process of category design means making big decisions that couldn't have been made prior to working through the category design **process** – eliminating internal gravity. It starts with the CEO and includes the whole leadership team. It's not business as usual.

Photo Courtesy StickerGiant

#4

KOMBUCHA

GT Dave

Marketers encourage comparison, whereas category designers **FORCE A CHOICE**.

Be different, not just better, faster or cheaper. When people want a soda they either compare Coke and Pepsi, or they **choose** something different such as GTs Kombucha.
Force the market to choose.

comparison vs. choice

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#5

SHAPEWEAR

Sara Blakely

Marketers strive to capture revenue from competitors, category designers **CREATE** new market cap.

All too often companies claw to claim their piece of the available market economics. Category design is about the missing, the different – designing markets that grow **new value**.

Photo Courtesy Spanx

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Marketers fear and target existing competition, category designers say “f#!& the competition” and **DIMINISH** them.

If you’re asked “*how do you compare to the competition?*” Never answer it with superlative messaging like better, faster, cheaper. Answer with a unique **point of view** that compels the audience to see absolutely no competition.

#6

KID’S TV

Mr. Rogers

Marketers scream “we’re better!”
Category designers evangelize “we’re **DIFFERENT!**”

#7

SUSHIRITO

Peter Yen

If you’re asked “how do you compare to the competition?” Never stoop so low as to answer it. Respond in a way that compels the audience to see absolutely no competition. Sushiritto is still sushi, but it’s **different**.

Photo Courtesy Sushirito

Marketers compete for share, category designers create **ZERO BILLION DOLLAR** markets.

If you envision a category nobody else can see, it's a zero billion dollar market – **$ØB**. The total addressable market (TAM) is as large as you can design it to be. Categories solve a problem people didn't know they had, or provides a solution they didn't know existed.

#8

VIDEO-FIRST CONFERENCING

Eric Yuan

Photo Courtesy John Reed

#9

Marketers attack competitors, category designers attack the **PROBLEM**.

By targeting competitors, you legitimize them. The market sees the same solution to the same problem and it's certain there is already a category leader. Instead, attack the problem as if it's a **villain**. Make prospective customers feel the pain, then provide a hero – your category – to rescue them.

Photo Courtesy Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

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