

Laura 00:00

In today's episode, we're diving into the fascinating and increasingly important topic of ethics and marketing, which I admit the title itself could feel a little bit like a snooze fest. But this is incredibly important information that you're not going to want to miss. As business owners and marketers, it is our responsibility to ensure that our marketing practices align with our values and social responsibility. In fact, I would propose that the general marketplace is burnt out from getting offers from people who don't prioritize ethics. And in doing so, we're going to stand out from the crowd. And also, we can create sustainable growth in our company, while making a positive impact on our customers, employees and community. Next up, I'm going to be sharing with you why ethical marketing isn't just about doing more of what's right. Why it's also a smart business strategy that can lead to stronger customer relationships. Up next, ethics and marketing, why doing good is good for business.

Laura 01:07

Hello, and welcome to the Next Level Leap podcast. My name is Laura Meyer, and I'm thrilled to be your guide on this journey. With over 20 years' experience as an entrepreneur and growth strategist for some of the country's fastest growing nonprofit and for-profit organizations. I'm passionate about the power of marketing, creating massive positive change in the world. In this podcast, we'll explore how you can use marketing to create a ripple effect of change that will impact lives and communities for years to come. I'm so excited to share my insights and strategies with you and to help you discover how you can use your talents and skills to make a difference in the world. So, let's dive in together and create a marketing ripple effect that will change the world.

Laura 01:49

Today, I'm going to explore with you the significance of ethical marketing and discuss various examples of ethical marketing practices that you can implement today in your business. I'm also going to share with you some potential consequences of unethical marketing and provide you with the practical steps to ensure that your marketing aligns with your values. So, I'm going to dive in and share with you how doing good is not only the right thing to do for those of us with a conscience, but it's also good for business. By embracing some of these practices, we can build trust and credibility in our audience, attract like-minded employees and partners, and ultimately create a better world to our business. Doesn't that sound great? So, let's go.

Laura 02:33

In a world where profitability often takes center stage, it is very easy to lose sight on the bigger picture. In the coaching industry, where I've spent a lot of time and a lot of time with my clients, I have seen a huge turning events in the last few years where people are becoming more and more skeptical. Why? Because they've invested in programs courses, coaches, who promised the world and vastly under delivered, we've watched programs come on to the scene fast and

furiously, and then disappear just as quickly because of the number of bad reviews they have. So, this is something that is so important for all of us to be paying attention to. And sometimes ethical marketing is actually not always the most profitable approach. We can make a lot of money short-term making big promises we can't fulfill. I'm going to say that again. We can make a lot of money, all of us by making big promises that we know only a vast minority of people actually receive from our offer. And I think when things get kind of tough when we're marketing and selling and it didn't work as well as it used to, it's pretty tempting to try to make bigger promises. So, what I'm going to be exploring is this idea that doing the right thing, when it comes to marketing and sales or enrollment might come with short term costs. But the long-term benefits far outweigh those costs, from building trust and credibility with your audience to establishing a very visible and exciting brand, embracing ethical marketing practices can just lead to a more profound positive impact on your customers, employees and your society at large. So I'm going to dive in into why following ethics and marketing is not only again the right thing to do, but an essential element of a sustainable and successful business.

Laura 04:57

Many of you who are listening know that I spend an equal amount of time I'm in both nonprofit and for-profit spaces. And within the last month I was at Notre Dame University's lab for economic opportunity, who is one of our primary nonprofit clients. And I was listening to the premise of Ethics in Research, specifically academic research when it comes to studying the outcomes of nonprofit programs and analyzing their overall effectiveness, what they call an evidence-based approach. And when I was listening to this leading economics professor who is one of the cofounders of for the lab for economic opportunity at Notre Dame, I was blown away by how similar ethics and research needs to be in comparison to ethics and marketing. Let me explain. In both academia and marketing, ethical considerations play a crucial role in guiding research practices in ensuring that the rights of well and well-being of individuals are protected. The Belmont Report, which is a foundational document for ethical research, and academia, highlights three essential principles, respect for persons doing no harm, and justice. So how in the world does this apply to a for profit company and marketing and why should you keep listening? Well, let's take a look.

Laura 06:31

In 2015, the automotive giant Volkswagen was caught in what is now known as their diesel gate scandal. Volkswagen had installed software in their diesel engine vehicles that could detect when emissions testing was taking place and alter the vehicles performance accordingly to pass the tests. Pretty sneaky. This deceptive practice allowed Volkswagen to market their diesel vehicles as environmentally friendly and fuel efficient, leading to increased sales and market share, which was great in the short term. However, when the truth came to light, Volkswagen faced significant backlash from customers, regulators and the public. The company's reputation took a significant hit, and they had to pay billions of dollars in finds

settlements and recall expenses. In the long run, Volkswagens unethical marketing practices not only caused substantial financial damage, but it also eroded the trust that consumers and stakeholders had in the brand. This scandal served as a stark reminder of the importance of ethical marketing practices and the potential long-term consequences of prioritizing short term profits over honesty and transparency.

Laura 07:56

So going back to the Belmont Report, when we talk about respect for persons in marketing, it's really about understanding and valuing the individuality of each person. We all want to feel respected and heard and understood. And that's precisely what this principle aims to achieve in the world of marketing. First off, respecting the autonomy of consumers means giving them the power to make informed decisions, being transparent about what the outcomes are typically like for people in their position. In this practice, it involves being honest about our products or services and avoid exaggerating the benefits or hiding any potential drawbacks. By providing accurate and relevant information, we can empower people to make choices that align with their needs and preferences and give them a greater chance of getting what they came for. Another aspect of respecting persons and marketing is protecting privacy. So let's face it, nobody likes their personal information being misused or shared without their consent. So it's really important to handle this data responsibly, only collecting what's necessary, ensuring it's securely stored and being transparent about usage.

Laura 09:13

And moreover, just respecting individual preferences is another key part of this principle. So have you ever been annoyed by relentless marketing emails or ads that just won't quit? I know I have. And there's been times where I haven't wanted to be on a list, but I kept showing up there anyways, there's nothing more annoying, right? So to avoid irritating customers or consumers, we need to respect their communication preferences and only send them information that's relevant to them at that time. This is where AI and automation can actually become more useful. A lot of people are concerned about it when it comes to ethics, but this is where we can use it for good. And that way we can only send people marketing and sales communications that they want that they're excited to receive. And that is important and relevant. to them. So applying this principle of respect for persons and not only academic research, but in marketing is all about treating customers as unique individuals with their own needs, preferences and rights. And by being honest, transparent and considerate, we can not only create a better experience for customers, but also foster long lasting relationships built on trust and respect.

Laura 10:28

The idea of do no harm is something that you hear about in both academia as well as in the field of medicine. And it's just one of those principles. It's pretty straightforward in theory, but in

practice, it can be a little bit more nuanced, especially when it comes to marketing. So I want to dive in, in this part of this podcast, to chat about what it really means to do no harm in the world of marketing and how we can ensure our strategies align with our ethics. First and foremost, we really want to think about the impact of our marketing efforts and what how they impact consumers, or buyers. And this means not only avoiding false claims, or deceptive advertising, which by the way, the Federal Trade Commission is, is pretty clear about not everybody listens to it, but it's very straightforward on what they do and don't allow, but also just steering clear of the gray areas, you know, tactics that could potentially exploit or manipulate people. For example, fear based marketing tactics might be effective and grabbing attention, or what I call fake scarcity. But it can create unnecessary anxiety and stress for the world's population, which we do not need more of, right. So as marketers, we want to strive to create those positive experiences for our audience and promote products and services in a way that's uplifting and honest.

Laura 11:45

Another aspect of do no harm in marketing is really considering the long term consequences of our actions. So sure, marketing strategies might create quick results. But if they have a negative impact long term, on the buyer or the environment, we really have to ask ourselves if it's worth it in the long run, for example, like excessive packaging, non-recyclable materials, this might seem like a minor issue. But when you consider the cumulative effect at volume, it really helps us learn how to prioritize our choices and take responsibility for sustainability. And lastly, what I think is most importantly, is just considering the impact of our marketing efforts on society as a whole. Are we doing good with our marketing? Are our campaigns perpetuating harmful stereotypes or reinforcing negative biases are our marketing efforts, creating better outcomes overall, for the people that we serve, and really also making sure that our marketing materials promote inclusive, you know, diversity, inclusiveness positive values, and this helps us shape a more equitable society, which ultimately benefits everyone. And as marketers, we have incredible power, I think and responsibility to be thinking about these things in our own marketing. So in a nutshell, applying the principle of do no harm and marketing really means being aware of the potential consequences of our actions, and making decisions that prioritize the well-being of our clients, our customers, the environment and society. It can feel like a pretty big responsibility, but just by generally taking a mindful and ethical approach, we can foster stronger connections with our audience and also contribute to just a more responsible world. And don't we all need a little bit more of that, right.

Laura 13:40

So finally, let's talk about justice and marketing. Justice in this context, and marketing versus in academic research really refers to the idea of treating all people fairly, and ensuring that our marketing efforts don't unfairly target or exclude specific groups. So how can we apply this in our marketing campaigns? Let's break it down. First and foremost, we need to be mindful of

the audiences we're targeting and the messages we're sending. Are we inadvertently perpetuating stereotypes or contributing to the marginalization of certain groups. For example, if our marketing campaigns only feature people from a specific demographic, we may be unintentionally reinforcing biases or limiting our audience's ability to see themselves represented in our brand. To promote justice in our marketing, we need to strive to create those inclusive campaigns and with a diverse range of people so that everybody can feel seen and valued. Another important of justice in our marketing is really just making sure that the products and services that we are marketing are accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances. This means considering factors like affordability, availability and ease of use, are we pricing our products in a way that's fair and reasonable? And when I say that, I don't mean cheap. It just means that when we run the numbers, does it make sense for the buyer? higher? And do we offer a variety of options so that it does make sense for the buyer. For programs that maybe don't have a cost like nonprofit programs, can we create campaigns that really let them know what the opportunity is, and while also fostering a sense of fairness and equity. Finally, we really want to consider the potential consequences of marketing on vulnerable populations. And I work with a lot of vulnerable populations in the nonprofit space. So for example, it's important to not market services or products that could actually be harmful to certain groups. You know, an extreme example might be promoting unhealthy food to children or promoting addictive substances. In these cases, you know, they don't come across my desk very often, but different variations of them do, and weighing the potential profits against the ethical implications of our actions is something that I'm constantly doing, especially when we're thinking about is this is this offer going to get people into debt? What can they reasonably pay off that debt within a short period of time, these are all things that I want to make sure that we're thinking about when we are considering ethical marketing practices.

Laura 16:19

So in summary, I was pretty inspired by this talk at Notre Dame on the idea of ethics in academia. And by applying the same principle and marketing really helps us become aware of our own ethics and our marketing strategies, particularly with respect for persons and do no harm, and the idea of justice. And by thinking about these three principles, we can really create a powerful and lasting impact that goes beyond our business, because so many of us got into business not because you know, we wanted to make a buck, which if you did, that's fine. But I think most people I talked to wanted to create an impact. And the big promise of following ethical marketing practices is that it fosters a brand, a sustainable, long term brand that's built on trust, integrity, and inclusivity. And by following these guidelines, you get to with your business contribute to a more equitable, and just society, you'll be able to create deep connections with your audience that stand the test of time. And customers are much more likely to remain loyal to brands that demonstrate a commitment to ethical practices, which just leads to more and more compounded long term success over time.

Laura 17:37

So as business owners and marketers, I want to invite you to this unique responsibility and opportunity to create positive change around us through our messaging and marketing efforts. And by placing ethics at the forefront of our marketing strategy, this is where we can make the greatest impact. And it is something that I you can tell I'm really passionate about. And so as we wrap up this episode, I just want to help us remember that our marketing efforts are more than just a means to drive revenue. Yes, that is important. But more importantly, they have the power to influence people's lives and shape our world. So really want to invite us to commit to making ethical marketing the norm so that together, we can contribute to a better future for all. I want to thank you so much for tuning in up to this point. And hearing me talk about this topic. If it inspired you have questions about it, please message me on social media, LinkedIn, Instagram, all the places. And I hope that these insights have really inspired you to take a closer look at how your marketing or how your team is marketing and think about how you might be able to embrace these ethical marketing principles and your efforts. So join me again next time as I continue to explore the world of marketing and business growth. And until then, keep scaling with joy.

Laura 18:56

Thank you so much for tuning in to the Next Level leap Podcast where we explore the transformative power of marketing to create positive change in the world. If you enjoyed this episode, and you want to learn more about how we can work together to create positive change through better marketing, please visit our website at joybrandcreative.com. That's www.joybrandcreative.com. There you'll find more information about our services, our mission, and how we can help you use marketing to make a real difference in the world. And if you want to stay updated on the latest episodes of the next level leap podcast, make sure that you subscribe and leave us a review on your favorite podcast platform. Your feedback and support means the world to us and we're excited to continue this journey of creating positive change in the world through the power of marketing. So until next time, keep spreading joy and making a difference. I'll see you soon