

INTRO

Good morning and welcome to this session. My name is John Shirley and I am the sales and marketing director for a company called hark. For five years we have been designing and producing digital workbooks for companies in the outdoor industry and it is this experience of understanding what is required for a successful relationship to exist between a sales rep and a buyer, seen by us from the outside in, that I wish to share with you today in the hope that some of the insights we have gained will be useful to you.

This talk is entitled “how game changing is iPad?” and it is my aim to share with you my thoughts on that, and also to ask what is the impact of iPad and tablets on the way that information is managed and consumed in the industry? That is to say how an iPad might be used by sales people and by retail buyers in particular, as a replacement for printed workbooks. And if that is the way it is going what it means for those people responsible for managing the data and workflow, the people in IT and Marketing.

Some definitions. I use the word tablet to define the iPad and other devices like the Motorola xoom and the blackberry play book.

WHO IS IN THE AUDIENCE

Can I have a show of hands please to indicate who in the audience is a retailer and who is a brand owner? Who is in sales? Who is in marketing? Who owns an iPad? Who wants an iPad? Who thinks its game changing? Who thinks its not?

WHAT INSPIRED THIS TALK – WHERE ARE WE NOW

I will talk today about some general reasons why I think iPad is game changing but specifically I want to look at how the iPad and tablet devices might change the selling relationship between a brand owner and a retailer. That is to say, how a sales rep sells products and how a retailer buys product.

First let us go back in time. The title for this talk was given to me by a UK sales rep for a US outdoor brand. It was nine months ago at the Outdoor Trade Show in Coventry, England. I was talking to him and the International marketing manager. We all had iPads in our hands but none of us had any useful business to business software installed. So instead we found ourselves comparing the enclosures we had, leather against metal etc.

Why? Because back then there wasn't any useful software. Even today my observation is that the most common extent to which an iPad or a tablet is being used by a rep is to show off PDF catalogues. I have also observed that iPads are popular as dumb monitor screens to run video from. And yet this sales rep who inspired this talk stated firmly that iPad was game changing. Why?

HOW WE SELL

Imagine you are a rep and you want to sell your products. The best way to sell a product is to show a sample. But you cannot carry all the samples with you and even if you are in a show room or on a trade stand where you have a full sample set, you still won't have all the samples or all the colour variants. So your back up is a printed catalogue and a lap top. The catalogue is glossy, has some great lifestyle photographs and shows loads of product.

The problem is it's out of date because some products have been dropped and others added. Yes there may be a B2B web site that normally has the latest information on product availability - but we are in the pre season so it hasn't been launched or updated yet.

And in any case, the rep knows (that's you or me) that when I get to this retailer's store there isn't an internet connection. And even if I had got internet I can't get a lap top out, because there's no space and the buyer is busy running his business and doesn't want to go through the lap top thing.

This is a very common set of circumstances. And for this single reason alone the iPad and the tablet devices are game changing. They are small, lightweight, switch on fast, have high quality screens, wide viewing angles and a long battery life.

If you have not held an iPad2 in your hand you should and I challenge you not to marvel at the ingenuity of how apple engineers have managed to cram so much in.

MOBILE HAS ALREADY CHANGED THE GAME

So is the iPad game changing? Yes I believe so. The iPad is hugely game changing. This change is linked in large part to the trend of "mobile". That is to say, mobile internet access, mobile communication through smart phones. There is no question that Apple has led the way and transformed the way we interact with these devices. And by transformed I mean "made it easier" for us to use them through smart design of the user interface and the user experience . And with innovations like iTunes and the world of "apps" we have been given many thousands of reasons to use the smartphone or explore the new iPad and tablet. Apple have led the way and the Androids have followed. But none of them could have done it without us, the users, saying "yes, I like this I am going to adopt this and I am going to adapt"

ADOPT AND ADAPT

And this word adapt is perhaps where we find ourselves. To adopt new things we need to adapt. There is no question that to use an iPhone keyboard after a blackberry keyboard you must adapt. And to do the same with an iPad after using a mouse you need to change the way you think. I also believe that one reason the "touch" computing of the tablet is game changing is because we are tactile creatures – touch is one of our five senses. It feels more natural to touch the screen.

So back to business. If you are a sales rep who wants to use a computer then you will prefer an iPad or tablet to a laptop. It will change your game. In seconds you have access to all the product information, videos and photographs that tell the story of your brand. You will prefer it to the printed catalogues that give you shoulder ache. The information on your iPad is up to date, you know because you downloaded the update put together by the marketing team via your wi-fi connection before you left your home or hotel this morning.

I have spoken to more than one Sales Director who says they would consider a digital catalogue for a laptop, but they would certainly do it for an iPad or tablet. There are people out there who are not comfortable with technology who will find the iPad liberating. These are some opinions I have heard from people in this industry. If you are not a sales rep then you can probably get by with a smartphone and a laptop. Sorry.

If you are anyone in a brand owning company then you will prefer that the costs of wasted print are reduced or eliminated. And the wastage arises not just from printing too many but from

printing with inaccuracies such that most of the notes being scribbled on the page are to do with altering the incorrect product information.

HOW DO WE BUY?

And what if you are a retail buyer? What is it you want? How might iPads change your game? It has been said to me that it is typical behaviour for a buyer to gather a number of brochures from brand owners at a show such as this, and take them away, even just a few days before the ordering deadline, to compare products and brochures from different brands in peace and away from the pressure of the show.

For the buyer this means lots of heavy catalogues to be carried. It also means the buyer and the brand owner will have to reconcile the problem with inaccuracies in the product listings printed in the catalogue.

The point is that in the absence of a better solution then the heavy and inaccurate printed catalogue is the best and only solution. Print is like a “comfort blanket” it reassures us because it has “always been there”. It works because we have made it work and we have established work arounds and strategies to cope with it’s failings and shortcomings.

NO PRINTED BROCHURE?

But the game is changing and has been changing for some time. Digital offers different and better solutions in the shape of web sites and electronic catalogues.

But different is not always better and many mistakes and failures have been made in implementing technology. I am sure all of us here could list some examples. However, as Henry Ford said “.. failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.” It is not a reason to bury your head in the sand and hope it goes away.

A really significant point here is that the digital solutions are getting better. The hardware is better and the software is better.

I speak to many companies who would like to do NO print at all. How do we feel about that? If a brand owner could persuade you the retailer to download their iPad app and browse the range from there, how much better would that be?

What if, with the right set up and the proper supporting infrastructure behind the app a brand can make sure that the range on offer is right up to date, that it is accurate on price and current availability, and that notes can be made and an order compiled. And retailers, what if you could view multiple catalogues from different suppliers on the same app, and even compare products across brands in the same app? These are all possibilities

TRANSITION

The reality for now is that we are in a period of transition where old ways are giving way to new ways but the new ways are not established yet as the norm. This is hard, let us not underestimate how challenging this is for everyone.

What we have is fragmentation, or put another way, the options and alternatives are greater and this makes the decision making on what to do much harder. For example I speak to companies who want to use the print budget to go digital, but also want to do both print and digital to manage the transition. It means that they will need to spend more money, and they don’t like that, especially when technology promised them they would have to spend less.

The thinking through of what to do also takes time, and we are all short on that. Let me give you another example from a well known brand. I have been talking to them and showing them demos of our laptop solution for two years. The Senior management has changed once in that time. We expect to be launching with their Autumn Winter 2012 collection. This is not a criticism of them, it is a reality of what it takes. And our software is relatively self-contained and easily deployed. How many of you have been involved in a SAP deployment? The planning and implementation alone can run for three years!! I met a lady in the US who had moved jobs twice and each time she joined the new firm they were about to implement SAP!!

It is not surprising therefore that very often the easiest decision is to do nothing. But that is not the right decision in the long run because this change is happening whether we like it or not.

So just to summarise again - I believe that the iPad is game changing because for the first time you have a lightweight portable computer that has a long battery life, that is quick to turn on and that is easy to use. The hardware is supported by the software phenomenon that is the app and the app store. Apps are already proven as part of the smartphone explosion and the iPad sits right in the middle between a smartphone and a laptop. The iPad is game changing because people want to do things differently and this tool means they can and they will. And remember the game that is really changing is mobile computing.

THE PRACTICALITIES

So if the only constant is change itself what do we do? Well we do what we always do – we manage the change as best we can. And this brings me to the other part of my talk. The question of what is the impact of iPad and tablets on the way that information is managed and consumed in the industry? By sales people and by retail buyers, yes; but also those people responsible in brand owning businesses for managing the data and the workflow.

These are the people in IT and Marketing. And it is in this context we can ask the question “What is the role of technology – hardware and software? And how can business deliver efficiencies and competitive advantage?” Now this is a big subject that I can not hope to cover thoroughly. But here goes.

Earlier I said this . “If you are a sales rep then you will prefer an iPad or tablet to a laptop. It will change your game. In seconds you have access to all the product information, videos and photographs that tell the story of your brand.”

It is easy to say this, how easy is it to do? How does this magically happen on the iPad? ... Someone has to organise the information and get it on to the iPad. Publishing information to a print catalogue, a web site or an iPad app takes time and effort and that usually falls to marketing. And there is a lot of work that goes in to the planning of a product range. How do you keep track of this? Well in terms of software and systems Microsoft Excel is usually the answer in spite of the expensive ERP, SAP, PLM, PDM systems that companies put in place.

I see companies where whole departments and salaried jobs are dedicated to this. I see it from the outside. I see silos of activity, fragmented groups of people with the title of IT this, CIO that, across product, marketing and sales. Very often they are all working toward the same goal but by different routes.

In one company for example, and I kid you not, they had a Microsoft Excel sheet for Men’s, Women’s and Kids but the format and arrangement of fields was different for each one – which obviously made collating them together more complicated than it needed to be. Again, we can smile and laugh and think we wouldn’t do that but my point is not to point the finger, because I am

sure in my business there are things that could be done better and differently. My point is that the reality of most businesses is striving to be productive in amongst the organised chaos. We are humans after all.

How often have I seen IT departments who just want to lock down everything and who are the last place you will find any innovation, and even if they build a really good system (and I have seen this at ISPO in February) they don't want to share it with sales and marketing because they would change it to suit them. This is common, it is not a universal truth, there are opposite ends of this spectrum too where there is more alignment. But it is the fragmentation and sometimes the dysfunction that we must acknowledge and work with.

The simple answer to what is required is alignment, agreement and data discipline. And the other laser beam focus can we use as the means to cut through the fragmentation and the rest is yes you guessed it another quote from Henry Ford.

Now this is particularly true for the B2B channel and certainly relevant to retailers. There is a phrase I use and I hear a lot – “people buy from people” and in my opinion it is the relationships between people and companies that are major drivers in commerce. For me this is where there is opportunity for competitive advantage, in the quality of your relationships. Yes you need a good quality, well designed product that strives for technological innovation and that is a given.

So for me the test of technology tools, whether hardware or software is about whether they help me be more efficient and more effective and if by using them I can do things that I could not do before.

I already gave you my answer on iPad, it's a simple one, they are a great tool for sharing and showing photos and videos and a lot of other things too. As such they are a great help to a sales rep in building and maintaining a relationship with a buyer and telling the story of the products and the brand.

And just to conclude let me tell you about this really game changing technology - teleportation. Last week I put the question “how game changing is iPad?” on a LinkedIn Forum for Apparel and Footwear sales professionals and invited people to comment.

One person while agreeing iPads were only as good as the software and systems back up you put on them suggested that what would really be game changing is a reduction in the travel time, expense and carbon footprint of doing meetings which reminded me of a technology I had heard about from Teleportec.

They claim their system will teleport your image from your location to a meeting conference or event anywhere in the world. You will appear in the room live, life size ... as if you are actually there and have eye-to-eye contact with those present.. the only thing you can't do is touch and shake hands. Now that really could be game changing. And by the way I am not a hologram.

Thank you.



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