

Hey, every organization—including your local church serving the Kingdom of God—must “do” marketing well at a certain level in order to thrive over the long haul! To that end, our first episode on marketing honed in on the four key words in the AMA’s official definition of marketing: “offerings that have value.”

So now we’re going to take a fascinating dive into that phrase: *offerings that have value*. To that end, the *strategic marketing* word for “value” is the word “utility.” To stimulate marketing success, the focus must be on what specifically delivers value and what offering creates that value or utility. So, a broad definition of utility is this: “the ability of the goods or services offered to satisfy customer wants or needs.” And many organizations have missed the mark by misidentifying or ignoring or neglecting utility for customers.

So, every organization clearly needs to deliver strong value! We’re going to go with the ultimate example: we’re going to unfurl God’s amazing Biblical model of well-defined and delivered value! And, as we discussed in our previous marketing episode, the greatest offering of all time is the offering of the sinless Christ on the Cross! The Cross is an utterly unique offering that offers utterly unique value to believers!

So, we’ll start by unpacking four types of value: *form*, *time*, *place*, and *ownership*. These four classic types of value are used by astute marketing strategists. So, no surprise regarding the Kingdom, then: the offering of Christ on the Cross radically transformed these four utilities of form, time, place, and ownership. Yes, Christ’s offering created totally new value, clearly transcending previous Old Testament offerings!

Hey, astute marketers break overall value into specific utilities in order to improve specific elements that then re-combine into the best value. So, we’ll start with the first utility: *form*, which can be defined as “transforming inputs into a finished form important to the consumer.” In the Old Testament, relationship with God was transacted through the sacrifice of animals. But as Hebrews 10 says, it was impossible for these sacrifices to take away sins. These inadequate inputs rendered “relationship with God” to be distant. Average Israelites could go to the temple, but they could not enter into God’s actual presence. But with Christ’s offering on the Cross, we’re given a radically new form utility, and that’s intimacy with the living God...real depth of relationship! Yes, the Cross of Christ gives us the opportunity to “approach the throne of grace with confidence” and know what it means to walk in true relationship with God. We are given His presence, His voice, His guidance! Wow, talk about the value of true intimacy with God...*that’s form utility!*

Yes, Jesus contributed His unique, flawless input—His *offering*. And His words on the Cross were, “It is finished!” No additional assembly is required by us—our righteousness is as filthy rags. Now that is crazy good—by us simply responding to the gift of salvation by faith, we don’t have to earn our way to eternal fellowship with God. Wow, that’s the ultimate *form utility*—Jesus offers a finished service of eternal value!

The second utility is *time* utility—that can be defined as “the providing of goods or services in accordance with the customer’s optimal timetable.” So, Jesus did provide this amazing service of salvation and eternal fellowship with God—but in what time frame is this service accessible? Well, the answer to that is this: the potential consumer of God’s salvific grace can respond *instantly* upon hearing of Jesus’s offering of great value! No phone number to call, no website to visit—the timing of accepting this offer is simply *now!*

But, once accepted, how long does this service last? Well, God provides the ultimate, comprehensive time utility—Jesus’s service on the Cross covers an eternal time span! John 3:16 (ESV) says: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” That’s right, the Gospel embraced right now delivers a complete time utility—now *and* evermore!

The next utility is *place* utility—that can be defined as “when the goods or services are provided at a desirable place for the consumer.” In the case of the Kingdom of God, there are three different places where God operates with regard to *place* utility. First, the good news of the Gospel can be provided anywhere, to every person, in any nation! You don’t have to go to a particular place on Earth to accept

Jesus's finished work on the Cross...no need to go to a church building...to a denominational headquarters...or anywhere else specific. You simply believe in Christ *wherever you're at!*

So what's the second "place"-utility in this story? Well, for the believer, the dwelling of Jesus in the believer is completely portable, so Jesus is "with" the believer from that first moment of belief all the way to every place ahead...for life! The believer has constant fellowship with God, navigating to any place around the world, enabled as Christ's ambassador! Then, there's the third "place"-utility for the believer: home with the Lord! Then we will be in full fellowship with God for an eternity—in the most desirable *place* ever! Hey, a stunted version of *place* only looks to how we can impact the kingdoms of this world—or only to investing in "heavenly" things like an isolated monk might do. But God's grand design is that *place* encompasses the Kingdom of God in its fullness, both here...on earth...as well as there...in heaven!

Finally, the fourth utility is *ownership* utility—that can be defined as "when the consumer gets meaningful ownership transferred as a result of a transaction." Stunningly, here's the manifestation of likely the most startling, unmerited utility ever offered in all of history... First, Hebrews 1:2 (ESV) tells us that, "...in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." So, Jesus is heir of all things! Then, Romans 8:16-17 says to us, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ..." Can you imagine? You and I are fellow heirs with Jesus—yes, heirs of all things!

Now, those four Kingdom utilities forge an amazing, synergistic combination of value: first, form utility (full fellowship with God); second, time utility (now and for eternity); third, place utility (everywhere—in every nation and in heaven); and fourth, ownership utility (believers being fellow heirs of all things with Jesus). Wow. These manifestations of these four utilities—*form, time, place, and ownership*—provide the crucial *strategic* foundation for the *operational* marketing of the Great Commission that works to fulfill these strategic values...these utilities. That's why Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

Why would anyone go forth to unreached neighbors without totally embracing the four foundational utilities offered by Christ and Him crucified: full fellowship with God, eternal life, heaven, and fellow heirship with Christ? Buddha doesn't offer that. Muhammed doesn't offer that. Nations don't offer that. Governments don't offer that. Families don't offer that. Only Jesus gave us His offering of great value!

So, Jesus's sacrificial "input" on the Cross clearly manifested as an offering of great value! But that's only given an opportunity for completion *if* the messenger embraces the fullness of these utilities manifested by Jesus. Regrettably, many churches, have a message of condemnation...or a message of pursuing elusive human goodness...or a message of merely helping others while muting the Gospel. Truly, the recipients of such stunted or misguided efforts will not experience the four utilities provided by Jesus at the Cross!

The true value of all *operational* marketing approaches—even the Great Commission—is dependent upon the proper utilities of the *strategic* marketing foundations that such street-level approaches should be aligned with. But, sadly, it's happened in every era over the past two millennia: often social needs are isolated and emphasized by Christians in lieu of salvation, eternal life, and full fellowship with God now and forever. The recipients of stunted social-need marketing will get that fruit, yay—but *not* the deepest, most rich utilities offered by Jesus! Wait, you might say, meeting social needs is pre-evangelism! Great...that can be true! But where are the fruits of the evangelism that followed—you know, the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus was all about as He also met such needs? (Mark 1)

Here's the crux of the matter. Whether in your church or your workplace, the *strategic* utilities that give rise to value are the crucial foundation to *operational* marketing success. Only a fraction of churches succeed at this. Those that don't simply fail in strategic impact. And the same is true of every organization over time! Hey, how's your church...your workplace...doing with its crucial foundations of utilities?

A&A: Application & Action

1. Regarding your workplace, can you identify the offerings that have value and the specifics of their foundational utilities (form, time, place, ownership)? Explain. (Then stay tuned to a later episode on this topic.)

2. Regarding your local church, how's it doing with embracing the four strategic, key utilities? Be specific: reflect upon each one and note how much your church focuses on them. Next, regarding your local church, how's it doing with operational marketing: the practical application of the Great Commission?

3. If your church does meet important social needs of its neighbors nearby and around the world, how does it ultimately tie in those actions to the four key utilities that Jesus came to fulfill on our behalf as home-bound believers for eternity? Be specific. Give examples.