

Today's topic is "getting in the flow of mass customization." So, what in the world does that mean...and why is it so important?

Well, for starters, here's a quick summary of our recent podcast episode about the galloping phenomenon the past several decades of *supercharged mass customization*. So, let's restate a basic definition of mass customization according to Investopedia: "mass customization is the process of producing affordable market goods and services that are customized to meet a specific customer's needs." Yes, the basic reality is that a number of nations nowadays are in a rather dramatic era of *mass customization*...in fact, we can rightly call that all as being part of a *supercharged* mass customization! And that is *supercharged* because of the impact of an exceedingly effective digital infrastructure that's undergirded by the internet.

And there's no better example of an enterprise leveraging digital enablement than Amazon...it's the current poster child for highly effective supercharged mass customization. When we looked at Amazon in that vein in that previous episode, we detailed eight strategic dimensions of Amazon that reveal it as a top leader in supercharged mass customization. Indeed, all eight of those dimensions work to the radical benefit of Amazon's many millions of consumers. Here's a bulleted list of those *Amazon's eight*...

First, founder Jeff Bezos said Amazon's "goal is to be *earth's most customer-centric company*." To that end, Amazon and its third-party sellers currently offer a reported *300 million products* via its website.

Second, another Amazon philosophy is that its *competitors' high prices open the door to Amazon* customers buying from Amazon instead. And massive sales require a massive inventory.

Third, Amazon collaborates with its customers through each customer's *easy and extensive self-search and self-select functionality*. And putting customers totally in charge begets radical customization!

Fourth is *customized "libraries"*—first, each person's "*browsing history*" is stored...second, their "*save for later*" feature is in checkout...and third, there's a "*buy it again*" list. Yes, *Amazon remembers for you!*

Fifth is Amazon's *multi-tiered delivery options* and then *customized tracking* to every address you desire, past and present...then each address is stored for your purchases in the future!

Sixth, *other people can enter into the mix* of your possibilities...like folks registering for baby or wedding gifts...with your related customized message also sent to their specific, customized delivery addresses.

Seventh, *multiple payment options stored* like your credit cards and gift cards, all the way to using reward points of affiliates like American Express. That's right, *fresh customization each time!*

Eighth, how about "*pure*" *digital delivery* of numerous Amazon prime entertainment features like movies?

So, just what is core to Amazon's stunning marketing success? It's the power of *Amazon's near-infinite mixing and matching* of these eight dimensions *and more*. It has created a near-unlimited kaleidoscope of customization choices...not just once, but each time you visit the website. Here's the key point: *supercharged, evergreen mass customization experiences* foster millions of folks returning to Amazon!

Now, we get to the core focus of this episode: how can you or your enterprise fruitfully get in the flow of supercharged mass customization? And should you?

To take a swing at those questions, we'll take a look at four options for marketing in this era of supercharged mass customization.

First, you can do the obvious: join Amazon's ecosystem with your particular product offering. Many a third-party seller is doing just that with Amazon! So, take a crafty company that creates wonderful thingamajigs that people love to buy and use...but marketing outside the 14-person workshop in Montana is a killer. What to do? Pack up the van and go to craft fairs in the region? Or...try to create a retail supply chain encompassing stores numerous and savvy enough to support production costs? Or...perhaps find a comfortable fit with Amazon handling virtually everything in the "front of the house"...with that

encompassing a huge go-to retail credibility, a seemingly endless mass of potential buyers, great search capability, impressive site navigation, and strong handling of all the invoicing? Many entrepreneurially-minded companies have found fantastic success being a part of Amazon. Just think of those eight powerful dimensions of Amazon working 24/7 on your behalf!

But remember that when you sleep with an elephant, he can roll over in bed and squash you! In a flash, Amazon can sign up key competitors to you without giving you any thought at all. Or a private equity firm who bought some of your competitors and created an extensive well-branded catalog of competitive products is in scrolling distance of your products...and can now leapfrog you in the marketplace. Maybe Amazon *is* great...but are you prepared for a possible precipitous drop in sales? Or should you keep other marketing channels working and thriving? Yes, *supercharged* is great...until the channel gets unplugged or crowded—and you’ve built your entire business around that particular channel of mass customization!

Second, maybe, yeah just maybe, there’s still real mass customization potential *without* a digital mall like Amazon! And that type of opportunity has indeed matured...the tried-and-true of relying on the internet tech layer while working through another marketing channel like...say...*Google!* You know, your enterprise can specifically craft SEO solutions...that’s Search Engine Optimization...’course, that’s when a user puts a couple of words in Google like “tennis racket” and then well-matched racket-sellers kinda magically pop up in all those boxes.

Or it could be that you target your market using specific websites or platforms that draw your desired potential customer? You know, like when you are perusing your favorite classic car websites and the pop-ups keep going wild because your clicks are revealing your interests? That’s mass customization in action!

Third, it may be that you can truly develop your own ecosystem that can compete with Amazon. Walmart was the king of retail supply-chain success in America for decades until Amazon emerged...and Walmart has rightly responded to Amazon with curbside pickup services—just like a whole lot of other product and food retailers in America have. But Walmart is better positioned than most for a truly large-scale response to Amazon’s warehouse-direct-to-consumer delivery. And don’t forget Shopify...a marketing channel akin to Amazon that has diligently weathered some real storms the past several years. Will others emerge too?

Fourth, marketing-wise, you can stay pretty much boutique-y...or local...or wildly differentiated—a specialty operation with the sexiness of *not* being part of the Amazon universe! For some consumers, the soft elitism of exclusivity never goes out of style. Think local farm-to-market eateries...or historically unique shops...and a niche firm run by a confident founder determined to fend off the corporate feel of Amazon! Truth is, there’ve always been winners with the segment of independent-minded consumers!

Of course, there are other ways to market. But digital leveraging in marketing has changed so very much...and that means the genie of mass customization is way out of the bottle—and is being routinely accessed by vast segments of the American population. That’s doubly true for *supercharged* mass customization like Amazon’s. Hey, when I poll college students, every one is using a specialty website or two for unique digital purchases...but typically *all* have used Amazon during the past several weeks!

But let’s go to the best! For 2,000 years, serious Christians have been a vital part of the *supercharged mass customization* that is the Kingdom of God! While Amazon is effective due to its savvy use of *digital* infrastructure, the Kingdom is effective due to its savvy use of *supernatural* infrastructure! It’s just that each Christian is the end-node of communication and ministry of God’s mass customization. But how so?

Well, Jesus’s death on the Cross is mass-customized unto salvation for all to cover every sin except the sin of unbelief! All believers have to do is proclaim that truth! Sadly, few laborers are doing so (Matthew 9:37). But Spirit-led, discerning mass customization is *also* in operation in the dailyness of the pre-evangelization of loving neighbors and the ministering within the body of Christ to all sorts of needs. You see, *God finished the foundation of His supercharged mass-customization...and we are simply the final link of Spirit-led delivery!* Get in the grand flow of God’s supercharged mass customization. *That’s crazy good!*

A&A: Application & Action

1. How about your workplace enterprise...is it in the flow of mass customization necessary for its future success? Discuss.
2. Is your local church in the flow of God's supercharged mass customization of His Kingdom? Or is it more like perpetually sticking a big toe into the bathtub to test the waters? Discuss.
3. How about you personally? Are you in the flow of delivering as part of God's supercharged mass customization of His Kingdom? Discuss.