

## What do Dating, Courtship & Marriage have to do with Zappos?



You know Zappos. The company started by Tony Hsieh which went about “Delivering Happiness” in the form of shoes. They’ve started delivering things other than shoes just to make you happy, too. Like pizza. Zappos is the company I heard of that would pay you US\$2,000 to quit if you didn’t feel like you were a fit after the onboarding program. Recently, I read somewhere that Amazon does that now, too, only Amazon pays you US\$5,000! But then, I’m not suggesting you join just to find out if it’s really true. I came across two LinkedIn posts that talked directly or indirectly about Zappos in succession, and that made me think.

Every company, we have been told by sales and marketing gurus, needs to woo its customers or clients. Make your shop front attractive, use data analytics to find out what different segments of the population want and send the appropriate messages to them. Make your online and other collateral more appealing visually, auditorily and perhaps even kinaesthetically if possible. Choose your words carefully. Use words which will appeal to the subconscious and cause you to become more appealing. I don’t know, maybe even infuse some sort of pheromone in print collateral. I stretch things a little, of course, but you know what I mean.

**Dating** is a phenomenon of the times we live in. It is the result of a culture oriented to hedonism, self-seeking pleasure. The main theme in dating is to have fun. Explore, get to know other people better, have fun, no entanglements, no commitment. If both of you think it works, then, it works. If not, let’s part, and no hard feelings. Well, of course there are no hard feelings. Hard to have any feelings left when “Every time you go away, you take a piece of me with you...”, isn’t it? Indulging in dating leaves a hollow feeling of emptiness. It can cause one to wonder “Would it have been better with Harry?” even after Sally is married, and is perhaps going through a rough patch in her marriage.



Perhaps the dating culture has been so pervasive that it has crept into sales and marketing language too. People are promised experiences “out of this world”, that they’ll never be more feminine or masculine, that they’ll look like the accomplished persons they really are with that pen, *ad advertorium*<sup>1</sup>. All with one objective. To have fun. To get the girl. Or get the guy.

I’m not saying that we pay scant attention to the attractiveness of our messages, our collateral, our brands. What I am saying is that perhaps we need to ask ourselves why we want them to be attractive.

**Courtship** is different from dating in that it is a precursor to marriage. While fun can certainly be part of it, fun is not the main thing, preparation is. Preparation to become as complementary and fulfilling a life partner as one can be to the other. Preparation

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, I made that up. You know what I mean.

in getting to know the other person as much as possible in order to be in as good a position as possible to apply the Platinum Rule when marriage does happen. It is having a good conscience to end the courtship if either party feels that this would not be the way they'd want to go, and part as friends before any serious commitment occurs.

Have you attempted to find out as much as possible about what your customer really needs before pushing the sale? Do you care enough for them to recommend a solution that might not be yours if it really boils down to that? I was once selling a set of products to a family friend. We sat down together and went through their needs. At the end of it, I told them not to buy because what the company was offering was not a good match for what they needed at the time. They ended up making some other arrangement that was more in line with what they needed.



**Marriage** is a commitment to seek the best for your life partner for as long as you both shall live. The relationship endures even when, and perhaps especially when, both of you are changing, growing as persons and growing as individuals. That lame excuse for divorce, “He’s not the same man I married”, simply implies that you have not bothered to grow up with him. If the focus of marriage partners is not on self but on

their partner, divorce rates would plummet. Unfortunately, with the irresponsible culture of dating now in the very lifeblood of societies, good marriages are becoming harder and harder to come by. It is refreshing to see an elderly couple still holding hands, having been married for maybe 40 or 50 years.

Does that sound like a client relationship your business would like to have? Of course, not everything should be duplicated. I don’t advocate harems, but businesses definitely need more than one customer, no matter how major the account. But I hope you get my drift. Clients who instantly think of you when they need goods and services that are within your business sphere. “Get me that Social Media Guru”, or “Get me that automotive consultant”, or perhaps “Get me that packaging solutions expert” simply because you have become so much a part of their lives where your specialties are concerned. Your business might even be diversifying or growing another arm because you meet more and more of their needs.

Does Zappos do that? I don’t know, I’ve never ordered shoes online. Nor have I asked them to deliver pizza. But from all that I have read and heard, I think they probably do. What about you?