

From the Authors of the *New York Times* Bestseller *Call to Action*

# Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?



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**Persuading**

**Customers**

**When They**

**Ignore**

**Marketing**

**BRYAN & JEFFREY EISENBERG**

with Lisa T. Davis

Foreword by Murray Gaylord, VP of Brand Marketing, Yahoo!

## Praise for *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?*

“In 1999, the Wachowski brothers revolutionized moviemaking with stunning new angles and special effects revealed in *The Matrix*. Now the ‘Eisenbrothers’ have done the same for business in *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* Stunning new angles! Techniques that will be copied for decades. *Cat* is sure to be remembered as the genesis of an important new direction in marketing.”

—Roy H. Williams, *New York Times* Best-Selling Author,  
*The Wizard of Ads Trilogy*

“The Web is a democratizing force as the world’s largest global brain. It educates everyone on the pros and cons of every product, service, and even person. An educated person doesn’t react well to the traditional ‘art of manipulation’ that most marketers attempt to employ in their campaigns. As a matter of fact, it makes them angry and defensive—like a cat backed into a corner. No one understands this new world of marketing better than the Eisenbergs. *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* is the marketing manifesto of our generation. Read it, weep, and then go do something about it.”

—Brett Hurt, Founder and CEO of Bazaarvoice,  
Founder of Coremetrics, and Shop.org Board Director

“It is easy to buy traffic but persuading that traffic to buy, subscribe, or otherwise take a profitable action is essential. Persuasion Architecture™ provides a framework for companies to better understand and reach customers with more relevant messages that increase the probability of acquiring and serving customers. Traffic cost inflation is a real problem, and this book not only tells you how to allow customers to buy the way they want to buy but makes the entire process accountable. I’ll be encouraging the companies I invest in to read it.”

—Tod Francis, Managing Partner, Shasta Ventures

“Who’s buying? How are they buying? And why do they buy from you? Consumers have been turning away from old media channels and even most methods of advertising to embrace new media. The Eisenbergs have developed a proven methodology for selling in this new environment where the old marketing rules no longer apply. This book will change how you think about marketing. It may even change how you think.”

—Rebecca Lieb, Executive Editor, The ClickZ Network

“This book lays out a powerful and fresh way of thinking about personas, persuasion, and marketing in today’s increasingly fragmented media environment. If you want a practical guidebook for successfully marketing to today’s consumer, then this is a must-read.”

—Mark Kingdon, CEO, Organic, Inc.

“*Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* systematically covers every aspect of critical thinking about customers and prospects a marketer could need in today’s complex business world. This is a book you’ll reach for every time you begin your strategic planning.”

—Susan Bratton, CEO, Cendara, Inc., and Executive Chair  
ad:tech Conferences

“With *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?*, the Eisenbergs have shown us the power of persuasion for marketing. They back up their positions with compelling case studies and great firsthand experience that is priceless. This is a must-read for all marketing professionals and is on my desk.”

—Rand Schulman, Chief Active Marketing Officer, WebSideStory

“The Brothers Eisenberg usher us out of the 20th-century age of media and into the 21st-century age of optimization. They show us step-by-step how to leave behind the diminished returns and false expectations of quantity, and how to replace them instead with the more universal appeal and profitability of quality.”

—Jeff Einstein, Media Pioneer and Social Critic

“The Eisenberg brothers have done it again! Hot on the heels of their best-selling *Call to Action*, *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* is a guide to the use of personas and Persuasion Architecture™ that will force readers to reconsider all of their marketing efforts. Chock full of “big picture” thinking and great strategic advice, the chapters “Choosing Personas” and “Bringing Personas to Life” are must-reads for anyone serious about marketing. Jeffrey and Bryan force us to rehumanize our audience in a way that drives measurement and forces accountability.”

—Eric Peterson, Author, *Web Analytics Demystified*  
and *Web Site Measurement Hacks*

“*Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* is a tremendous read. It has fresh ideas and practical solutions for persuading customers to act. I highly recommend this book.”

—Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D., *New York Times* Best-Selling Author  
and Founder of BNI

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Persuading  
Customers When  
They Ignore  
Marketing

BRYAN EISENBERG  
JEFFREY EISENBERG  
with Lisa T. Davis



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We dedicate this book to the memory of our father,  
Santiago Eisenberg  
1936–2005

He lived with wisdom, strength,  
wealth and honor.  
—Pirkei Avot 4:1.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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It was the worst of times, and so the best of times passed unacknowledged. In the blink of an eye since I drafted the acknowledgments for *Call to Action* and this moment, Bryan and I have had so much to be grateful for and so many people to thank that we may never get the chance to make it up. With the passing of our father, uncle, and grandmother, we never had the chance or the urge to celebrate our huge success with *Call to Action*.

In the foreword to *Call to Action*, I mused it wasn't exactly the book we intended to write. *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* is. Instead of being a book about what we've thought and where we've been, it's a book about what we're thinking and where we're going.

So many people helped make this book happen that naming them all is impossible. Nevertheless, there are those people whose contribution was so great that it would be a sin to leave them unacknowledged.

We thank our friends, Roy and Pennie Williams, for believing in us when there was no good reason to.

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We have been privileged to work with a number of people, expansive of spirit and curious of mind, who were eager to offer their marketing efforts as testing grounds for our ideas. In turn, we have learned much from them. In particular, we'd like to thank our staff, our readers, colleagues, clients, and many others who offered us advice and moral support.

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Bryan has Stacey and I have Cindy who love us and put up with us. How can we be more blessed than that? It is possible—Hannah and Sammy are blessings beyond words. We love them dearly.

Without Lisa Davis, one of those family members you get to choose, none of our books would have been written. Her love, loyalty, and hard work are eclipsed only by her talent for extracting what Bryan and I have trapped in our heads. I know Lisa would want to thank Zachary, her brilliant and warm son, for all his patience while this book consumed time that rightfully belonged to him.

And finally, dear reader, we humbly thank you for sharing your all-too-precious time with us. Our greatest wish is that you find in this book something you can use and that you will share it with someone.

Jeffrey Eisenberg  
New York City  
February 16, 2006

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Look around. It seems you can't pick up a newspaper or business magazine today without seeing headlines such as:

- “Is Advertising Dead?”
- “The Death of Mass Media”
- “GM Turns Cool to Mass Marketing Advertising”
- “P&G Launches Major Change in Media Spending”

Not since the emergence of television fifty years ago have we seen such a metamorphosis in consumer behavior.

We are witnessing a change in the way media is consumed and the way the entire consumer shopping experience has changed. What's driving this? To paraphrase the former Clinton administration, “It's the Internet, stupid!”

We learned from the dot-com implosion in 2001 that the Internet is neither the “Holy Grail” nor a panacea for marketers. Television, radio, newspapers, and other media are far from being dead. Each remains an important tool in the advertiser's toolkit. Yet, as Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg explain in this book, the Internet is the glue that binds customers' experiences in our emerging experience economy.

For marketers, the challenges—and the opportunities—are huge. Advertisers know the old model is broken, and that the old rules do not apply. As broadband has proliferated, the promise of interactivity and creativity on the Web has come to fruition. Consumers are finally in control, and they have become the programmers, consuming media when they want, where they want, and how they want. Video-on-demand, Podcast, TiVo, Yahoo!Go, Google Video, blogs, and more.

We also have a generation of young adults who are now in their twenties and early thirties, who have grown up with interactive technology and are not set in their media-usage habits. With the advent of popular sites like MySpace, Flickr, Facebook, and sixdegrees.com, this group is redefining the roles of traditional media and demand media on *its* terms.

Search marketing is becoming an extremely powerful new way to engage customers, and it makes the Web experience more important than ever. Pay-per-click, a model that did not exist at the end of the last decade, is the fastest growing segment of all advertising.

Clearly we are moving through a time of irrevocable change that has profound implications for businesses large and small. A.G. Lafley, Chairman and CEO of Procter & Gamble, recently said, “We need to reinvent the way we market to consumers. We need a new model. It does not exist.”

Until now.

In *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg dig deeply into the marketing changes we are seeing. They integrate a variety of perspectives and tie together lots of dangling threads, all of which marketers are now called upon to weave into their efforts.

The Eisenbergs speak to the concerns of all marketers who want to navigate intelligently through this emerging media landscape and make a difference on behalf of their companies, within and across channels. They identify why we need to rethink the interconnectedness of marketing and sales, and they offer a smart—and simple—model for looking at customer behavior. Persuasion Architecture is a great framework for becoming an effective marketer in this new world.

Given the changes we are seeing, marketing professionals as well as students of marketing are clearly in need of a playbook to thrive in this new environment. *Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* is that playbook.

This is an important book. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I am sure you will as well.

Murray Gaylord  
Vice President, Brand Marketing  
Yahoo! Inc.  
January 23, 2006

# Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?

**T**his question is really our way of asking, “Are you waiting for your customers to respond the way they used to?”

Many marketers are, and that’s a problem.

Cats don’t bark—and consumers today don’t “salivate on command” like they seemed to a couple of decades ago. Consumers today behave more like cats than Pavlov’s pooch. Times have changed—and so must we.

Nobody could have foreseen the challenges today’s marketers would face. Twenty years ago, getting through to “over-messaged” customers was like filling a thimble with a fire hose. Imagine what we would have thought then of the multi-tasking, instant-messaging, e-mailing, cell phoning, emoticoning ;-), always on, Web-searching, blogging, TiVo-watching, eBaying customers we now need to reach.

Then, we would have been horrified. Today we’re scrambling just to get the job done.

Acquire new customers, deepen relationships with existing customers, reach decision-makers, measure marketing results, generate more leads,

improve lead quality, reconcile selling channels, increase product awareness, close more business, develop the brand—these are our goals as marketers. We understand this language. But the equation has become so complex that we often lack a framework to describe how one marketing solution affects the others.

Technology has changed; emerging media are subdividing the masses into specialized audiences. But the biggest challenge we face is the customer's ability to assert control over the entire process.

While emerging media and technology undermine the effectiveness of traditional mass-marketing models, they also create unprecedented opportunity for us to redefine and profit from how we communicate with customers.

### **WIIFM: “What’s in it for me?”**

This book isn't filled with business-school theory. In these pages, we explain the principles and framework behind the things we do every day. We give you a framework for modeling interactivity across all your touch points and for tying all the communications your company creates into a coherent persuasive system.

In the chapters ahead, we tell a marketing story that has a happy ending. It's not a small story with a simple plot; as marketers, we are not facing a small problem. Through Chapter Thirteen, we lay the groundwork, examining the interconnected issues in today's marketing landscape. The balance of the narrative weaves together the elements of our solution.

Along the way, we answer several questions:

- How and why has marketing permanently changed? (Chapters One–Six)
- Why do customers respond differently than they used to? (Chapters Seven–Thirteen)
- How can you anticipate what customers require? (Chapters Fourteen–Twenty-Two)
- How does Persuasion Architecture<sup>1</sup> bridge the new marketer/customer gap? (Chapters Twenty-Three–Twenty-Eight)

- How can you start implementing Persuasion Architecture in your business? (Chapter Twenty-Nine)

We tell this story primarily from a marketing perspective, for marketers and for business owners who are involved in marketing and sales as well as for general students of business and followers of media developments. Our story provides a necessary framework for preparing both marketers and sales staff to manage and respond to the demands emerging media place on them.

### **Success by multiples!**

*Waiting for Your Cat to Bark?* provides a proven context for rethinking and retooling your customers in a rewired world. We've worked with and helped some of the best and brightest marketers who face the same challenges you face. Persuasion Architecture is enormously practical. It's simple. But it isn't easy. We guarantee, however, that if you start applying these principles to your business, you will get better results—not just by percentages but by multiples.

# Dogs, Cats, and Marketing

It must have been one of those “light bulb moments.” A Russian scientist ambles through his laboratory one day, thoughts of digestive secretions on his mind. Idly he watches a lab-coated assistant lean down to pet one of the dogs.

The dog starts drooling, and this routine sight stops the scientist in his tracks. Assistant pets dog, dog salivates (the involuntary, slobbery confirmation the dog is thinking about food). Yet there is no food in sight. Aha! The assistant always wears his lab coat when he feeds the dog. The dog sees the lab coat and thinks food is on the way.

Most of us, faced with a drooling dog, would simply shake our heads and reach for the nearest paper towel. Not Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, who worked with dogs to help him understand the human digestive system.

To get a handle on the relationship between stimulus and response, Pavlov replaced the lab coat with a sound and began an investigation into the world of conditional reflexes. The rest is history. Pavlov won a Nobel Prize in 1904 for his medical inquiries into the physiology of digestion,

but he is best remembered as the man who got dogs to salivate to the sound of a bell.<sup>1</sup>

So what does dog drool have to do with marketing?

Since the time of Pavlov, marketers have been “bell ringers”, and customers have played the role of the drooling dog. Bells ring everywhere—there are even ads in urinals—but today fewer customers are panting and whining for a bite. Even worse for marketers, many customers simply find all that bell ringing annoying.

What changed? The bell? The dogs? Why aren’t customers responding? And what can marketers do about that?

### **Cooking up a conditioned response**

A conditioned response is a simple form of branding, and you can’t create a conditioned response in the blink of an eye. That’s why marketers insist on creating the most salient ads possible, then broadcasting those to as many people as possible as frequently as possible.

Here is the recipe for “Customers a la Pavlov”:

1. Find your dog and keep him a bit hungry. This takes time.
2. Ring your bell, and offer the dog meat.<sup>2</sup> Dogs love meat; meat is salient. If you try to associate bell ringing with sawdust, the dog will simply ignore you. No self-respecting dog drools for sawdust!
3. Repeat step #2 over and over and over again. When “bell” becomes synonymous with “food” in the canine’s gray matter, you can ring the bell, withhold the food, and the dog still salivates.
4. Conditioning can wear off. To keep your dog conditioned, repeat this process frequently.

Modern psychology considers Pavlov’s behaviorist experiment an example of “classic conditioning,” the goal of which is to instill an association between stimuli (usually external ones like the bell) so that encountering one will bring the other to mind.<sup>3</sup>

## Far-reaching implications

In 1909, the implications of Pavlov's results came to the attention of American behaviorist John Broadus Watson, then on the faculty at Johns Hopkins University. In 1930, Watson wrote:

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in, and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggarman and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors. I am going beyond my facts, and I admit it, but so have the advocates of the contrary, and they have been doing it for many thousands of years.<sup>4</sup>

Watson gained notoriety through his “Little Albert” experiments, in which he conditioned a fear response in an eleven-month-old boy, using a white rat and a loud sound.<sup>5</sup> Forced to leave academia when he was caught in a sex scandal involving the student who assisted him in this research, Watson turned his attention to advertising and went to work for J. Walter Thompson (now JWT):

. . . where, using techniques from his behavioral psychology, he showed that people's preferences between rival products were not based on their sensory qualities but on their associations. He went on to develop the selling of products like Maxwell House Coffee, Pond's Cold Cream, Johnson's Baby Powder and Odorono (one of the first deodorants). By 1924 he was one of the four vice-presidents of this very successful agency.<sup>6</sup>

“So here we have J.B. Watson,” wrote Chris Locke in *Chief Blogging Officer*, “father of American behaviorism, packing up all he knows about eliciting the Pavlovian slobber reaction, and wholesaling it to Madison Avenue.”<sup>7</sup>

Through men like Pavlov and Watson, the seeds for over half a century's

worth of marketing practice were planted, then nourished by the “science” of behaviorism and its successful application in the spheres of marketing.

### “Tom” foolery

Pavlov used dogs because their digestive systems are similar to those of humans. As all his equipment was set up to accommodate dogs, Pavlov carried out his conditional reflex experiments on dogs.<sup>8</sup>

We suspect Pavlov would have had a harder time—and wonder what it might have meant to the development of behaviorist marketing practice—had he been working with cats. You can classically condition a response in many creatures, but the ease depends in large part on the nature of your subject and the reinforcement you use.

One basic difference between cats and dogs is motivation.<sup>9</sup> Centuries of cat and dog humor captures the stereotypes: A dog wants to please you; a cat couldn’t care less. Dogs are devoted and loving and selfless. Cats are aloof, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Dogs are social and act in ways that maintain and support the social order. Cats are solitary and act in ways that benefit themselves.

### Cat Haiku

The food in my bowl  
Is old, and more to the point  
Contains no tuna.

Most problems can be  
Ignored. The more difficult  
Ones can be slept through.

Am I in your way?  
You seem to have it backwards:  
This pillow’s taken.<sup>10</sup>

Yes, a cat may come running when she hears you going for the can opener, and with enough effort you can teach her to roll over on com-

mand some percentage of the time. Ultimately, though, her engagement with you lasts only as long as she wants it to last. A cat is not out to please you; she's in it for herself.

She is not, and never will be, a dog.

### **Consumer branding: calling all cats**

Early marketers, supported by Pavlov's research and studies with human subjects, attempted to "prove" that when businesses rang the right bell the right number of times, they could command desire and behavior in their audience through branding alone. Early successes helped them feel advertising gave them control over their audiences.

When the available advertising media choices were limited and communities were more localized, people's exposure to alternative experiences was restricted. It seemed possible that this theoretical control, or behavior-centeredness, of marketing was the key. Customers did, indeed, appear to salivate to marketing's bells and responded by buying the most heavily marketed goods and services.

Few anticipated the full effect of blossoming media options on the behaviorist marketing models. Even as late as the mid-1980s, people looked upon burgeoning media—broadcast and cable television and radio—as growing vehicles for delivering messages to even larger audiences who were predisposed to "devour information and constantly clamor for more."<sup>11</sup> Expanding media markets seemed to offer brilliant opportunities to ring better bells for increasingly more dogs.

Even a casual reading of a newspaper's business section, with headlines that herald the death of mass-marketing and advertising, reveals the opportunities haven't played out the way we'd hoped.

To everyone's disappointment, emerging media are shattering behaviorist marketing tenets. Businesses are not in control of the strings; they can command neither desire nor response. Customers now have access to an unprecedented amount of information and can communicate any time and place they please. As media fragments, so does the "mass" in mass-marketing.

The window that emerging media has opened for us reveals a personal-experience economy, in which customers are in control. Brand is defined

in customers' minds by their personal experiences with a particular product or service. Attentive only to the information that matters to them, customers are behaving a lot more like cats than like Pavlov's dogs.

Interactivity has changed the nature of marketing. Marketers must now reach beyond their traditional roles of raising awareness and driving traffic and extend themselves into the more intimate world of sales and customer relations. They are now responsible for creating powerful "persuasive systems" that anticipate and model customer needs, personalize information and processes to meet those needs, and then measure the return on investment for every discrete process in that system.

Technology may evolve at a pace that leaves us breathless, but the essential qualities of human behavior aren't nearly that transitory. The road may have changed, but those traveling on the road haven't.

We are not, and have never been, the metaphoric equivalent of Pavlov's dogs.

Actually, when it comes to consumer behavior, we've always been like cats. All it took was a little media fragmentation and a critical mass of information for management to notice. Understanding the "What's in it for me?" focus in our customers' behavior patterns is central to success.

We don't suggest you find better ways to ring better bells. Instead, we present you with the context for celebrating meows.