



AN INTERVIEW WITH DON SCHULTZ

Don Schultz was one of three keynote speakers at the 2006 Stamats SIM Conference in Chicago. This interview, conducted by Dr. Robert A. Sevier, Stamats senior vice president, strategy, on the role and function of integrated marketing communication in higher education took place shortly before the conference.

Don Schultz Biography

Don Schultz is presently professor emeritus-in-service of integrated marketing communication at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University. He is also the president of the consulting firm Agora, Inc.

Additionally, Schultz is a visiting professor at Cranfield School of Management, Bedfordshire, UK; adjunct professor at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia; and visiting professor at Tsinghua University, Beijing, China.

Schultz has consulted, lectured, and held seminars on integrated marketing communication, marketing, advertising, sales promotion, brands and branding, and communication management in Europe, South America, Asia, the Middle East, Australia, and North America.

His articles have appeared in numerous professional trade publications and academic journals including Advertising Age, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Advertising,

Sevier: Back in 2004, the American Marketing Association changed the definition of marketing.¹ Marketing is now viewed as an organizational function and not the responsibility of an individual or department. How does this new definition correlate with how colleges typically approach marketing?

Schultz: The previous definition of marketing was developed in 1985 and was almost entirely institutionally focused. It revolved around the four Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. That definition really didn't say much about the market—and certainly very little about customers. The new definition is actually quite radical because, for the first time, it talks about customers, it talks about relationships, and it talks about value. This is the opposite side of the coin from the four Ps. The four Ps are all internally oriented. The new definition of marketing is externally oriented.

Sevier: Colleges and universities tend to assign the responsibility for marketing to an individual or a department. In doing so, they believe they have “handled” the marketing issue. This new definition, however, stresses that marketing is an organizational function, and it implies that the entire campus is involved in its execution.

Schultz: When I work with organizations, I tell them that marketing is not something an individual, a group, or a department unit does. Marketing is what an organization does. Colleges like to assign external groups of people to specific internal offices and departments. Fundraisers deal with donors. Alumni affairs deals with alumni. But it is never that simple. When students or donors or parents reach out to a college, they often don't know who they are supposed to be talking to. They just want to connect; they just want a response and they want it quickly.

If you have an integrated marketing approach, then everyone will know they have a responsibility to step up and help regardless of whether or not it is formally part of their job.

Sevier: Everyone in higher education is working at full capacity. Dollars are tight. Why should they take the time and invest the resources in an integrated marketing communication strategy? What makes it worth the effort?

Schultz: I think there are two reasons. Number one, integrated marketing is much more effective than the current approach to marketing. And number two, it is much more efficient.

(bio is continued on the next page)

¹The 2004 definition of marketing reads: “An organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its shareholders.” For higher education, we often translate “shareholders” into “stakeholders.”

(continued from previous page)

and Marketing News. Professor Schultz was the founding editor of Journal of Direct Marketing. He has served as associate editor of Journal of Marketing Communication and is on the editorial review board for a number of trade and scholarly publications.

He is author/co-author of 13 books, including Strategic Advertising Campaigns (now in its fifth edition), Essentials of Advertising Strategy (now in its third edition), and Measuring Brand Communication ROI. Schultz's recent books include Communicating Globally (2000) and Raising the Corporate Umbrella (2001). He and his wife Heidi have completed an update on the seminal text on IMC, IMC: Next Generation, which was published in fall 2003. They also have co-authored Brand Babble: Sense and Nonsense about Brands and Branding, which also was published in fall 2003.

The assumption by many is that integrated marketing will cost a lot of money and take a lot of time. That's usually not the case. In fact, the integrated marketing process is designed to squeeze out waste.

Sevier: So you would position integrated marketing communication, in part, as stewardship?

Schultz: Yes, it essentially is a stewardship approach. Historically, higher education has focused almost entirely on efficiency. We often ask, "How efficient is the medium?" The real question—from an integrated marketing perspective—is, "How effective is the medium?"

Sevier: It's the difference between output and outcomes.

Schultz: Right. And the difference between the two is very relevant to colleges and universities because of finite resources. The question must always be: "How can we use these resources most effectively?" At the end of the year, we like to count things. "We did seven of this and mailed 10,000 of that." But we don't often spend much time calculating our return.

Sevier: What's the most important thing that presidents and senior teams need to understand about integrated marketing?

Schultz: For an integrated marketing effort to be successful, the leader needs to really take charge.² It can't be delegated. And it certainly can't be driven from below. Without this support, the initiative will disintegrate. It must be a university-wide commitment, and it must be clear that the leader and senior

team are on board and actively support this initiative. At larger schools, this includes the deans. You simply cannot have deans going in separate directions. They need to be reined in. Finally, you need to push this commitment down inside the organization. This means that you need to work inside before you can start doing anything outside.

Let me give you an example. We did a project for a school of engineering and applied sciences. They were trying to decide whether or not they liked their logo. We were brought in by the dean to talk about brand marketing. At the first meeting, two or three faculty said they didn't want a brand, didn't need a slogan, and didn't need a jingle. "We've already got our colors," they said, "so all the branding stuff is already done." The dean just sat there and didn't say a word.

To build support, the leadership must spend considerable time explaining the issues that need to be addressed and how the new marketing effort will help address those issues. Then the leaders have to explain how marketing works and outline the role different people will have. You just can't do it in one announcement.

Sevier: If you had to place the emphasis of IMC on either the integration side or the marketing communication side, which one would you choose?

Schultz: You can't separate them. It's one concept: integrated marketing communication. You integrate for a purpose, and that purpose is to more effectively communicate to your most important audiences.

²See final sidebar on president's role in marketing.

Sevier: Can you think of any schools that have done an exemplary job in this area?

Schultz: Well, I can think of one, but you probably don't want to hear about it. The one I think does the best job is the University of Phoenix. They've really got their act together, and they do a terrific job. But most people in the academic community tend to dismiss Phoenix as too commercial. Of course, they are commercial. They know who their market is, they know what they have to offer, they know how to communicate, and they know how to deliver a great educational experience.

Sevier: So it's not just communication? You need to make sure you are able to deliver what you promise.

Schultz: Absolutely.

Sevier: Would you say that there is typically a fairly high correlation between a college's strategic plan and its marketing communication plan?

Schultz: There should be, but I really don't see it very often.

Sevier: Why not?

Schultz: One of the things you have to do is align what you say you will do with what you do. You can't say we have a friendly campus and then shove people off the sidewalk. I think it's a real issue in terms of backing up what you really are promising to your stakeholders. It makes no sense to promise something in your brand that you are not willing or able to deliver.

Sevier: More and more schools are looking at the idea of brand marketing. From your perspective, what's the big challenge when it comes to building a brand?

Schultz: Part of the issue is whether you will manage the brand or let the brand be managed for you. I think that means you need a proactive approach towards branding. You really need to sit down and work through who you are, what people expect from you, and then communicate that. One of the things that's challenging about brand marketing is that you will often discover that you cannot satisfy and attract every person out there. This is difficult for organizations to comprehend.

Sevier: Even though they want to.

Schultz: Exactly. They believe anyone who makes fog on a mirror is a prospect, and it just doesn't work that way. You need to define certain things you do well; you have to have a certain ability, a certain culture. You also need to understand that this culture will (likely) drive some people away, but that's OK. You'll drive them away long-term anyway.

Sevier: Please finish this sentence for me: Don't bother trying to undertake integrated marketing communication if...

Schultz: ...[if] you have a short-term view or expect immediate results. Or if you can't get the support of the internal group.

Sevier: And the internal group means?

Schultz: The internal group means everyone from the president all the way down to the staff.

Sevier: OK. So you need a critical mass of people who are for the idea.

Schultz: Exactly. And that's why I say it's a long-term commitment, because this is not something that you go in, plug in, and a semester later you see grandiose results. It's essentially a long-term way of thinking about the institution.

Sevier: What's the role of the board in all this?

Schultz: A lot of board members are from publicly-held companies, and they're used to 90-day reports. I think you have to help board members understand that there aren't any 90-day reports in marketing. It just doesn't happen that fast. There needs to be a long-term commitment.

Sevier: I often draw the parallel between the implementation of an effective marketing strategy and the new facilities plan. It could take a generation.

Schultz: Right, absolutely.

Sevier: What do you do with the board member who insists that what the college really needs is more advertising?

Schultz: We have a board of visitors and any time I hear those kinds of suggestions, I say we would be happy to do this. Will you give us the money? And suddenly it isn't nearly as important.

Sevier: What's the part of the marketing process that colleges and other organizations seem to have the most trouble with?

Schultz: Silos.

Sevier: Do you think we'll ever get rid of silos?

Schultz: No, we'll never be able to do that. There will always be departments, there will always be schools, and there will always be units. One of the things you have to think about is how to start building horizontal relationships. We talk about interdisciplinary curriculum, but we never talk about interdisciplinary marketing and communication. I think the real question is, "How do I build systems and processes that go across schools, units, and turf; how do I build systems that stay focused on the stakeholders and not focused on individual units with their own individual goals?"

Sevier: It seems that one way colleges deal with the turf issue is to get a representative from every group on the marketing committee.

Schultz: Yes, that's true. That tends to be the way.

Sevier: Do you think this is an effective approach?

Schultz: No, because what they get is a group of people who sit in a room and argue for three hours about goals and definitions, and everybody walks out feeling like nothing was accomplished.

You need to have a process that everyone understands and respects. People need to agree to the group's mission and goals before they are appointed to the committee. If they can't agree to the goals, then they should not be on the committee. People need to know that they will be heard, but that decisions will be made.

Sevier: We often suggest that clients write a mission statement for the marketing committee that outlines the group's broad purpose. If you don't, invariably half the people on the team try to talk the other half out of doing anything.

Schultz: There's that, or they're trying to get resources for their own use.

Sevier: Right, absolutely. It's a resource grab.

Schultz: Yeah, "Oh, you guys have that? We need one of those, too." That's what typically happens.

Sevier: One of the marketing ideas we see floating around lately is differentiation.³

Schultz: Differentiation is key. At first glance, differentiation in higher education seems hard because so many colleges and universities look and sound the same. But think about it. If I am a competitor, I can't copy your culture. I can't copy your brand. I can't copy your faculty. I can't copy your location. I can't copy your alumni. There are actually all kinds of ways to differentiate. You need to ask this question: What makes us truly different from all the other folks out there who have essentially the same curriculum?

Let me give you an example. One thing that we found about the engineering school at Northwestern was that students can, and often do, double major. They can get a major in engineering and one in communication. That's unique.

Sevier: Would you say that if you dig deep enough, it's possible for most schools to differentiate?

Schultz: It's there. But the problem is it takes hard thinking and digging. You need to be clear about who you are. And you need to be clear about who your competitors really are.

Sevier: And what about the political side of that whole conversation?

Schultz: [chuckle] Well, at some point you hope the faculty will come around, but it can take quite some time.

Sevier: But somebody, the leader, must have a vision and be willing to expend the necessary political capital?

Schultz: Exactly.

Sevier: As part of the visioning process most institutions use the familiar SWOT. They begin with strengths and weaknesses. I like to begin with the opportunities and threats. This forces people to look outside, even when they would prefer to focus on the inside.

Schultz: Yes. This forces you to look outside of the walls of the university. Universities tend to be very internally focused, and this is almost always a problem.

³For an expanded discussion on differentiation, look at White Paper #15, which features an in-depth interview with Jack Trout, author of *Differentiate or Die*.

Sevier: Let me return to something you brought up earlier. You mentioned turf issues and the idea of silos. What do you do with administrators and faculty and staff who don't want to participate?

Schultz: If they don't want to play, I think you need to isolate them. You can't let them delay the process. We just had this conversation yesterday in the faculty. What do you do with tenured professors who haven't done anything for the last 15 years? If you treat everyone the same—whether they follow the plan or not—you won't get anywhere. You need to have the courage to occasionally use a stick.

Sevier: It sounds like a leadership issue.

Schultz: It often comes down to leadership. I hate to say it, but once you get off the athletic field, leadership is not something that is particularly valued in higher education.

Sevier: I'm sorry...did you say "athletic field"?

Schultz: Yes. Except on the athletic field, leadership is not something we particularly value; it is not one of (our) strengths.

Sevier: Earlier you intimated that one of the core functions of the president must be to build the senior team.

Schultz: Yes, absolutely.

Sevier: And he or she has to demonstrate his/her support for that team publicly, visibly, and often.

Schultz: And has to have a vision.

Sevier: It seems that many visions in higher education are all about doing more things for more people. Is doing more the answer?

Schultz: No, it's not. It's not about doing more stuff, it is about doing the right stuff. It is about focus. When Arnold Weber came to Northwestern, he had a reputation of being mean. But he wasn't; he was focused. So I think it is a question about the president and the provost understanding what the requirements of the university and its students are—and building on that and getting support from the board going forward, and making tough decisions.

To a great extent I liken the university to a business. Every successful business has a focus and works hard to keep that focus.

College leaders need to ask themselves, "Who are our 10 stakeholders and what are their critical issues? Do we understand them, and do we know what they're looking for?" By and large, I don't think universities really know what students are looking for and what alumni are looking for. But they need to. If you want to be successful, you need to completely understand what your customers want and what you are able to do.

Sevier: Let me ask you a question that has been nagging me: Is integrated marketing communication singular or plural?

Schultz: I guess, to me, it's singular, because I think once you integrate it, it becomes whole. It's holistic. And if it's holistic, it's one.

Sevier: Any closing thoughts?

Schultz: When I first started thinking integrated marketing, it was fairly simple because it had a limited number of media and most of the communication to schools and techniques were pretty well known and understood. But then things began to change.

Sevier: How so?

Schultz: Today's students and others have so many ways of getting information. It is no longer the case of the university simply deciding what it wants its message to be and then going out and telling people.

The first thing people do when they want to know something is they ask someone else; maybe someone who has had experience with that thing. They ask a friend, a neighbor, or a relative, "What do you know about this?" And the second thing they do is go to the Internet. And then there's college guides. The list goes on, and it's getting longer. They're not coming and getting the brochures and the folders from us anymore.

Anyone under the age of about 25 processes information in a polychromic manner. They will be online, watching TV, flipping through a magazine, talking on the cell phone, and telling their parents they're studying—and they are. But they have the ability to process things in parallel and simultaneously. I think we need to recognize that we have a radically different person out there than in the past.

Sevier: We're raising a generation of air traffic controllers.

Schultz: Pretty much.

Let me tell you one last story and let you go. We bought a new building about three years ago, and we put in an Internet connection at every desk or at every seat. So when students come in with laptops, they plug into the Internet and you don't know what they're doing. They're supposed to be taking notes, but they look at anything.

But the most interesting thing happens when a professor is lecturing and says, "My research says that 82 percent of things are this way," and somebody will hold up their hand and say, "The latest information from Google says it's 87 percent." So one of the things that happens is this instantaneous access to information, and it is something that universities simply don't understand and faculty don't always appreciate.

Sevier: To their own peril.

Schultz: Exactly.

Sevier: I appreciate your taking the time this morning.

Schultz: You're welcome.



Promises kept.

615 Fifth Street SE P.O. Box 1888
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-1888
319.364.6167 • toll free: 800.553.8878
fax: 319.365.5421
www.stamats.com

President's Role in Integrated Marketing

On most campuses, the president is the chief marketing officer. As such, the signals he/she sends—to senior staff, middle managers, and faculty—will telegraph whether or not marketing is a legitimate institutional commitment and worthy of their time and commitment. As CMO, the president must:

- Have a **vision** for how marketing can help the institution. Without this personal vision, there will never be personal commitment.
- Commit his or her **power and prestige** to the marketing efforts.
- Commit institutional **time, talent, and treasure**.
- Make **tough decisions** in a timely fashion.
- Provide **authority** to the chief marketing officer, department, and/or team.
- Convey that marketing is an **institution-wide commitment** and responsibility.
- Clear away **organizational and policy roadblocks**.
- Insist on **shared goals and resources** among senior administrators/staffs.
- **Go toe-to-toe** with recalcitrant administrators, administrators who adopt a wait-and-see attitude, and administrators who are hostile to the idea of marketing.
- Demand departmental and even individual **accountability**.
- Be the champion's **sponsor**.

ESSENTIAL MARKETING BOOKSHELF

If you are interested in a further discussion of integrated marketing, integrated marketing communication, and brand marketing, check out one or more of the following:

1. Aaker: *Building Strong Brands; Brand Portfolio Strategy*
2. Beckwith: *Selling the Invisible; What Clients Love; Invisible Touch*
3. Cialdini: *Influence: Science and Practice*
4. Gladwell: *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*
5. Godin: *Purple Cow; Unleashing the Idea Virus; Permission Marketing; All Marketers Are Liars*
6. Lenskold: *Marketing ROI: The Path to Campaign, Customer, and Corporate Profitability*
7. Peppers and Rogers: *One-to-One Marketing* (several books on same theme by same authors)
8. Ries: *Focus: The Future of Your Company Depends Upon It*
9. Ries and Trout: *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind; The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing*
10. Schultz: *IMC, The Next Generation: Five Steps for Delivering Value and Measuring Financial Returns*
11. Schultz: *Integrated Marketing Communications: Putting It Together & Making It Work*
12. Sevier: *Building a Brand That Matters*
13. Sevier: *Integrated Marketing Workbook*
14. Trout: *Differentiate or Die*