

**IT  
ISN'T THE  
CONSUMERS  
JOB  
TO KNOW  
WHAT THEY  
WANT**

STEVE JOBS

*Putting customers above the products. Trying hard to meet the customers' needs. This is a sure-fire formula for success, if we're talking about traditional marketing. But is this the right path towards radical innovation?*

---

## RADICAL INNOVATION ? IGNORE YOUR CUSTOMERS!

---

**NEW PRODUCT INTRODUCTIONS ARE EXPENSIVE,** and that is why companies first seek proof of (success rate) evidence. By conducting research, one could have solid grounds in evaluating whether a new product fills a need or fits perfectly with consumers' tastes. The motto is therefore 'to measure is to know'. However, the consumer is not always a reliable factor in regards to radical innovations - innovative products and services that consumers have not yet fully and explicitly expressed as needs, but which could as well be future 'cash cows'. Consumers usually do not know what it is they like, even though they claim so otherwise. Every researcher, marketer, or strategist who is involved with consumer research knows that many consumers will give their opinion on a particular product -even if they don't know what they're talking about. This is not done intentionally or because consumers take glory in misleading researchers; this is simply because 95 percent of our thoughts and actions are being determined unconsciously. Based on market research, it seems to be that consumers don't need products they don't know.

### *Conviction*

Guy Kawasaki, a top marketer in the field of marketing and innovation, was in the Netherlands sometime in early February for the Marketing Pioneers congress. His advise to entrepreneurs with innovative ideas is primarily: "Make the product that you yourself would buy." That advise corresponds with Miyamoto's vision, the creator of the Wii controller: "Instead of asking everyone's opinion, this time I wanted to convince everybody that this was the idea we'd all been looking for. How shall I put it? It was a conviction."

Kawasaki's second advise is to develop a prototype as soon as possible. A prototype will definitely make it easier to 'sell' an idea. Lastly, the company must have guts, take risks, and break from the beaten path. Marketers and strategists have to be able to look for solutions for the non-explicit needs of customers. It will involve trial and error for a company to be able to work in such a way.

For decades, Apple and Toyota have been capable of successfully launching incremental and radical innovations. If consumer opinions were taken into account all the time, Twitter would have probably not seen the light of day. The New York Times recently raised the question to Apple's Steve Jobs: "How much market research did you do for the iPad?" Jobs' answer: "None. It isn't the consumers' job to know what they want."



**PAULA BUIT**

---

Strategist and Communication Specialist  
[www.paulabuit.nl](http://www.paulabuit.nl)