

# Does your business suffer from 'marketing myopia'?

 By [Carmen Murray](#)

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Theodore Levitt, the editor of the journal, *Harvard Business Review* wrote a very important paper that was published in 1960. He was the first person to coin the theory behind 'marketing myopia'.



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## What does marketing myopia state?

Let's face it, at some point in time every industry was once a "growth industry" and now we are seeing some of these industries surfing the tides in the hopes of playing catch up in the shadow of possible death and decline.

We need to recognise that the reason growth and relevance of many businesses are threatened, slowed or stopped is not *only* due to a saturated market but because of the failure of management.

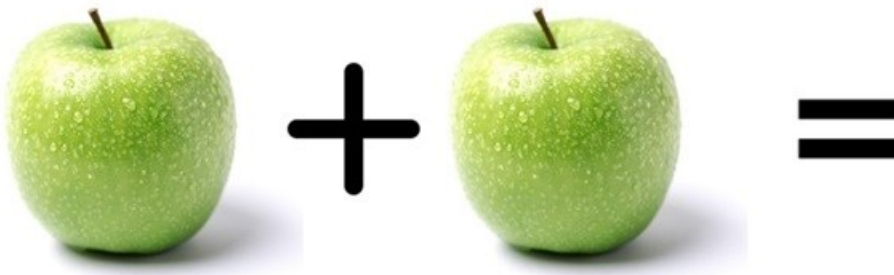
Marketing myopia is a short-sighted and inward-looking approach to marketing that focuses on the needs of the company instead of defining the company and its products in terms of the customers.

I challenge companies when they talk about being a Future Fit business. In most instances, it has become a buzzword rather than a verb. A Future Fit business time shifts. It looks back from the future, understanding and actively solving

tomorrows' problems, today, in order to achieve tomorrows profits.

Recently at the Future Fit Networking Events, Pepe Marais, chief creative director of Joe Public United, used such a great metaphor to challenge the way we look at things. I would like to borrow this metaphor to support the idea behind Marketing Myopia.

Typically, we are taught to say 1 apple + 1 apple = 2. But what if you opened the apples and planted the seeds? You could have thousands of apples. That is exactly the short-sight we have, because we look at what's in front of us, rather than what's ahead of us.



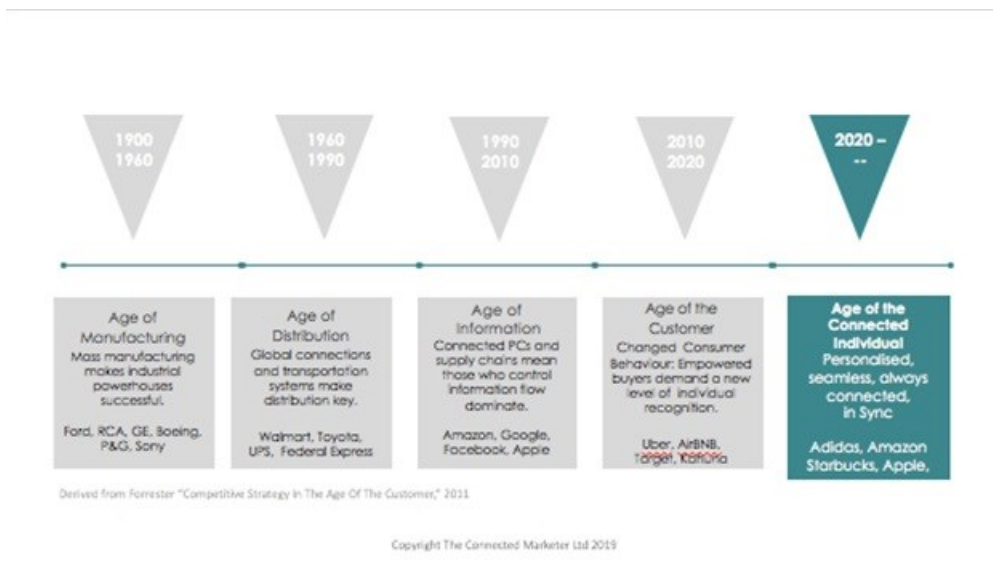
## The dangers of suffering from marketing myopia

There is a saying that goes, the moment you join a company, you no longer represent the customer. You represent the stakeholders. This is what we learn in business school and this is what happens at large entities. The business is all about the supply chain rather than the demand chain. This leads to an organisation that becomes inner-focused, instead of outer-focused.

### Here is the biggest threat to an inner-focused business:

In the age of manufacturing, if you owned a factory, you dominated the market in 1900-1960s. If you were in the age of distribution and operated in transportation from 1960 – 1990, you were a dominant market leader. If you were in the age of information, and most would argue we are still in that age, you were booming. Now, we are in the age of the customer according to Forrester.

If you are in the business of exceptional customer experience today, you are the market leader. Let's take it a step further. We are now in the age of the connected individual. The entire supply chain has flipped and is at the consumers' fingertips through a mobile phone. It is now all about how quickly you can meet the demands of the connected individual and no longer about what you want to sell, but how customers want to buy when they need it.



Derived from Forrester "Competitive strategy in the age of the customer," 2011:

***"The economy is now powered by connection, not industry. Connection and innovation and the instant movement of data mean that the rules most of us grew up with are quickly becoming obsolete." Seth Godin***

***"Consumers have never been more connected - but it's never been harder to connect with them." Tom Daly, Coca-Cola***

For businesses that want to be relevant, it is no longer about today. Today is over. Will all your efforts yield you results tomorrow? 30 days? 3 years from now? That is the question.

Now is the time, to recognise the age we live in. Our top priority to succeed in the age of the connected individual is to shift from the supply chain to the demand chain. I close off with one of my favourite quotes:

***"Moving towards "co-creation" with customers involves a complete rethink of your strategy and operation. Think 'demand chain' instead of 'supply chain' and see how different the world looks from that perspective. - Phil Dourado***

## ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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