



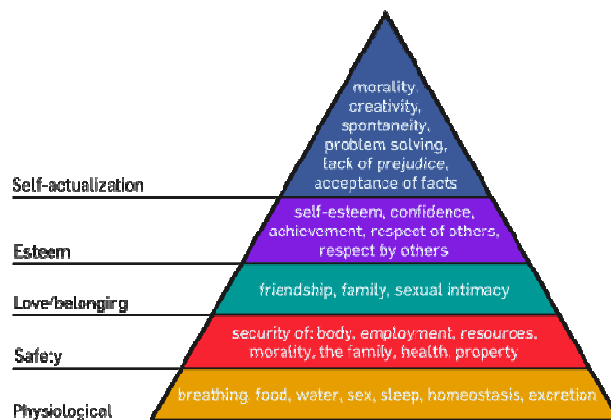
Should credit union marketers focus more on the basic needs from Maslow's Hierarchy?

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Question: Because of the recession should credit union marketers focus more on the basic needs from Maslow's Hierarchy?

Answer: Focus on the brain, branding and beating banks.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (adapted from Motivation & Personality , ©1970 Source: Wikipedia Commons, used with permission)]

If you've taken a 101 marketing, psychology or sociology course, chances are you recognize the chart shown above. Maslow explained human motivation in terms of satisfying needs and desires along a progression of steps with new needs emerging as those at the level below are met.

But is what we've been taught in marketing school wrong? I just completed a [10-part blog series](#) on the marketing implications of new brain research, and some of the answers might surprise you.

Abraham Maslow put on a SCARF

In his new book, [Your Brain at Work: Strategies for Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, and Working Smarter All Day Long](#), David Rock uses the acronym SCARF to describe ideal states desired by the human brain:

- S tatus ...to feel important
- C ertainty ...to accurately forecast what's coming next
- A utonomy ...to have choices and a say in things
- R elatedness ...to safely connect with others
- F airness ...to be treated with evenhandedness

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Here's a new perspective: Instead of focusing on Maslow's Hierarchy, choose one or two letters from the SCARF model to emphasize in your marketing message.

Can you relate?

The “R”— *relatedness* —seems like a natural fit because credit unions are about people and affinity.

Through neuroscience, we're discovering that relatedness is more important to the brain than Maslow hypothesized. In fact, when we trust someone, a chemical is released in the brain: oxytocin, the same hormone that's associated with physical contact between a baby and its mother.

Life's not fair, but credit unions are

“F,” for *fairness* also works well. Why? According to CUNA, last year alone, credit unions saved their members \$7.25 billion!

It turns out that Maslow underestimated the value of fairness to the brain. Rock says, “Fairness doesn't intuitively feel like it is of the same importance as food. Because of this people don't value fairness highly enough, and, as a result, are blind-sided by the intensity of a fairness response.”

Many people are angry at bankers right now. Sounds like an opportunity...

Case in point

This week I spoke with a talented branding strategist, Lisa Girdharry, director of marketing and communication for the University of Wisconsin Credit Union. She tells how the credit union is winning micro-battles over banks and achieved 10% membership growth in 2009, in part, because of a commitment to business practices that are transparent, honest and straightforward.

While I can't adequately cover the topic of branding in this article—in the context of the SCARF model, consider three of the questions Girdharry and her executive team answered:

1. **Why do we exist?** *Answer: Humanity counts most*
2. **What audience are we trying to reach with our branding?** *Answer: People who have a similar mindset and affinity toward the University of Wisconsin System*
3. **What is the one principal benefit we want to promote and deliver?** *Answer: Your best interest always comes first* (also serves as the tagline for the credit union)

For a *bonus point*: Find the word in the tagline that brings in another element of the SCARF model.

Girdharry says, “Our branding process was a success because we identified the values that are most important to our credit union—and those values align with what's important to our members. When you have that, members feel a connection.”

What's going on in the heads of your members?

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