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Is it time to blow away IMC? (Opinion)(integrated marketing communications and integrated customer behavior management) *Robert F. Lauterborn.*

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Imc was a label Don Schultz, Stan Tannenbaum and I stuck on a process nearly a dozen years ago in a book titled "Integrated Marketing Communications: Pulling It Together and Making It Work." What we thought we were describing was a strategic problem-solving approach, a banner under which multiple functions could march together in lockstep to accomplish a business objective, accountably.

Instead, what IMC has come to mean to too many people is little more than two-from-Column A, one-from-Column B media selection.

Maybe it's time to blow it all away and rebuild. Let's start with a new name: ICBM, for Integrated Customer Behavior Management.

Here's the thinking that fuels the ICBM concept:

Profitability is a function of customer behavior.

Any program launched without specific, measurable behavioral objectives is doomed to veer off course.

Marketing and marketing communication are investment functions, and the return on investment is a computation based on the incremental revenue that results from altered customer behavior.

Here's how to get the ICBM process off the pad:

Exactly what core business objective does the company want to achieve and what is the net value to the company of success?

Exactly whose behavior needs to be changed for these results to happen?

Exactly what do we want these people to do, and why should they?

How do we engage them in a dialogue over time?

How will we measure success? How will we demonstrate a return on the investment?

Integrated Customer Behavior Management integrates everything that impacts customer behavior: Product development to meet customer needs more precisely. Packaging that communicates with equal precision. Pricing that reflects the value the customer perceives in the product compared to other ways he or she could satisfy the need or want. A distribution scheme that makes it convenient for the customer to buy. Channel management, sales management, financing, CRM, TQM, Six Sigma and whatever else needs to be happening to change how the customer thinks and behaves.

And, yes, ICBM involves multidimensional, interactive, continuously measured communication that connects the brand or product and the customer, because that's what makes the whole process lift off and stay in orbit.

IMC as it was designed, works. Do we need an ICBM to relaunch it? Or do we just need to blow away the misconceptions that keep the concept from making a contribution?

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