

## 10.4: How Companies Approach Marketing

### Learning Objectives

- Explain the marketing concept

### Company Orientation

When companies develop a marketing strategy, they make decisions about the direction that the company and their marketing efforts will take. Companies can focus on the customer, product, sales, or production. As the business environment has changed over time, so has the way that companies focus their marketing efforts.

### The Marketing Concept

*An organization adopts the marketing concept when it takes steps to know as much about the consumer as possible, coupled with a decision to base marketing, product, and even strategy decisions on this information.* These organizations start with the customers' needs and work backward from there to create value, rather than starting with some other factor like production capacity or an innovative invention. They operate on the assumption that success depends on doing better than competitors at understanding, creating, delivering, and communicating value to their target customers.

### The Product Concept

Both historically and currently, many businesses do not follow the marketing concept. For many years, companies such as Texas Instruments and Otis Elevator have followed a *product orientation*, in which the primary organizational focus is technology and innovation. All parts of these organizations invest heavily in building and showcasing impressive features and product advances, which are the areas in which these companies prefer to compete. This approach is also known as the *product concept*. Rather than focusing on a deep understanding of customer needs, these companies assume that a technically superior or less expensive product will sell itself. While this approach can be very profitable, there is a high risk of losing touch with what customers actually want. This leaves product-oriented companies vulnerable to more customer-oriented competitors.

### The Sales Concept

Other companies follow a *sales orientation*. These businesses emphasize the sales process and try to make it as effective as possible. While companies in any industry may adopt the sales concept, multilevel-marketing companies such as Herbalife and Amway generally fall into this category. Many business-to-business companies with dedicated sales teams also fit this profile. These organizations assume that a good salesperson with the right tools and incentives is capable of selling almost anything. Sales and marketing techniques include aggressive sales methods, promotions, and other activities that support the sale. Often, this focus on the selling process may ignore the customer or view the customer as someone to be manipulated. These companies sell what they make, which isn't necessarily what customers want.

### The Production Concept



Figure 10.4.1: Ford assembly line, 1913, Highland Park, Michigan

The *production concept* is followed by organizations that are striving for low-production costs, highly efficient processes, and mass distribution (which enables them to deliver low-cost goods at the best price). This approach came into popularity during the Industrial Revolution of the late 1800s, when businesses were beginning to exploit opportunities associated with automation and mass production. Production-oriented companies assume that customers care most about low-cost products being readily available and less about specific product features. Henry Ford's success with the groundbreaking assembly-line-built Model T is a classic

example of the production concept in action. Today this approach is still widely successful in developing countries seeking economic gains in the manufacturing sector.

## Seeing the Whole Picture

Savvy businesses acknowledge the importance of product features, production, and sales, but they also realize that in today's business environment a marketing orientation will lead to the greatest success when businesses continuously collect information about customers' needs and competitors' capabilities; share the information across departments; and use the information to create a competitive advantage by increasing value for customers.

### ? Practice Question

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/14476>

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