

PROCESS

WHEN IN DOUBT, SIMPLIFY

HOW 'MARKETBUSTERS' THINKING HELPS MARKETERS
BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

By Rita Gunther McGrath and Ian C. MacMillan

One useful way to look at what a company does is to think of it as a translation device between what the customer needs and what you can do. A marketer's task is to get that translation just right, so that the price you charge represents fair compensation for the value you create.

In the March issue of *Point*, an excerpt from "MarketBusters" (by Rita Gunther McGrath and Ian M. Macmillan, Harvard Business School Press, 2005) demonstrated how marketers should study their customers' points of view in order to better understand the experiential context in which products or services are consumed. This second offering from "MarketBusters" gives counsel on identifying how the characteristics or attributes of a company's offering are positioned in the customers' mind and how such attributes affect expectations. As the authors write, "We think of this process as analogous to charting your position on a map, because essentially you are trying to develop insight about your relative position."

Atttribute mapping is a tool that can simplify the complexity of a marketer's proposition to its customers. Moreover, it can simplify a company's position with respect to competitors. Attribute mapping allows a marketer to clearly see how a move might have an impact. And it's also a way to get objective information about the

likely consequences of a move.

Let's begin with the bad news: There always will be things about a company's product or service that some customer segments dislike. Further, a lot of what a marketing program takes time and effort to deliver is either not visible to the customer or not a factor that differentiates one product or service

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