Introduction

Why Context Is King

One morning back in 2014, I felt the familiar buzz from the phone in my pocket. It was a Facebook notification from my friend Cliff, who’d tagged me in a comment on the latest article from Forbes. Salesforce, the company I work for, had just been named “Most Innovative Company” in the world for the fourth straight year. But as I settled in to read the story, I felt puzzled. The article, clearly relevant, hadn’t reached me that day. I simply had not seen it. What I saw was Cliff’s notification, alerting me to the story.

Make no mistake: Forbes knows a thing or two about the power of customer experience and modern marketing. And it had many ways to get my attention. It’s a publication I write for, and I follow it online. It was pushing media to me daily through my email and Twitter accounts. But while that story would have reached me directly just a few years before, in 2014 it didn’t, because by then I was fielding thousands of pieces of media each day. Forbes’s emails were getting auto-filed into the abyss of my “unread” tab in Gmail—the catch-all for emails that don’t come from colleagues or my direct connections. Similarly, because I was getting thousands of tweets by then, only a tiny fraction ever made it into my Twitter feed.

Despite all my connections to Forbes, the media environment had effectively silenced the company’s marketing. The success of that article breaking through had nothing to do with the might of Forbes’s century-old media powerhouse—and everything to do with my friend Cliff tagging me. “Push”
and whatever else the magazine was doing to market and promote itself was no longer enough.

Now I understand why: marketing as we know it had already died.

The Day Consumers Stopped Listening

It happened on June 24, 2009. The death of an era, hidden amid the noise of a political bathroom scandal and the introduction of the iPhone, was silent and invisible. There were no bells, no alarms, no protest. No one even noticed. The day felt just like the one before and the one after it. And yet that moment in June 2009 marked an unprecedented shift in the history of media, business, and I would argue humankind. It was the day when private individuals—not brands, not businesses or traditional media outlets—became the largest producers of media in the world.

Had we understood the signs, we could have seen it coming. The plight of newspapers and other print media certainly was a harbinger, as was the power of individuals collectively creating political protests using social media, such as during the Arab Spring and Occupy movements. What’s more, marketing engagement rates across all media channels had been steadily decreasing while media usage continued to climb.

Clearly a massive change was underfoot, yet none of us realized to what extent. So June 24, 2009, came and went without fanfare. It would take another eight years for anyone to realize what had happened. It wasn’t until 2017, while researching the future costs of marketing, that I stumbled onto what had occurred back in 2009. I wasn’t looking for it—I was merely trying to track the volume of noise and calculate the cost of breaking through in the future.

What I uncovered wasn’t just that we had more noise, created mostly by individuals rather than businesses. We had entered into a new media era. As I will show in this book, noise is no longer what it once was. More isn’t just more—it is exponentially different.

And yet today, judging by how few companies have altered the way they attempt to motivate customers, it’s as if that momentous June day never
even occurred. My research shows that we marketers continue to stumble around, trying to get customers’ attention but succeeding only in annoying them with endless intrusions (think: ads in YouTube videos, telemarketers, and auto-playing videos you must hide before reading an article). If consumers aren’t annoyed, it’s because they’re ignoring advertisers’ extraordinarily costly efforts by blocking ads, and increasingly the channels themselves are doing it for them. That’s the crazy part: more and more, consumers don’t have to lift a finger to avoid you. The environment itself is filtering out brands’ attention-seeking messages with the kind of email and social media filters that hid the *Forbes* article from me.

The message couldn’t be more obvious: consumers simply aren’t listening anymore. They don’t have to. Today they’re the ones in charge, not marketers. Even though no one noticed, much less acted on, that day in June 2009, it was a tipping point with monumental consequences. It forever redefined how we build relationships, how we connect to the world around us, and even how our economy functions. It ushered in what I call the infinite media era.

Infinite media doesn’t mean just more media. It means a radically different *media environment* in which the possibilities are quite literally infinite. What does all this signify for organizations and for marketers in particular? Such a drastic departure from how things once worked can’t be met with business as usual. It demands not just new marketing ideas but rather a whole new idea of marketing. It requires a revolution in what we do, how we do it, and the way we think about building brands and motivating customers. No matter what your business’s size or type, or what level and kind of job you’re in, prepare to embark on a mind-bending way of seeing, selling, and growing your brand, defined by a different kind of marketing in a changed environment.

I call it the *context marketing revolution*. Motivating consumers today has nothing to do with getting their attention and everything to do with their understanding their *context*—that is, their current position in time and space and whatever their task may be in that moment. Today, helping people achieve their immediate goals is the only way to break through the noise and motivate consumers to act.
The era of infinite media has already been unfolding for a decade or more, so we’d better get started. This book will help.

**This Changes Everything**

Because the way consumers move in the infinite media era is wholly different, brands need to interact with individuals in a wholly different way. Let’s step back and look at what came before—call it the limited media era. Beginning in 1900 until about 1995, media creation and distribution were limited to people with the capital to participate—“ad men,” agencies, media outlets—so the volume of noise was relatively low and made of a different substance than we have today, as I’ll describe later. Since only brands and traditional media outlets could create and distribute noise, they were solely competing with each other, using creative messaging to steal people’s attention and push their wares. Sex sold, and brands used subliminal tricks to become “top of mind.” Publication and promotion were the backbone of building a brand.

With the rise of consumer email use in the 1990s, we saw the first glimpse of the revolution. As time progressed, more and more consumers were _becoming_ the media—creating, tweeting, posting, and sharing—until that fateful day in June 2009 when the scales tipped. With the beginning of the infinite media era, the shift to a new master, the individual, was complete. Businesses were no longer in charge of the media environment. Their monopoly had ended.

In coming chapters, we’ll explore in depth what the differences between the limited and infinite eras mean. But for now it’s enough to understand that the new era transformed everything—the very notion of what noise is, what consumers desire, and how brands break through. No longer are those things done in a limited and static way, but rather in a manner that is infinitely dynamic. To win in the infinite media era, we all need to grasp a truth that’s both simple and complex. What matters isn’t ads, creative messaging, elegant copy, or even dazzling content—what matters is context: understanding how to help consumers achieve their goals in the moment.
The Swedish furniture giant IKEA has mastered this notion of context. But that wasn’t always the case. The stories were legendary: frustrated, disillusioned customers attempting to find their way through the massive warehouse and then lugging home their just-purchased bookshelf or table in an enormous flat box—only to come face-to-face with a challenging set of assembly instructions. To improve customer experience and increase sales, IKEA bought the gig-economy startup TaskRabbit. So, starting in 2017, IKEA customers can hire an independent handyperson to pick up, deliver, and assemble that table or shelf by using the TaskRabbit app, in real time, through a process similar to ordering a car with Uber or Lyft. Customers love it, and why wouldn’t they? IKEA found a way to meet consumers at their precise point of need, that is, in the context of their current goal to have their furniture delivered and assembled, hassle-free.

IKEA is one company that I, working with a research team at Salesforce, identified as a “high performer.” Our criteria were based on a blind survey we issued each year for four years to businesses worldwide of every vertical, size, and geography (a total of eleven thousand businesses). The data points we gathered told us a lot about what marketing tools and tactics worked well for those anonymous companies. Specifically, we found that the companies that enjoyed consistent growth were those that stayed focused on crafting experiences across the customer journey. The data showed that those companies—only 16 percent of the thousands of companies surveyed—were almost ten times more likely than the others to register significant, consistent wins over their direct competition. That means that the future of the other 84 percent of the companies in our survey depends on their ability to follow in the footsteps of that top 16 percent.

Next, we used the criteria from those top-growth companies in the blind survey to look for companies and brands that seemed to follow those same practices. Besides IKEA, we uncovered other high performers, such as Tesla, Room & Board, Oreo, Airbnb, and WeWork, all of which seemed to understand the notion of context and what’s needed to navigate consistently in the infinite media era. That is, all of our high performers had adopted a new idea of marketing—not just new marketing ideas.
The Changes Keep Coming

Before we continue, keep in mind an important truth about the future, given the speed at which things are moving and the magnitude of the metamorphosis. Today I’m telling you that individuals, not brands, are in charge. But the reason we have to get context marketing right is because things are rapidly changing still: our individual devices and apps have become the second-largest creators of media. And it isn’t just more media; rather, it’s extremely powerful media, able to motivate consumers unlike anything before.

All of which is to say that artificial intelligence (AI) is already here. The AI in our devices continually reminds or alerts us—and we’ve changed our behavior in response. Think of the Fitbit and its power to get you to take five hundred more steps to reach your daily goal. Don’t want to be late? Your calendar will notify you thirty minutes before your appointment and again fifteen minutes later. Want to be more mindful, lose weight, learn a language? Get an app or device to be your personal assistant. It can read your personal data feed, alerting you to exactly what to do and when. Each app and device becomes a personal media stream created just for you, sent just to you at the correct moment, motivating you in novel ways. That’s what I mean by the importance of context to our transformed environment.

The fact is, we can’t do without AI in the era of infinite media. The massive content glut from brands, individuals, and devices has made AI indispensable. AI curates our inboxes, Google search queries, websites, apps, and social feeds. Consumers see only what AI selects for them to see (and eventually, AI will also be the major creator of that content). Again, everything is contextual, and AI’s importance as the controller only increases as we move forward in time and noise rises even higher. Context isn’t just what consumers want; it’s what AI optimizes for. That is why context is the key and AI the barrier we must break through to reach and motivate the modern consumer. More on all of this later in the book. For now, understand that the context marketing revolution is crucial—not only for today but also for a future in which AI curates or creates most of the content we see.
The Context Marketing Revolution—and a New Model for Growth

Because the foundation on which marketing traditionally stood has flipped and multiplied across infinitely larger territory, we marketers find ourselves standing on new ground, with brand-new rules. It took us all this time to realize it, but make no mistake: starting on June 24, 2009, everything that once worked in marketing, stopped. What we do, how we do it, and who does it were transformed forever.

Fortunately, we have some guidelines: our research into today’s high-performing marketing organizations reveals a way to navigate this shifting ground, no matter how large your business or what kind, whether you’re a leader at a company or agency, or a member of a marketing team. The change needed, however, isn’t simply another iteration of what you’ve done before. Context marketing requires a recrafted lens to view how the whole landscape has shifted in three key aspects:

- **What We Do.** In today’s era of infinite media, marketing must move from attention-getting schemes (which today’s consumers filter out) to working within the contexts in which people find themselves. As the example of IKEA illustrates, the scope of marketing must refocus to work within a diverse and infinite set of contexts to help consumers achieve their immediate goals.

- **How We Do It.** Today, marketers can’t just broadcast static messages; rather, they need to create and provide dynamic experiences. Tesla is a master at crafting the kinds of experiences that engage consumers, as I’ll describe shortly. Businesses everywhere must follow Tesla’s example and rethink their execution of marketing: marketers must become engineers of perpetual systems where scale is achieved through agility and automation, not broader reach. The level of personal engagement required to achieve the expanded levels of context simply cannot be reached otherwise. Ad campaigns give way to holistic systems, such as automated customer journeys,
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artificially intelligent websites, and predictive and proactive customer support.

- **Who Does It.** Individuals, not businesses or brands, are now the chief noise makers. That means executive leadership must reenvision the role of marketing to motivate consumers and drive growth. In this new businesses model, marketing has an expanded role and multiple levers to increase revenue far past net new sales. For example, Salesforce marketing created a customer-community site called Trailblazer, where customers engage with each other and with the company. As a result, buyers associated with this largely community-run site spend twice as much money on Salesforce services and stay on as customers four times as long as do non-Trailblazer-community customers. In other words, Salesforce has dramatically increased its profitability—without ever creating a new customer.

As this book will show, those three shifts in marketing’s scope, execution, and role demand a revised growth model that brands must follow. Where once we clung to the idea of build-market-sell, brands will survive only with a formulation of that model that’s been flipped and expanded: market-sell-build-market. I call this new model the context marketing model, and I’ll describe it in detail later in this introduction.

Right about now you might be thinking that this doesn’t really sound so new, that you’ve heard some of these ideas before. And you have, at least in part. The problem is what companies have done with those ideas and the gaps that remain. We’ll need to bridge those gaps before we can begin to meet the demands of the infinite media era.

**Everything New Is New Again**

The need for change has not been lost on brands. Companies and marketing organizations have tried to improve and expand their mediums, formats, and channels. The trouble is that they’ve left the foundational ideas of marketing alone. We’re all versed on the consumer’s desire for
experiences, as laid out back in 1999 by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore in their breakout book, *The Experience Economy*. The authors empirically proved that experiences that help consumers transform ultimately create the highest value for businesses. But rather than gaining a deep understanding of the authors’ notion of experience as a system of connected moments, most brands simply recast old ideas. They took their static ads and made them immersive, and they made their physical products digital—all while using the same old ideas, businesses models, and marketing methods.

The same year that Pine and Gilmore’s book appeared, we learned about the power of permissioned media to directly reach audiences as foretold by Seth Godin’s *Permission Marketing*. And again brands leapt to adopt “permissioned” methods for email but ignored the important foundation the book describes: value exchange. Consumers will give you the data, permission, and access to the most personal parts of their lives as long as you use those things to deliver the value they seek. That value also shifts with time. When Godin crafted his masterpiece, content was limited, so consumers valued brands sending them content. Now content is infinite, and consumers value experiences. *Forbes* had permission to reach me, and it didn’t matter. My inbox filtered the magazine’s email into the “unimportant” folder, burying it under hundreds of others, while my social channels filtered out the *Forbes* notification completely. Consumers do not want mass experiences; they desire personal moments. The requirement of asking for permission has not changed—how we use it has. It has morphed into something greater: it is the key that marketers need to gain access to your inbox and the data we need in order to create personal experiences, not just improve mass messages.

The notion of value exchange that Godin wrote about applies to many other recent marketing ideas as well, such as content marketing (brands creating their own content to engage their audiences) and inbound marketing (brands designing content that specifically answers people’s search-engine questions and then directs them to the brand’s own site). Both ideas are correct, yet most brands fail to understand why they work or what consumers value about them. No consumer ever said, “I want content.” Content is only an intermediary to achieve a goal at a specific moment—to
answer people’s questions, to entertain them, to validate their identity. Those are specific *experiences* that people desire, not “content.” In other words, without a new idea of marketing that is built on the notion of using permission to create value that consumers desire in the moment, it doesn’t matter what methods you apply. They are dead on arrival.

Along with their versions of experience, permission, and content, brands more recently have adopted more systematic pathways of growth, as laid out a few years ago in such books as *Hacking Growth* by Sean Ellis and Morgan Brown and *From Impossible to Inevitable* by Aaron Ross and Jason Lemkin. But again, if brands undertake these efforts without a contextual lens, they will fail. Not because the ideas in any of those books aren’t correct, but rather because brands are using them as simple tweaks on their same old ideas. That is not what these authors were suggesting, yet it is what most brands have done, and then they wonder why nothing’s really improved in their ability to motivate customers.

The truth most brands haven’t recognized is that their old *ideas* of marketing—the ones on which brands have been pinning new faces (like experiences, permission, content, and different paths to growth)—are the problem. That is why that day in June 2009, when the switch flipped and the infinite media era dawned, is so critical. It’s the hard evidence showing why those ideas once worked, why they failed, and what we need to do about it.

In fact, given just how drastically the world upended in 2009, we might well wonder how marketers everywhere missed it—me included, at least for a while.

### Why Marketing Missed the Memo

Perhaps we marketers were simply racing too hard while running in the wrong direction. Over the past decade or more, we diligently and creatively adopted new channels, changed our messaging, tailored our brand voice, and increased our product’s value to customers in every way imaginable. We’ve allocated and reallocated digital spend to connect with prospects on their journey, to win them and retain them. To accomplish all of that, we’ve
forged better working relationships with IT and sales, working together to
design apps, to relaunch websites, and to build landing pages for campaigns
that ooze with data.

Each of those efforts, when they were first adopted, did move the nee-
dle. But too many brands didn’t understand why their efforts worked, so
today they are floundering. What they needed to understand were things
like the following: Apps work when they are the best way to accomplish a
task, not because consumers desire apps. Permission works because it gives
the individual control, not because it gets brands’ marketing emails through.
Content and inbound marketing work because they let consumers make
up their own minds.

But there are other reasons we marketers are falling short. We are still
relying on marketing commandments that are fossils of a bygone era. Ideas
like “sex sells,” or keeping your brand “top of mind” for consumers, or
“there’s no such thing as bad press” are notions the infinite media era has
made obsolete. Images that flash skin or smoldering looks just don’t sell as
they once did because consumers aren’t even looking at ads—and if they
do, they’re unlikely to remember brand names because people now oper-
ate in a completely different world.

The changed media environment has spawned a brand-new kind of con-
sumer, one who transcends defined categories such as age demographics
and business-to-business (B2B) versus business-to-consumer (B2C). And
that new consumer has developed novel ways for remembering things and
fresh processes for making decisions, amounting to an entirely altered cus-
tomer journey, as I’ll describe in more detail in chapter 1. We marketers
have accounted for none of these shifts, perhaps in part because our own
company leaders have mostly been blind to how much the transformed
media environment has changed the ways we do business.

Indeed, digital-age leaders have reexamined and redefined just about
every aspect of their business model except marketing. They see the vast
expansion of media as simply the multiplication of channels, with free dis-
tribution and better ad targeting, not a whole new business environment.
And in that limited view, they fail to understand this current environment’s
profound effect on consumers’ behavior and motivation. More significantly,
they fail to understand its effect on their business: how it has fundamentally
altered how they should create value for consumers and establish long-term relationships with them.

The point is that, whether any of us realized it or not, June 24, 2009, marked the day that consumers completed the transition into an altogether changed environment. This created fresh possibilities and a seismic shift in buyer behaviors and values. Brands that fail to grasp that truth will never break through, just as Forbes didn’t break through to me with a relevant news story about my company.

Unfortunately, all signs point to one indisputable fact: almost no one has grasped the truth of the infinite media era. Marketers continue doing the same old things as if nothing is different. Again, it’s not working. This becomes clear in a survey conducted by Forrester Research in 2018. The survey found that B2B marketers with a managed lead flow converted only 1.15 percent of every one hundred leads they generated into a sale. Which means those marketers’ idea of marketing fails 98.85 percent of the time to generate revenue.

Moreover, consumers have shown us they don’t even like advertising, and they’ve had enough: six hundred million devices today use ad blocking software. Such mass consumer action to filter out marketing is “easily the largest boycott in the history of the world,” as Doc Searls, Harvard fellow and coauthor of The Cluetrain Manifesto, reminded me in a recent conversation. Simply put, the consumer is in charge, not marketers like you and me.

Not only do people dislike advertising, but they also don’t trust it or the people creating it. The 2018 Gallup poll of the most trusted professions found advertising professionals as the fourth-least-trusted profession, preceded only by members of Congress (#1), car salespeople (#2), and telemarketers (#3). Lawyers are now more trusted than advertising professionals. This data should be smacking us in the face. Advertisers, marketers, and salespeople—the very professions we’ve created to grow our businesses—have become the most distrusted professions in America.

The hard truth is that consumers have always distrusted advertising, almost as much as they dislike being “sold to.” But in the limited era, they didn’t have any recourse. Today, not only do they have powerful recourse
to bypass marketing, but the infinite environment is doing it for them through all the ways people now connect, engage, and share.

Think of the difference between a YouTube ad campaign, which you want to skip (but can't), and an offer of the TaskRabbit app from IKEA to get the help you need to assemble your newly bought table in record time. The former is undesirable and nonpermissioned; the latter is hugely desirable and highly permissioned, and consumers will pay for it. To succeed as marketers in this modern era, we must focus on providing experiences that are desired and permissioned wherever possible. In other words, contextual experiences.

The Way Forward

One very important aspect of this revolution in the way the new media works is that neither consumers nor marketers control it. The media environment is (and forever will be) driven by algorithms. As the level of noise has risen, algorithms have played an increasing role in helping consumers make sense of the modern world, and we are now at a point of no return. The amount of noise is far past human cognition, and AI is a native aspect of every modern interaction—behind the screens, ensuring that individuals get exactly what they want, when they want it. In other words, consumers have adopted a novel decision-making process (which we will begin to explore in chapter 2), shaped by their intense daily relationship with today’s media environment.

The result is that now people can be exposed to an experience, and become engaged with it, only when it’s contextual—that is, when it algorithmically appears on their new (extraordinarily personal) customer journey. A brand experience that is the most contextual in the moment stands the highest chance of playing the algorithm game correctly, reaching consumers, and driving the growth that businesses seek.

How do we make that happen? Our study of high performers in the infinite media era reveals a clear path, one that takes into account today’s consumer psychology. To craft contextual brand moments that will break
through and drive engagement, marketers must ensure experiences that are (1) available, (2) permissioned, (3) personal, (4) authentic, and (5) purposeful. Those are the five elements of context, and they are so crucial to getting context marketing right that we will spend all of part two learning about them.

But there’s more. Motivating consumers in the infinite media era also requires a fresh understanding of how marketing builds brands and drives action. In the limited era, consumer motivation was a by-product of creative campaigns that told people about the products or services that companies created. Brands crafted a single message so compelling that people acted. Today motivation is a by-product of many connected moments, requiring brands to have a systematic effort that is holistic and perpetual. It begins long before a company builds a product or releases a service, and it extends long past the product’s or service’s use.

That’s what I meant earlier when I said the context marketing revolution essentially spawns a recrafted model for consumer motivation and building brands: market-sell-build-market, which is the context marketing model (CMM). Think about Tesla, which built its market for the Model 3 long before it began selling or even making the car. As a result, when Model 3 presales became available, it was cited as the biggest one-week launch of any product ever, preselling more than one hundred thousand cars in a matter of hours. Tesla did that by engaging consumers, over a period of time, in a number of experiences that contained all five elements of context that we just listed.

For example, the company’s founder, Elon Musk, built a massive permissioned audience on social media that was engaged around a central purpose: radical innovation to get the world off fossil fuel. Musk’s personal Twitter feed is full of rocket launches, discussions about solar panels, tours of Tesla’s new production facility (aptly named the Gigafactory), and even a video of him launching a car into space. All of this is authentic, as it fits directly in line with the value that the company’s audience members expected when they gave permission. They follow both Musk and Tesla for that over-the-top content, experiences that are available in the context of the moment. Tesla then used this deep connection to cobuild the car with its audience, asking audience members to fund the production of the Model 3 by preordering. They did.
But the Tesla experience doesn’t stop there. Even after the order is placed, the company continues its marketing efforts by providing over-the-top customer experiences. For example, a Tesla team member reaches out in a personal way to let each buyer know when his or her car is being made, then follows up to let the buyer choose how the car should be delivered. Finally, team members ask buyers to share their amazing experience with others through an advocacy program where Tesla customers can earn rewards by taking action.

The result? Today Musk’s audience on Twitter is seven times that of Tesla’s closest competitor, Mercedes-Benz, and the company spends a miniscule amount on advertising (1/150th the amount that Mercedes-Benz spends); yet it sells three times as many cars. The impressive part is the sustainability of this model of market-sell-build-market. It was the same model Tesla used to launch all three of its previous cars, and it continues to work. In 2018, two years after Tesla launched the Model 3, it became the best-selling luxury car in the United States.7

Tesla isn’t alone, as we’ll see in the examples of high performers throughout this book. These are brands on a journey with their customers, defined by a novel business model tailor-made for the infinite media era. In part three of this book, I will walk you through each stage of the CMM and illustrate how your brand can craft customer experiences with the winning formula of market-sell-build-market. But there’s more. With the context marketing revolution, we’re reimagining all aspects of marketing, including the methods we use to produce it. That means finding ways of building automated programs that can manage and optimize massive new networks of customer experiences. Building such programs doesn’t take more creativity or even better innovation. Our research at Salesforce found that a particular method—agile—enabled the high-performing marketing organizations we studied to focus on crafting the most value per unit of time possible. Part three will cover in detail what agile is and how to use agile, but for now understand that creative ideas are only the start, the hypotheses. Working those ideas through agile methods is what raises them to their highest value.
About this Book

In part one, we strip away outdated ideas of what marketing is “supposed to be” and examine in detail the context marketing revolution and why we need it. Chapter 1 looks closely at the fundamental differences between how we once motivated customers in the limited media era and how we must motivate them in today’s infinite media era. What’s needed now is context marketing, which entails a shift in marketing’s scope (what we do), execution (how we do it), and role (who does it). Chapter 2 describes how the changed media environment has spawned both a new kind of consumer—one who transcends defined categories such as age demographics and B2B versus B2C—and a new consumer decision-making process or journey, which requires a revolution in how marketers approach their brands and customers.

Part two focuses on the five elements of context that are key to the context marketing revolution. Chapter 3 provides an overview of context and how its five elements (the context framework) can guide marketers to create the kinds of experiences that are all-important for consumers today, and how those experiences work together to motivate customers in new ways. Then, each of chapters 4–8 examines one of the five elements of context that craft the customer experience. That is, experiences that are available (helping people achieve the value they seek in the moment); permissioned (coordinating with individuals to give them what they’ve asked for, on their terms); personal (going beyond how personal the experience is, to how personally you can deliver it); authentic (combining voice, empathy, and channel congruence simultaneously); and purposeful (creating a deeper connection to the brand beyond the product).

In part three I show how to break through the noise to execute context marketing in the infinite era. I provide a revised rulebook that showcases how high performers employ context-based marketing to build modern brands and dominate their marketplaces. Chapter 9 describes how marketers can shift from telegraphing static ad campaigns to crafting perpetually flowing customer journeys. These are journeys that apply across all businesses and sizes and demographics to powerfully reshape the way you
grow your brand. The chapter includes specific questions you can ask in customer interviews, which will help you understand your brand’s various buyer personas as you begin to map their journeys. Chapter 10 looks at the concept of triggers, which are key moments that marketers can engage to connect or reconnect individuals to their customer journeys. The chapter describes two kinds of triggers—natural and targeted—and how to use them to keep consumers moving forward through each stage in a continuous flow of context.

But how do we scale such flowing rivers of customer experiences? Chapter 11 describes how contextual marketers must learn to leverage complex systems of data, technology, and automated programs to carry customers through their journeys, stage by stage. Such automation is the only way we can instantly create and execute programs in real time. Even with automations, however, there simply isn’t enough time in the day to do it all. That’s why we need a revolutionary way of working, which I describe in chapter 12: agile. High-performing marketing organizations today such as Twitter, Airbnb, and Facebook have embraced agile—a process of rapid testing of hypotheses—which allows them to produce the highest level of value per unit of time. Embracing agile enables us to move toward an innovative model for doing business, which is the final step of the context marketing revolution, as detailed in chapter 13. That is, contextual marketing leads inevitably to transformed organizational structures and roles that are required to execute the CMM, already being embraced by companies like Tesla. Such a model goes hand in hand with other novel processes needed in the infinite media era, such as a reporting method—the weighted pipeline—that offers a holistic and predictive measure of marketing efforts.

Finally, chapter 14 concludes the book with a call to action that will help marketers take the first step needed to start the revolution: getting executive buy-in. Proving to your top executives that contextual marketing is the only path forward toward growth will be key to its success, and this final chapter offers some insights on how to do that.

Consider this your guidebook for the revolution. Billions of people strong, this revolution is unlike any that’s come before. And make no mistake:
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Membership is not optional; the revolution affects everyone and everything. The context marketing revolution isn’t about content, social media, ad blocking, or mobility. It’s about what people derive from instant access, connectivity, and openness. It’s about a novel set of shared values, desires, and purpose found within the infinite media era that would have been impossible in an earlier time. By its very nature, this revolution is already unlocking deeper levels of humanity, power, and connectivity between individuals. It’s a revolution in what consumers demand, how they make decisions, and how brands fulfill those needs.

Let’s begin by exploring in detail how and why the infinite media era makes traditional marketing obsolete, and delve into three keys of contextual marketing. The shift from limited media to infinite media changed who the players in marketing are, what we marketers do, and how we do it. That is, it ushered in the context marketing revolution that will powerfully reshape the way you motivate customers and grow your brand.