



The Familiar and the New

...how to develop new offerings that will sell!

by [Andrew Cooke](#), [Blue Sky GPS \(Growth & Profit Solutions\)](#)

Customers are a fickle lot. You produce what your research tells you will sell, and you end up with a lemon, or it fails to produce the results you seek. Why is this?

If customers are going to buy a new offering it has to appeal to them, not just in terms of the needs it satisfies, but in how it gets over the initial barrier of being attractive to them.

Customers are torn between a curiosity about new things and a fear of anything too new. So people tend to be attracted to offerings that are bold, but instantly comprehensible. Raymond Loewy, the industrial designer, who came up with this idea called it MAYA – “Most Advanced Yet Acceptable”. He said to sell something surprising, make it familiar; and to sell something familiar, make it surprising.

Think of Apple and the iPad. The technology was not new – it combined different technologies in a clever way, but what made it stand out was its design and the user experience that it created for the iPad’s users.

People like what is familiar, but if they are over-exposed to it then it becomes overfamiliar and they tire of it. How many times could you listen to your favorite song before you get tired of it, or stop listening properly to it? It is probably fewer than you think. Similarly, although people may like surprises if the surprise is too much then it becomes counter-productive.

To get the best of both worlds – that which is familiar to people, and that which represents a surprise – requires a balance. The power of familiarity seems to be strongest when a person isn’t expecting it; and a surprise seems to work best when it contains some element of familiarity. This has been described as having a level of “optimal newness”.

Internet companies provide a good example of this where many new ideas are promoted as a fresh spin on familiar successes.. For example, Airbnb was once called “eBay for homes.”; Uber was described as “Airbnb for cars”; and with Uber’s success many start-ups have begun



describing themselves as "Uber for [anything]." In the movies, the film "Alien" eventually found the financial backing it required when it described the plot as "Jaws in space" – the film and plot of "Jaws" being very familiar, and the locating the story in space providing the surprise.

So when you look to bring new offerings to market ask yourself these three questions:

1. How will I make it familiar?
2. How will I make it surprising:
3. How will I make it familiar when a person least expects it, and make it surprising yet still somewhat familiar?

Answering these questions will help you generate ideas and approaches to try with your customers and make your new offerings more successful.

About Andrew Cooke

Andrew Cooke is the director and founder of Blue Sky GPS and is known for his work with executives, managers and teams in helping them to grow, develop and achieve results. Using a blend of consulting, facilitation and coaching he is noted for his ability in "bringing people potential to life". Andrew takes the time to understand and assist successful business executives in creating a customized plan that allows them grow and develop their leadership effectiveness. In doing this he guides executives to manage, direct and make change work for them and their stakeholders and teams in an increasing volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous business environment. From this he helps others to become more successful in both what they do and how they do it.

Andrew demonstrates a proactive attitude and empathy that blends enthusiasm, energy and a pragmatic approach in engaging leaders and their stakeholders. He has over thirty years of international business experience and insights on which to draw, and has worked with blue-chip clients and other leading businesses across a range of industries. Andrew is passionate about helping others to be more successful personally and professionally.

Qualifications & Accreditations

Andrew is an experienced international expert in executive coaching, leadership development and business consulting. He has qualifications, certifications and accreditations from recognized leading global organizations, including:



- International executive coach with certifications for Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching and Global Leader of the Future 360⁰ Assessment
- Masters of Business Administration (MBA), London Business School, UK
- Bachelor of Business BA (Hons), University of Plymouth (UK)
- Diploma from the Institute of Marketing (UK)
- Accredited DISC Facilitator & Coach