



mhca's e-Newsletter

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The One Thing Everyone Wants Most

Guest article by Speaker, Author & Corporate Trainer Jeff Havens

Every year, billions and billions of dollars are spent trying to convince us to buy things – clothes, toys, hot tubs, insurance policies, private jets, googly-eye glasses, cosmetic surgery, laser pointers, watches, and at least four other things – and 99.99% of the brain power behind that money is focused on trying to figure out the best way to reach people. Do we respond better to fun or utility? Are we more cost-conscious, or can we be sold on luxury? How old are we, and what kind of life do we lead? The sheer number of approaches used to persuade people to buy a product, work for a company or take a specific action is daunting to say the least.

So let me save you a little time. There is one thing *all* of us want more than anything else – and that is *meaning*. All of us are looking for meaning in virtually everything we do – our relationships, our jobs, and also in the things we buy in order to build the lives we want. This search for meaning has always been a part of us, and it is never going to change.

And interestingly, there's really only one way we find meaning on this planet, and that is by attaching to something larger than ourselves. This is the heart of what it means to be human, and it informs every single thing we do. This desire to belong to something greater than ourselves is the reason that we have children, root for sports teams, and build cathedrals and monuments designed to last well beyond our own lifetimes. It's the reason we make friends, join companies, give to charity, get tattoos of movie characters or chalupas, and watch whatever viral video is popular at the moment. This need in all of us to attach to something larger than ourselves can explain everything from our ancestors choosing to fight the Revolutionary War to the fact that thousands of people every year get naked in New Orleans so they can snag a few colored beads. Why do they do that? They sell those beads in every store on Bourbon Street for very reasonable prices! But that's apparently not as meaningful as collecting them in the middle of a huge crowd of sweaty, vomity drunks.

There are a million ways to coax people into buying from you or partnering with you, but if you had to focus on only one approach, it should be one that shows them the meaning of what you're offering. Coca-Cola doesn't try to sell people on the quality of their products but rather on the idea that drinking a Coke will help them have a meaningful experience with others. The insurance industry didn't become as large as it is because insurance is wildly exciting, but rather because people are attracted to the idea of protecting the ones they care about. Bottom line, meaning is generally more important than entertainment. It's more important than perks. And it's more important than money. And if you can package your services and employment opportunities in a way that can provide meaning, then you will have built the keystone of a winning customer and employee experience.

Jeff Havens has been a popular presenter at **mhca** quarterly conferences and he will be speaking at our Winter Conference in Clearwater Beach next month. If you'd like to watch some of his previous sessions, you can view the recordings here in the searchable online library (**mhca** member login required): <https://mhca.com/conference-presentations>



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