Marketing Components and Value Proposition of NationBuilder

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This paper will look at the four marketing components of the company NationBuilder, and then use these to develop a value proposition for the company.

Our textbook begins its first chapter by quoting a definition of marketing from the American Marketing Association as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". It then contrasts the 1950s view of the components of marketing given by the nouns of the four P's of the so called marketing mix, product, promotion, place, and price, with a more dynamic and contemporary model using the gerunds creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging (The University of Minnesota, 2010, p. 2).

It next presents a diagram showing these four dynamic components of marketing connected in a ring around a central component, value. It defines value as "benefits buyers receive that meet their needs" given by the formula: value = benefits - (price + hassle) (p. 3). In the second chapter, the term value proposition is defined as "a thirty-second 'elevator speech' stating the specific benefits a product or service offering provides a buyer" (p. 26).

NationBuilder is a privately held technology start-up that develops software for political campaigns (Wikipedia Contributors, 2020 & Craft, n.d.). It delivers software as a service through monthly subscriptions starting at $29 per month (Captera, n.d.). The basic "Leader" subscription includes a people database of up to 5000 entries, website with standard templates, email blasting of up to 1000, payment and donation processing, and listing basic events and limited ticketing. What is called the Team option starts at $199 per month, and adds limited database and

permission set customization, email A/B testing, user submitted events, and basic text messaging to the Leader option (NationBuilder, n.d.d).

The fundamental business model here is what is called software as a service or Saas. Central to this model is that access to software which is hosted on a central server is licensed to users (Wikipedia contributors, 2020, April 7). Unlike web giants Google, Amazon, or Facebook, NationBuilder does not commodify user data. It states this explicitly on the company website, and makes this policy part of its marketing, stating that "we do not share customer data with anyone", and giving each customer a completely separate, secure, and self-contained database (NationBuilder, n.d.b).

NationBuilder's vision statement is "We envision a world where everyone has the freedom and opportunity to create what they are meant to create.", and its mission statement is "We build the infrastructure for a world of creators by helping leaders develop and organize thriving communities." (NationBuilder, n.d.c).

The best statement of a value proposition for NationBuilder I found in my investigation comes from the first line in the NationBuilder overview section on the Craft website, which says that, "NationBuilder is leadership software for a connected humanity. It combines clients' people database, website, and communication tools like email, text messaging, and social media—all in one" (n.d.).

Unfortunately, NationBuilder's business model contradicts its vision, mission, and stated beliefs. Among the stated beliefs on the NationBuilder website are that "the internet makes it possible for everyone to be a leader" and that "the tools of leadership should be available to everyone" (NationBuilder, n.d.c). In truth, NationBuilder makes these tools available to everyone

willing and able to pay at least $199 per month and enter into a dependent relationship with a monopoly (Wikipedia contributors, 2020, April 15). I do not doubt that NationBuilder founder and original software developer Jim Gilliam was motivated by the deeply held beliefs he shares in his video, "The Internet is My Religion" (2011), but almost twenty-five million dollars in venture capital later (Crunchbase, n.d.), NationBuilder is fundamentally only interested in the one thing that motivates all such funded enterprises, making as much profit as possible, by doing whatever it takes to achieve that single aim.

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