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Book Excerpt: Power Shift

BY J. WALKER SMITH, ANN CLURMAN AND CRAIG WOOD

Oct 15, 2004 12:00 PM

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Editor's note: *This is an exclusive excerpt from the new book, "Coming to Concurrency: Addressable Attitudes and the New Model for Marketing Productivity," which covers consumers' resistance to marketing and the shift in practices that may be the only viable solution. It's scheduled for publication this month by Racom Communications.*

The question to ask of every marketing activity and system is whether it serves to empower consumers. The presumption should be that anything taking power away from consumers is allowed only as an exception.

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The reasons for keeping power from consumers must be clear and overwhelming. When it comes to consumer power, the One World Cafe in Salt Lake City makes no exceptions. There are no prices on the menu. Customers pay on the honor system. Some of the regulars pay in other ways. One pays the water bill. Another donated a quarter-acre of a vegetable garden. Some wash dishes; others repair the equipment. Most, though, pay. And the restaurant is breaking even. It's an idea that seems to be catching on. The landlord of the building in which the One World Cafe is located lets the restaurant owner set her own rent. The Associated Press reports that the president of the Utah Restaurant Association said that many restaurants have already moved to "menu-free, size-optional" formats.

But the integrating of insights must go farther than simply dumping all power into the laps of consumers. The insights must recognize the nuances and degrees of power that are appropriate in particular situations for particular individuals.

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