

The Science of Customer Connections

Manage Your Message to Grow Your Business

Jim Karrh, PhD
Foreword by Dorie Clark

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“I encourage you to spend some time with Jim’s book. Use it to set your messaging priorities, develop ideas, and build consistency in your professional voice. That way, you, with the help of your network of messengers, can make the biggest possible impact.” – **Dorie Clark**, author of *Reinventing You*

“The volume of information we receive every day is staggering! It’s not easy to separate the mindless messages from the mindful ones. Jim’s book helps you break free from the message maelstrom, and win your audience’s hearts and minds.” – **Lisa Nirell**, author of *EnergizeGrowth NOW* and *The Mindful Marketer*, CMO success expert, and founder, EnergizeGrowth LLC

BOOK SYNOPSIS

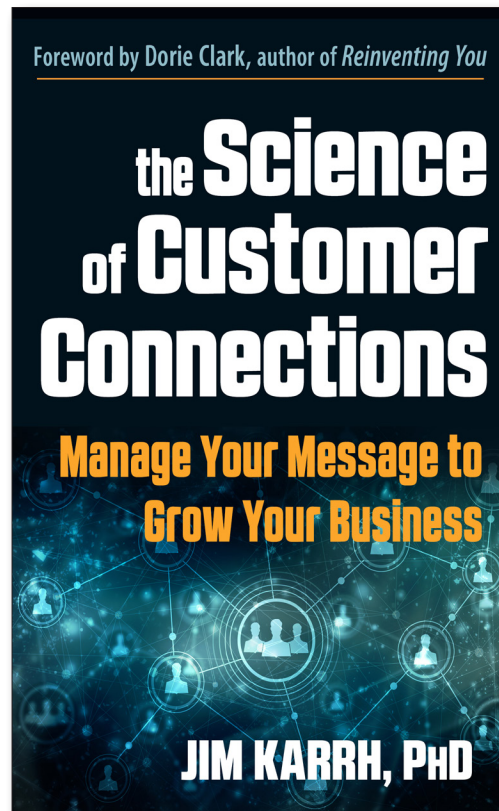
The vast majority of word of mouth happens offline, in everyday conversations. In *The Science of Customer Connections*, Karrh offers simple concepts plus practical guidance for individual professionals, teams, and complex organizations to be part of those conversations in ways that grow their business.

With clear language and a sense of humor, Karrh guides readers step by step to create:

- A message that is memorable, interesting to buyers, and built to share
- A growing set of messengers who include your story in their everyday conversations
- Management habits that build consistency and scale

Readers will be equipped to engage customers and employees, build trustworthiness, and grow profitably—without necessarily having to change their business model, offerings, pricing, distribution, or people. Instead, they can quickly elevate the way that everyone close to the business talks about it, consistently resulting in stronger cross-selling and upselling of additional products and services, higher customer satisfaction, and more consistent employee engagement.

Inspirational real-world examples are presented from entrepreneurs and career changers, growth companies, and large global organizations.



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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Jim Karrh, PhD uses his expertise in marketing communications and buyer behavior to help thousands of professionals talk about their businesses more effectively. He has received national and international awards as a researcher, corporate marketing leader, teacher, and columnist. He is also a professional speaker, consultant, and host of *The Manage Your Message Podcast*. He lives with his wife and children in Little Rock, Arkansas.

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Managing Your Message with Jim Karrh

Are there common ways that businesses get their message wrong?

I see several ways that the message can go awry, but the most common is when our business message focuses on us rather than on the customer. Every business worth its salt purports to make it all about the customer—yet so many times our attempts at conversation come across as self-absorbed. Business people talk about themselves, their mission, their passion, their history, and their products. When that happens, it's a monologue rather than a conversation. It usually isn't that engaging!

Why do smart, well-intentioned professionals fall into the trap of talking about themselves? One reason is sheer comfort. We tend to talk about the things we know best and feel most confident talking about. And we know ourselves, our organization, and our products more than we know the customer.

Is the communication environment working for or against most businesses today?

The environment for your message will pull you in one direction or the other. Certainly there is more opportunity than ever to get your message out into the marketplace, through social media, self-publishing, promotions, and events. But there's another half to the equation! In broadcasting it's called the signal-to-noise ratio. For business professionals, we have all of these ways to send our signal but so does everyone else. That leads to a lot of noise, so it's difficult to both get noticed and to sound different, to be distinct.

Can't businesses get into the right conversations just through social media and review sites?

There's no question that the digital world, including social media and rating and review sites, play an important role. Business people need to take full advantage of the opportunities they have. But overall it might surprise you how much more important the offline conversations still are, in terms of driving business growth. Research proves that even in our digital age the vast majority of word-of-mouth still happens offline, in the analog world.

I hear the frustration of so many professionals that the social conversation is full of flawed data and half-truths. With all of that noise, their potential customers fall victim to bad assumptions and potentially bad choices. If your product or service is legitimately helpful and even superior, then one of your big challenges is helping customers shed any false assumptions so they can make well-informed choices. In fact, you owe it to them. And that calls for real conversation and engagement with the opportunity to ask and answer questions in real time, face-to-face.

How would a professional or executive know exactly where to address messaging problems? Where do you find the so-called low-hanging fruit?

I find there are three varieties of the low-hanging fruit. Even without an outside diagnosis, your viewers/listeners probably have a gut feel already for any messaging challenge they have. I see three common areas, each pointing to a different thing to fix:

“Crickets,” as in the crickets are chirping and not much is happening. When growth is hard to come by, the issue probably is a lack of messengers to spread the good word about your business. That means you'll need to be intentional about providing employees, current customers, friends in the community, and others with what they need to talk about you.

“Commodity,” or looking and sounding like everyone else. For example, most mission or vision statements sound pretty much the same. Over time, people in an industry start using the same lingo and terminology. If you are coming across as a commodity, then it's time to shake up your message.

“Cowboys,” when people are saying and doing things their own way. We appreciate the independent spirit of the cowboy, but inconsistency in the message is the enemy of growth. When there are nearly as many stories and messages as there are people, then it's time to assemble a common playbook and some simple habits to follow.

Should businesses be worried about making a big mistake and saying the wrong thing? It's easy to lose reputation and get trashed these days.

Some businesses unfortunately get so worried about saying the wrong thing—and paying the price in social media or on review sites—that they don't say much at all. I believe that is a far more expensive mistake. No one will ever be perfect. You don't need to be perfect. The downside risk of a big mistake is itself very manageable.

I devoted a chapter to what I call “Mangled Messages,” those big mess-ups. I have studied them for years, and have come to find five markers of those Mangled Messages. In the book I describe examples from Nike, PBS, and a Midwestern university among others.

It's a guilty pleasure to look at how other organizations have stuck the corporate foot in their mouths! But none of that should deter anyone in your audience from being proactive with their own message. With this book and a little work, the chances of making a big mistake are very slim. Let your competitors make the mistakes.

