Consider attributes respondents don’t want

By Thomas T. Semon

In terms of maximizing or losing less, depending on whether their prime objective is maximum profit or protection of capital. The distinction has a parallel in marketing that is generally ignored by marketers and market researchers.

The difference is similar to that between a positive and a double-negative: Am I looking for something great, or do I just not want to be disappointed? Confronted with a restaurant’s dessert menu that offers both raspberry sherbet and a tropical fruit mélange, do I choose the safe and predictable raspberry sherbet, or the tropical fruit salad, which may contain my favorite mango and pineapple, or papaya and coconut, which I dislike (the waiter is unhelpful)? In this case, I would take the sherbet; it is more important to avoid the possible papaya and coconut.

That’s a pretty silly example, but it illustrates the problem’s complexity because it would be wrong to base a decision on a low-avoidance criterion. Market research, like marketing generally, tends to assume that customers or prospects are maximizers, an assumption that is in sync with the prevailing view of Americans as optimists. When we ask about the importance of product or service attributes, we rarely, if ever, give respondents an opportunity to tell us what they do not want. A low importance rating for some product feature does not mean that it is not wanted, only that it is not one whose absence would be strongly missed. It would not be difficult to modify product research questionnaires to incorporate this negative (as opposed to no-importance) perception, and it would provide useful insight.

Essentially, it would be useful to discern the difference between maximizers and dis-like, and most of our questionnaires do not allow us to discern that.

Thomas T. Semon is a marketing research consultant based in Highland Park, Ill. He can be reached at tcsemon@aol.com or news@ama.org.

KRAUSS / From page 7

It reminds Godin of his Stanford classmates who took the analytical marketing course instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.

“The theme of Small is the New Big is that acting small—answering your own mail, treating people like people, making your customers think of you as unique, like a partner instead of the intuitive class. “All of the people in the first class have dead-end jobs. They are stuck because they think they can analyze their way out of a situation. And you can’t. There is no indication that successful PR people in a non-P&R world (that) you can analyze your way to success.”

“Marketers are scared,” Godin says. “Analyzing is easier than failing. I believe that the people who are succeeding are the ones who are not falling.”

“What’s next for Godin?” He’s excited about his new book.