

## Perception vs. Reality

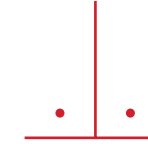
Changing a firm's image or marketing a new product requires countless hours of face time with the actual users to determine what they really want. Most of the time the sellers don't know. People can be in denial about what the firm actually produces, its actual culture, or what their clients want.

Sometimes it's impossible to sell a cube when the product is actually an egg. Then the client can't have what they want. Changing a client's perception of themselves is one of the hardest challenges a marketer encounters. Good client companies change—the ones with their heads in the sand go out of business. There's a reason change is so hard, it takes something like forty days of repetition to stop a habit. Imagine how hard it can be for a company to go from a mediocre design firm to an internationally recognized star architectural firm. A lot of changes need to take place.

Other times, it's not about what the client has to sell, but what the buyer wants. Cake mixes were once made so all you had to add was water. No one bought them. When surveyed, women said they needed to prepare something from scratch for special occasions. So companies changed the mix so a housewife had to add one egg and a little oil. The mixes sold like hot cakes.

Give people what they think they want. Today, a similar story fills MBA marketing books. It's a story about Febreze. It got rid of bad odors. However, Febreze itself was odorless. It wouldn't sell. Women needed to feel as though they had accomplished a task of "cleaning up," so a scent was added and the brand sold millions. From a marketing standpoint, how people feel is just as important as reality. Marketing is about experiences and emotions. It can also be a circus show. To be successful, a marketing campaign has to be honest and it has to grab at emotions. Ultimately, perception and reality need to balance.

I never used maraschino cherries because I was sure the red food color dye would kill us all or at least cause hyperactivity in children. Maybe a few cherries a year wouldn't have caused cancer, but I thought they might have. However, things change. Dyes are safer, and this recipe is great as a brunch addition or a house gift. So try it with the cherries.



## Cherry Pound Cake

### Ingredients

¼ cup salted butter

1 cup brown sugar

1 large egg, any color

2 teaspoons baking powder

2 cups flour

¼ cup chopped walnuts

Whole milk and the juice of a small bottle of maraschino cherries to make 1 cup

1 cup maraschino cherries, chopped

*Note: Leave out the nuts if serving to a group of people you don't know. Respect allergy potential.*

Preheat oven to 350°.

Use a hand mixer to cream butter and sugar. Add egg. Sift dry ingredients. Drain juice from cherries and fill one cup with milk and cherry juice combined. Add dry ingredients and liquid alternately to creamed mixture. Stir in walnuts and cherries. Bake for 50-55 minutes.