

24 26 2009 - Elevators, Escalators, & Buttons

While sitting at the mall earlier today, I noticed something odd. Not surprising, just odd. For every person who took the stairs, fifty took the escalator.

We live in a world in which convenience is no longer a dream; it's a reality. But, I wonder, if perhaps we've reached a point at which the world is becoming too convenient.

I live on the second floor of a building and, without fail, each time I leave by myself I take the stairs. A friend of mine lives on the second floor as well and, despite my best efforts, I've been unable to convince him to brave the stairs when a magic box is so conveniently available just a few feet away. After all, why walk when you can have an elaborate system of pulleys do the work for you?

Of course, that's not to say that these inventions are bad; they're not. Inventions that have made the normal lives of ordinary people more convenient have made the normal lives of people with disabilities possible. Their existence is, by all accounts, very purposeful indeed. But, sometime shortly after this existence began, they quickly turned into something they weren't necessarily intended to be. Elevators were meant to take people from one floor to the thirtieth floor or to take those who cannot walk from one floor to the next. They weren't really intended as a way for people to avoid the mini burst of exercise that comes hand in hand with a flight of stairs.

So, how does this tie into marketing?

It's important to recognize that whatever your company sets out to be, your customers are the ones who will tell you who you "really" are. BitTorrent is a wonderful technology, but many of its users have decided it's a tool for piracy - so it is.

That's not to say that some don't use it for other things; they do, but, like elevators, a lot of people use it for something else entirely. While you think that all of your customers are taking the stairs and only a few are using the elevators, they're probably all waiting around for the next elevator as you read these words.