

Societal Impacts of Marketing

Topic: Product (Controversial Product)

Characters: Len Quill, Buyer for Artifacts, an importer of ethnic arts
Mary Mathers, Len's boss at Artifacts, Ltd.
Bob Littman, Art gallery owner

Len Quill has been working for Artifacts, Ltd., an importer of ethnic arts, for four years. Len was uniquely suited for a position at Artifacts, having majored in marketing and majored in cultural anthropology in college. Len started his career at Artifacts in the importing department of the home office in the U.S. He soon became a buyer, traveling through South America and buying native arts from local communities. One of his major sources of artifacts is the Puna Native American tribe. Len became so interested in the tribe that he learned their native language, and now he is the only person from Artifacts who works directly with the Punas.

On a stop back at headquarters, Len's boss, Mary Mathers, has asked Len to join her and a client for lunch. The client is Bob Littman, who owns several art galleries specializing in ethnic arts. Bob is very interested in the arts of the Puna Native Americans. The Puna Native Americans make woven baskets which are very distinctive. The shapes, patterns, and colors of each basket denote symbols of important events in the tribe's long history. Although Bob is interested in the baskets, he wants to change the patterns and colors to reflect the tastes of his customers. It would be Len's job to market the idea to the Punas. Of course, the Native Americans would receive a good price for their wares. Although the Punas are not poverty stricken, there is certainly room to improve their standard of living. Mary Mathers is very enthusiastic about this opportunity; it will result in a large profit for Artifacts, Ltd.

Len is not sure he wants to convince the Punas to change their artwork. As an anthropology major, Len learned of many societies which weakened when basic cultural symbols were changed. Even if the Punas are eager to enter into the contract to make the new type of baskets, Len is concerned that they are not aware of the damage such changes can do to their society.

Len is leaving in a week for his next trip to South America. He is still unsure about how to handle the deal with Bob Littman. No contract has been signed, nor will a contract be signed until and unless Len gets an agreement from the Puna tribal council. Just as he is pondering this situation, Mary calls him into her office. Mary informs him that, if the Puna are willing to make baskets according to his specifications, Bob Littman insists on placing a large order that will be due in a short period of time. Len knows that in order to meet the deadline, the Puna would need to have both men and women working on the baskets. Traditionally, however, making the baskets has been women's work.

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