DAVID ALLISON

With a Foreword by Don Peppers and Martha Rogers, PhD

HUMAN

THE DEATH OF
DEMOGRAPHICS

Valuegraphic Marketing for a Values-Driven World

THE VALUEGRAPHICS DATABASE

EVERY ORGANIZATION ON EARTH WANTS TO CONVINCE some people to do something. And people will only do things that give them more of what they value. So, to be successful, an organization must identify what people value and give them as much of that as they can. You can see how powerful values are when it comes to marketing, product creation, and closing that last mile.

Behavioral scientists have known about the magnetic power of values for a long time, but what was missing was a Rosetta stone that would crack the code and make this knowledge operational for organizations to use. That's what

the Valuegraphics Database was made to do. It's the first database that maps the values that drive all human behavior, everywhere on earth, and can pinpoint which values any group of people share in common.

You'll recall we mentioned this database in Chapter 2, when we talked about how our research showed the fallacy of demographic profiles. Creating this database was an enormous undertaking and quite the adventure, partly because we first had to *identify* which values were driving the behaviors of everyone on earth. This is what makes this database such a breakthrough. It's the first complete inventory of shared human values, a kind of directory of how humans make decisions. Put another way, it's the operating system for being human.

Here's how we put the database together.

BUILDING THE VALUEGRAPHICS DATABASE

The Valuegraphics Database is the result of more than three-quarters of a million online surveys (and counting) conducted around the world, using a team of translators fluent in 152 languages. Even more interesting, the surveys were designed to react and change based on how the respondent answered. You could think of these surveys as three-dimensional, with each answer potentially triggering the next question to come at you by drilling down, moving along the same level, or shifting to an entirely new line of questions. This unlimited variation in question-pathing is one of the most exciting things about the brave new world of

online/digital surveys. Simpler, old-fashioned surveys only allow questions to follow one after the other in a sequence, or perhaps skip ahead a bit using the familiar phrase, "If you answered no to this question, skip ahead to question 5." Yawn.

Furthermore, there were 10 different sets of survey questions that focused on 10 different themes. For example, one theme was sports, fitness, health, and recreation. In all, we had 10 different surveys each with multiple, three-dimensional variations based on the way each respondent answered each question. Still with me?

The Questions We Asked

Using the 10 themes as a starting point, we asked respondents all over the world about their wants, needs, and expectations from life. Because of the three-dimensional nature of the survey design, the responses we received to this series of questions became a contextualizing layer of 380 possible data points. These 380 metrics about wants, needs, and expectations helped us better understand how the backbone of the study—the core human values that are most important to people—could be fleshed out.

For example, it's one thing to know that *Family* is the most important value in someone's life. But it helps us understand how *Family* is impacting behaviors and emotions if we also know their wants, needs, and expectations when it comes to their family.

As for the values themselves, in order to map their importance for the population of planet earth, we had to have a list of values to start with. We looked to respected

social science studies like the World Values Index and the Bhutan Gross Domestic Happiness Index and came up with a list of 40 values to track.

For practical reasons, we began by mapping these values for the United States and Canada. That's what my last book, *We Are All the Same Age Now*, was about. We started using this preliminary dataset for two countries to profile target audiences for clients and to generate reports on various industries. At the same time, we quietly finished our work polling the populations of the other countries of the world.

At the time, it felt frustrating that we couldn't do the entire planet all at once. This two-step approach was necessary to pay the bills and fund the completion of the global dataset. But in retrospect, I'm glad it happened this way because we learned so much from using the database on a smaller scale before we went global.

Crunching through all the global survey responses made it abundantly clear that the initial list of values we had been using for Canada and the United States needed an upgrade. There were more values at play around the world than we, or anyone else, had ever suspected. This is worth waving a flag about. It's not every day that a new value is identified after all.

Many things that we had assumed were behaviors, beliefs, or mere interests turned out to be core values. A behavior, belief, or interest becomes important enough to be labeled a core value when it influences all the emotions and behaviors of a significant segment of a population. When something rules the lives of enough people, it has become a value.

For example, *Environmentalism* was not a value on the master list when we started. It was merely something that some people were keen on. Thankfully for the future of the planet, there were enough people around the world for whom *Environmentalism* was a major influence in all aspects of their life, and it was elevated to a core human value.

We eventually found 16 new values to add to the original list of 40. This left us with a newly expanded total of 56 core human values that are at the center of the Valuegraphics Database.

Fifty-six. That's the magic number of values that drive everything we do.

It doesn't seem like a lot of values when you think of the feelings, emotions, decisions, and behaviors that those 56 values have conjured up and unleashed in the world. Those values have been responsible for starting wars and ending them. For starting romances and ending them. For first jobs, first dates, first promotions, and putting the first man on the moon.

Everything humans do is driven by our values. Our values make us who we are and determine what kind of world we create. So in an exceedingly macro way, valuegraphics have created the physical world we see around us every day.

If we add up the 56 core human values and those 380 wants, needs, and expectations, we get a total of 436 metrics.

How We Asked Those Questions

Research geeks like to call what we did a qual-quant survey. Qual-quant is a shorter and easier-to-say version of

qualitative-quantitative, and it simply means that whereas some of the questions were multiple choice or based on rankings or other numeric inputs, other questions required text-based responses.

I'm snacking on cheese as I write this, so let's run with that as an example. Instead of listing five kinds of cheese, asking people to rank them, and moving along to the next topic, we'd go deeper. We'd ask people to tell us how they feel about their favorite cheese. What would it be like if they could have more of that cheese? What if they suddenly had less? And so on. In other words, people were prompted to offer insights about the cheese they love most of all.

Once we had all the text-based survey responses in front of us, we'd start looking for related ideas. And as much as we like to think every person on earth is unique, there are only so many possible ways to respond to a question about cheese, so eventually a pattern of responses would emerge. And, of course, once you can see a pattern, you can use numbers to capture it in the dataset and convert qualitative responses into quantitative data.

The Respondents

The data we collected is an accurate map of the values of nine regions of the world. Those nine regions include 180 countries out of a possible 185 at this moment in time. Countries are always inconveniently dissolving and forming, and so the total number in existence is not a static thing. Think of the map of the world that your elementary school teacher showed you in grade three and what that

same map would look like today. Depending on how long ago you were in elementary school, those two maps will be significantly different.

The five countries we were not able to include in our dataset are countries like North Korea, where online survey distribution and collection is not a realistic undertaking for many reasons.

One thing that makes the Valuegraphics Database so unique is that the data was collected as a random stratified, statistically representative sample of those nine regions of the world. That's a bit of a tongue twister the first few times you try to say it out loud, and it's a real showstopper if you weave it into conversations at cocktail parties. It means that the data is a replica of the real world, with the same proportionate number of people of various age cohorts, in each of the nine regions and those 180 countries but in miniature. I like to say it's our own little Lego model of the people of planet earth.

People who know about statistics and representative samples will tell you how difficult it is to collect a random stratified, statistically representative sample of any population, even a small one. So when I tell these stats geeks that we have a random strat stat rep (that's how the cool kids say it) for the entire population of the world, they tend to light their hair on fire and run out of the room screaming. It's a big deal, and it's only been possible because of the algorithmic survey collection methods facilitated by social media.

Social media channels are, after all, the most sophisticated targeting tools ever created. They exist to allow advertisers to place an ad in front of a narrowly defined

target group of people. Why not use the same geographic and demographic targeting capabilities for surveys? Once you get enough survey respondents of one kind, you can stop accepting anymore of those and focus instead on recruiting more of the respondents that your sample is lacking.

At this point in the story, there's always someone who wants to tell me that sourcing survey respondents from social media leaves out everyone who is not on social media. That is why we sourced roughly 10% of the respondents using traditional survey respondent-sourcing methods. We did this to make sure the social media participants weren't somehow different from other people. We found that regardless of the source of the respondents, the responses were the same.

Oh, and let's not forget to talk about ethics. Survey respondents were not paid. They all knew why we were asking these questions, how we would use the data, and that we would anonymize their responses. To be extra-super-duper legit, we provided everyone with a secret code and an email address they could use to have their responses removed from the database at any time.

The Result

The result of this benchmark study is the Rosetta stone of valuegraphics. It's a database that accurately maps what people care about across the world. As we said in Chapter 2, the Valuegraphics Database is +/–3.5% accurate with a 95% level of confidence. In other words, it's empirically bulletproof.

The database establishes two very important things:

1. It proves that demographics are absolutely useless at describing *who* people are. Demographic stereotypes are bunk. If you need a refresher course, flip back to Chapter 2.

2. More importantly, it can identify the shared values of a target audience for anything in the world. This is important because shared values are the key to engaging a target audience, which is what all organizations are trying to do.

The Valuegraphics Profile

The Valuegraphics Database allows us to identify which of the 56 core human values a particular target audience shares. This list of shared values for a particular group is what we call a Valuegraphics Profile. You're going to see that term crop up a lot in the book from here on, so keep it in mind.

It's important to note that the groups profiled using valuegraphics can be anything. They could be baby boomers with a lot of money. They could be people who like to floss. They could be a region, like Africa. How we define a "group" will depend on what an organization is trying to do and who they want to engage and activate.

In the next chapter, we'll take a look at the 56 values that determine everything we do: the component parts of the Valuegraphics Database and building blocks of a Valuegraphics Profile.