

# 8 Levels of Consumer Awareness Around Organic

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As a business owner, it's imperative to know the different levels of awareness consumers have regarding the food they eat and the products they put in and on their bodies.

Some have zero awareness, while others are quite sophisticated in their level of awareness.

You MUST tailor your marketing messages to consumers who are at specific levels of awareness, so you can get better results.

I created these "8 levels of awareness" based partly on my own experiences as a consumer traversing the organic product landscape, and partly on observing the success my clients have had in marketing their products to consumers at different levels.

As a consumer, I've graduated through all 8 of these levels of awareness. I've danced the dance of falling in love with products that an expert told me were 'certified organic.' I've fallen out of love after discovering the certifications didn't mean much... or the company selling the product was engaging in questionable behaviors... or the expert was simply full of sh\*t.

You can leverage my rocky relationship with organic/healthy products to strengthen your marketing.

Note: Though the title of this article is around "organic" food, the content applies to gluten-free, soy-free, allergen-free, toxin-free, chemical-free, etc... and may be applied to health supplements, nontoxic cleaning products, eco-friendly products, organic skincare, natural personal care products, and anything related.

## The 8 Levels of Consumer Awareness Around Organic

**1. Unaware** – This level is comprised of consumers who are completely clueless about what’s in their food and personal/household products. They have no idea about herbicides, pesticides, chemicals, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), bad farming practices, or how food plays a role in the spontaneous creation of disease. These consumers “Live Under a Rock,” so to speak, and are completely oblivious to the food/body/health connection.

**2. Aware But Apathetic** – Consumers at this level have heard of organic, gluten-free, or some other terminology that’s “new” to them. However, they’re quick to dismiss the information as irrelevant. They simply don’t care about how food affects them; or don’t think the information applies to them. They may be skeptical, but not in a healthy way. In laymen’s terms, they “don’t give a shit.” They’ve never done any testing to confirm whether or not eating better (e.g., organic) food makes them feel better. Without doing proper research, they dismiss possibilities and stay in the dark. They don’t have a strong reason to change their viewpoints.

**3. Curious** – One level up from “Aware But Apathetic” is the Curious Person. He starts to open up his mind to new possibilities and new information, but is not yet taking any action. Perhaps he’s seen a family member lose 100 pounds or have boundless energy or cure some disease through better eating and/or supplements, so he starts to think, “Maybe there is something to this.” He begins researching and reading testimonials on the internet from total strangers about the benefits of eating purer/better food.

**4. Trying it Out, But Not Committed** – At some point when the curious get curious enough, they begin taking action such as deliberately buying their first piece of organic produce, or going gluten-free for a week, or hiring a nutritionist or health coach to point them in a better direction. Varying levels of dedication are found at this level of awareness. Consumers may genuinely want to improve their diets but may face lingering food addictions, withdrawals, peer pressure from their families to continue eating junk, or other factors that make them cheat and go back to their previous food choices. Money may also be a factor, as many people believe they cannot afford the better food, or supplements, or body products. Although they’re pretty much sold on the idea of better food, the consumer’s actions aren’t reflecting true commitment yet.

**5. Gung Ho Newbie** – The dedication level of this person is high. She’s totally sold on organic, gluten-free, dairy-free, or whatever her Thing is. She’s latched onto a few companies that are also gung ho and who have leveraged her enthusiasm for clean eating, perfect health, and a sense of pride about choosing “the best.” She spends hundreds or thousands of dollars on the organic/gluten-free/natural products, believing it’s the right thing to do. Blinded by her adoration of these companies she’s latched onto, she fails to see that something’s still quite not right. At this level, key information is still missing. But she doesn’t realize this yet.

**6. Disillusioned** – At this stage, the consumer discovers an ugly fact or two about the beloved products she’s been buying all this time. Perhaps she discovers the company selling the products is connected to Big Pharma... or the company is owned by a large junk food corporation that uses GMOs in their other products... or perhaps she discovers that the highly processed fish oils, vitamin D pills, soy cheese, or coconut milk recommended to her by the “Beloved Company” is actually causing mass destruction of her hormones. In short, she’s been duped. Walls of adoration come crashing down as she realizes she would feel slimy to continue

giving money to those companies she THOUGHT were selling great products. Suddenly the consumer feels like she has lost her identity.

**7. Unsure of Who to Trust** – Feeling disgusted by all the money (and TIME) she’s wasted buying products from so-called organic companies that turned out to be scammers, the consumer is now looking for someone to just Tell Them The Truth. Confused, angry, pissed off, maybe even bitter – this consumer refuses to be lured in by beautiful, smiling, photoshopped liars who scammed her in the past. She won’t be seduced by pompous credentials boasting Harvard educations or doctoral courses or long lists of media appearances. She will think twice before she buys. She will do due diligence.

**8. Gung Ho AND a Healthy Skeptic** – This is the healthiest level at which a consumer can be. When the consumers finds a trustworthy source of information, she will back them and support them and buy from them for life. She will be compelled to tell her friends and family about them. (And if she doesn’t, her friends and family will ASK her what she’s been doing to look and feel so good.) This level of consumer is extremely sophisticated. She’s been through the entire range of experiences as an organic consumer and has graduated to the highest level. She knows not to automatically trust a product simply because it’s labeled “USDA Certified Organic.” She knows that products marketed as “organic” aren’t necessarily organic – and that this is perfectly legal. She knows that a super-successful company that markets supplements doesn’t necessarily have all the facts themselves, even if they appear to. And therefore, their word can’t always be taken at face value. This consumer knows she must ultimately decide for herself what is true and correct for her – and that the definition of “true and correct” may change as new information surfaces.

### **Which level of consumers are you targeting in your marketing?**

How much awareness and sophistication does your audience have?

Are you launching multiple campaigns to reach consumers at different levels of awareness?

In my experience writing copy for clients, **customers at level 6 (Disillusioned) and 7 (Unsure of Who to Trust) represent a lucrative market for True Organic Companies.** This is where most of your marketing dollars and attention should go. At these levels, you have an opportunity to correct years of misinformation, reverse health issues in consumers, and legitimately earn customers for life. They will WANT to stick around with you – and feel good about doing so – not because you won them over with some slick marketing campaign, but because you opened their eyes to the truth.

The scam artists of the organic industry love to play at levels 4 (Trying it Out, But Not Committed) and 5 (Gung Ho Newbie). Like Hungry Hippos scarfing little white plastic balls, they greedily suck up as many consumers from this level as possible – leveraging the consumers’ enthusiasm and using it against them.

Once those consumers catch on to the scam, they’ll be looking for YOU and your products. They’ll be craving more and more messages of truth from you, which they can forward to their loved ones who are stuck in levels 4 and 5 (and maybe even 1, 2, and 3).

Those who are disillusioned tend to have the most energy and motivation to change. They WANT answers. They're tired of being dicked around. They're disgusted by how much money and time they wasted buying products that turned out to be garbage. Their ego may be a bit bruised – *how could they have not known?*

They didn't know, because they hadn't heard your message yet. They hadn't discovered you existed. Your marketing never reached them. And whose fault was that?

Make marketing a priority. And more importantly, **make sure you launch multiple campaigns that target consumers at these different levels of awareness.**

### **About the Author**

*Michelle Lopez is a copywriter and marketing consultant for organic/natural product companies with a strong message and mission. She helps independent companies strengthen their marketing efforts, improve their sales copy, reach more people, sell more products online, and create lifelong fans. Michelle is also the host and creator of The Organic CEO podcast, available on iTunes and Stitcher Radio. To learn more, visit [www.OrganicCEO.com](http://www.OrganicCEO.com)*