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## Marketing Problem Solver

How Marvin Davis's background at Verizon and Comcast have made him the man to bring LifeLock's identity-theft solutions to the masses

By Matt Alderton

**Marvin Davis** has the marketing equivalent of a Midas touch. At **Verizon Wireless**, for instance, he turned the company from an underperformer to an overachiever as engineer of the company's famous "Test Man" advertising campaign, the hallmark of which was the immortalized question, "Can you hear me now?" Later, at **Comcast**, he performed an even bigger miracle when he helped create the "Comcastic" and "Slowsky" campaigns, which turned the reviled cable provider into a celebrated telecommunications brand. Today, Davis is fine-tuning his touch at a different kind of company: identity-protection specialists **LifeLock Inc.** of Tempe, Arizona, where he serves as the chief marketing officer.

"Prior to LifeLock, I only worked at publicly traded Fortune 100 companies," says Davis, who joined LifeLock—a private company until 2012—in 2009 as its chief marketing officer. "My job before had always been to make big companies bigger. This was my opportunity to do something different by making a small company big."

Turning a start-up into a national brand requires building it, brick by brick, from "crumb" to "colossus." Fortunately, Davis—a self-described "high school math-team geek"—has both the left and right brain needed for construction. In fact, his whole-brained personality got Davis his first marketing job in 1990, in the health-care division at **Procter & Gamble** (P&G). There, surrounded by iconic brands like Crest, Scope, and Pepto-Bismol, he developed a signature approach to marketing.

"When you distill marketing down to its core element, it's really about problem solving," Davis says. "P&G strongly believed—and I believe, as well—that to be a strong marketer you have to have strong problem-solving skills. In fact, the final screening to get hired at P&G is called the P&G Problem Solving Test. You have 50 questions and 65 minutes to answer them. No matter how great you are, if you can't pass the test, you don't get hired."

Davis spent five years at P&G, followed by a short stint at BellSouth in Atlanta. In 1997, he accepted a position as area marketing director with GTE Wireless in San Ramon, California, which in 2000 merged with four other wireless carriers to become Verizon Wireless, of which Davis became vice president of brand management and advertising in 2001. "At the time, Sprint was dominating the wireless category," Davis recalls. "Verizon was really lagging behind."

In fact, Sprint was the country's number one wireless carrier for 15 consecutive quarters. AT&T was second, and Verizon third. The reason, according to research, was that customers ranked network quality—Verizon's greatest strength—fifth in importance behind handset, promotion, pricing plan, and provider brand.

"Everybody concluded that people don't really care about network quality," Davis says. "I looked at the research differently. To me, the research didn't say that people don't care about network quality—nobody likes dropped calls. What it said is they don't see any difference between carriers on that aspect, so it didn't drive preference ... I knew that if we could make network quality the reason people select one wireless provider over another, we would win."

Determined to be the nation's favorite wireless carrier, Verizon instructed its advertising agency to develop an ad campaign that made network quality a differentiator while communicating Verizon's superiority. The agency came back with three options, one of which was the famous "Test Man" campaign featuring bespectacled actor Paul Marcarelli and his catchphrase, "Can you hear me now?"

"Interestingly," Davis says, "it was not the preferred option of my COO, my CEO, or some of the sales executives in the company. But Verizon Wireless has a culture of personal accountability. If you have responsibility, you make the call. I chose the 'Test Man' campaign."

The campaign launched in the first quarter of 2002, and in the second quarter Verizon unseated Sprint as the country's number one wireless carrier—a position it maintained until 2005, when Davis left Verizon to become chief marketing officer at Comcast.

At the time, Comcast faced two major problems: One, it had a superior video-on-demand product for which it wasn't getting credit. Two, people hated cable companies—especially Comcast. Ever the problem solver, Davis took a 360-degree approach to promoting Comcast's products while improving its brand image. Step one was advertising. Although the company was in the middle of choosing an advertising agency when it hired him, Davis made the final choice: San Francisco-based **Goodby, Silverstein & Partners**, which created the "Comcastic" and "Slowsky" campaigns—the first featuring humorous spots proclaiming on-demand movies as "Comcastic," the second featuring a family of turtles who prefer DSL to cable Internet service because it's slower.

*Adweek* chose "Comcastic" as its 2006 "TV Campaign of the Year." What made the campaigns truly effective, however, was Davis's behind-the-scenes work in support of their messages: he made Comcast's customer-experience team "Comcastic" with brand education for the company's sales and customer-service representatives, and he helped Comcast compete for high-speed Internet customers by introducing a "good, better, best" approach to product pricing. "Marketing is more than just advertising," explains Davis, who bases all his marketing decisions on extensive market research. "It's the entire brand strategy."

When he left Comcast in 2008, Davis intended to leave corporate America for good in order to teach, write, and consult. In 2009, however, LifeLock made him an offer he couldn't refuse: No stodgy corporate politics. No cumbersome approval processes. Instead, a close collaboration with CEO **Todd Davis** as he helped build not only a brand, but also an entire product category. "This is a nascent category," Davis says of identity protection. "People still don't understand the threat, and they still don't understand their protection options."

Like he did at Comcast, Davis has helped LifeLock emphasize its product superiority with "good, better, best" product offerings (the company introduced its "best" product, LifeLock Ultimate, in 2012). However, category development remains its biggest challenge.

To that end, Davis has helped LifeLock develop several noncommercial offerings and initiatives with which to engage and educate consumers, including an "Identity Theft 101" resource on its website, a Facebook page that grew from 5,000 fans in 2011 to more than 250,000 in 2013, and the Council for Identity Protection, a consortium of identity-protection stakeholders who engage in thought leadership and debate via written discussions on the council's website.

"To be clear, once we educate people, and once they understand the threat [of identity theft], there is that traditional marketing piece that says, 'You need to buy these LifeLock products.'" Davis says. "But those two pieces have to work together. It's hard to get people to buy a product if they [don't know they need it]."

If the numbers are any indication—in 2010, more than 8 million Americans were victims of identity theft—people do, in fact, need LifeLock's product. And with Davis's Midas touch at work, it's only a matter of time before they realize it. "LifeLock is only eight years old," he says. "We're just getting started."

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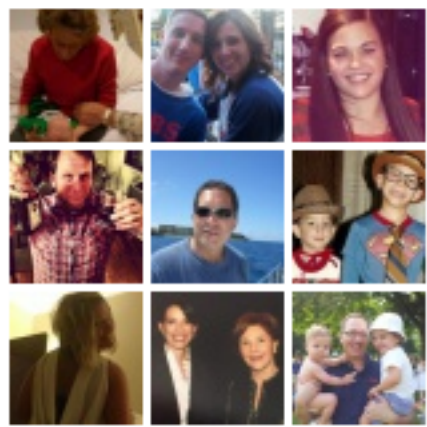


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#### Getting to Know Marvin Davis

What's your favorite part of the workday?

The morning. When I get in the office, I get the first hour and a half or so to myself to get focused on the key things I'm going to do that day.

What's the best advice you've ever been given?

Focus on what you like doing, not on making money. If you do, the money will come.

What motivates you most in life?

I'm very competitive. I want to be the best at what I do. I'm constantly trying to get better at my craft and to win in the marketplace.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

For the first time in my career, I don't have an answer to that question. Hopefully still at LifeLock, looking back at the early days when we had a small little company.