

White Paper

Buzz Marketing – What Goes Around Comes Around Part 1



Buzz Marketing –What Goes Around Comes Around Part 1

Influence Marketing, Word of Mouth, Viral and Buzz Marketing are the same concept. The point of this type of marketing is to get people talking about your product, service, person or idea. A traditional version of this concept was the publicity stunt. Stunts bring attention to whatever you are promoting and get the media and public talking about it.

“The Truth,” a campaign created by American Legacy Foundation to publicize the deadly effects of tobacco use, has mastered this technique and even uses stunts to create television commercials. In one commercial, they place chalk outlines, like those used in homicide investigations, on the streets in New York City. These outlines represent people killed by smoking. (You can see the commercial at www.thetruth.com.)

Not a New Concept

Buzz marketing is nothing new. Early examples of buzz marketing (30s to the 60s) include the decoder rings that the makers of Ovaltine gave to kids. Ovaltine started cytological premiums for the “Little Orphan Annie” radio program, and continued with the “Captain Midnight” radio and television programs. Children would listen to the radio program or watch it on TV and decode the program’s secret message. Of course, they had to have received their decoder by sending in Ovaltine proofs of purchase. There are many other colorful examples of this type of marketing. Perhaps you remember some of them.

As more and more people bought televisions, buzz marketing declined. In fact, in the early years television was the buzz agent itself and it was controlled by three networks. But as new networks and competing media appeared, the influence of the big three networks and of television as a whole shrank. This is graphically presented in Ed Keller and Jon Berry’s book *The Influentials*. The authors created a chart of the highest-rated shows from 1950 to 2000. In 1950 the “Texaco Star Theater” was the top-rated show, with a 61.5 rating and an 81 share. In 1998 “Seinfeld” won those honors with a 22 rating and a 33 share.

According to Keller and Berry, the number of consumer magazines has more than tripled during the last 20 years and there are 1.5 times as many radio stations as there were just 30 years ago. In 1970 36,000 new books were published in the US; in 2000, when *The Influentials* was published, 122,000 books were published. And of course, the Internet has captured the attention of over 70% of the adult US population and there are so many websites in the world that no one can accurately count them.

The Message Is the Media

Before magazines, radio and television the main method by which merchants thrived was word of mouth advertising. Sure they had pamphlets and posters but the real word spread through conversation. Of course that changed when magazines, radio and television came on the scene. But

now that there are so many companies and so many forms of media vying for our attention that we are starting to rely on good old word of mouth again.

Keller and Berry offer some statistics as evidence. They say that 58% of American car buyers rely on other people's opinions of a model's attributes and only 36% rely on advertising. Thirty-seven percent of Internet surfers rely on other people to suggest websites to visit and only 12% rely on advertising.

What makes buzz or word of mouth marketing different today is the myriad of ways we can communicate with our customers, and that they can communicate with us. Radio, print and televisions are still good (although expensive) ways to get the word out and the Internet and cell phones are excellent two-way communications vehicles. However, it is not the media that is important in creating buzz; it is the message.

Six Buzz Buttons

In his book *Buzzmarketing*, Mark Hughes says that there are six "buzz buttons" that start conversations. He should know; he was VP of Marketing for half.com and was successful in persuading a town in Oregon to take half.com as its name. This created media frenzy and with his expertise the web company's registrations rose from 0 to 8 million in three years. Six months after the launch of half.com, eBay bought the company for \$300 million.

Hughes' buzz buttons are:

- The Taboo
- The Unusual
- The Outrageous
- The Hilarious
- The Remarkable
- The Secrets (kept and revealed)

Mark's book has real life examples and I highly recommend reading it.

Of course the best buzz campaigns employ all of these buttons. The greatest example today is "American Idol." Its taboos are the insults that Simon hurls at the contestants. The show certainly offers some unusual if not outrageous and hilarious characters. No one can doubt that it has some remarkable talent and the identity of the person who will be voted out each week is such a closely-guarded secret that only four people know in advance who it will be.

Another great example of buzz marketing is Judson Laipply Evolution of Dance <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMH0bHeiRNg> that was featured on Youtube one year ago. So far it has 43,584,085 views and 24,108 comments.



VISION

GOALS

ACTION



404.664.5664 info@hallman.com

White Paper

In the video, Laipply dances to a soundtrack that plays popular songs of the 1950s through the 1990s by artists like Elvis Presley, MC Hammer, and Michael Jackson. In its first two weeks alone it amassed over 10 million views and was featured on CNN, MSN, E!, USA Today, Good Morning America, The Today Show, AOL, and Google.

You don't need 43 million people "buzzing" about your company (but it would be nice). Just a few small groups of influencers can help you generate a larger market share in your target market. Should buzz marketing be part of every marketing plan? The facts make that very clear. YES.

#

In Part 2 of this white paper series I will cover using "internal buzz" to motivate employees and increase sales.

Harry Hallman

Hallman & Associates

6099 Millstone

Stone Mountain, GA 30087

Direct Line: 404-664-5664

www.hallman.com

BLOG www.hallman.com/blog.htm