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Buzz Marketing – Is It Word Of Mouth (WOM)?

By Kim Klaver

Some people say that they're the same – word of mouth and network marketing.

Tom "Big Al" Schreiter, for example, has taught for years that recommending your product or business is like recommending a restaurant – only you don't get paid when you're recommending the restaurant.

While network marketers do speak to others about their wares, the 95% drop out rate in NM tells me that the "words of mouth" in NM are somehow not the same. People everywhere still recommend restaurants, movies and a host of other things to friends, but most network marketers have given up recommending their wares long ago.

What's the story here? Why the wildly different results?

Word of mouth and NM are both the same and not the same. Same in the sense that people talk to each other about things in both. But there the similarity stops.

Many marketers (not just network marketers) have latched onto the phrase word of mouth because it has been the most effective means so far to market products.

Here's how it's defined in Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_of_mouth

"Word of mouth (WOM) is the passing of information by verbal means, especially recommendations, but also general information, in an informal, person-to-person manner, rather than by mass media, advertising, organized publication, or traditional marketing...

Word of mouth promotion is highly valued by marketers. It is felt that this form of communication has valuable source credibility. People are more inclined to believe word of mouth promotion than more formal forms of promotion because the communicator is unlikely to have an ulterior motive (ie.: they are not out to sell you something)...Also people tend to believe people that they know." (Emphasis added.)

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In his eye-opening book "The Tipping Point (

<http://www.bananamarketing.com/library.html>

), Malcolm

Gladwell discusses those people ("Connectors" and "Mavens") who start word of mouth discussions that create major marketing successes.

"What sets Mavens apart...is the fact that [they] want to help, for no other reason than because they like to help. That turns out to be an awfully effective way of getting someone's attention."

He then brings up Paul Revere...

"News of the British march did not come by fax, or by means of a group email. It wasn't broadcast on the nightly news, surrounded by commercials. It was carried by a man, a volunteer, riding on a cold night with no personal agenda other than a concern for the liberty of his peers..."

And last, he gives a restaurant example..

"And why are the Zagat restaurant guides so popular?..Their real power derives from the fact that the reviews are the report of volunteers – of diners who want to share their opinions with others. Somehow, that represents a more compelling recommendation than the opinion of an expert whose job it is to rate restaurants." (Emphasis added.)

The difference, it appears, is in the motivation. Love? Or money?

In network marketing, many people DO love their products; so for them, that part of the word of mouth works. But then, when they come to the money part – the part where the listener finds out the speaker is selling it or benefitting in some material way when the other buys – that's the moment the word of mouth spell is broken. The trust has gone. The relationship has been abused, (

<http://kimklaverblogs.blogspot.com/2006/04/who-else-wants-to-abuse-their-friends.html>

) according to

tens of thousands of people.

Two suggestions for network marketers:

1. If in your soul, you feel this difference between marketing and word of mouth like I do, stop telling prospects that NM is like recommending a restaurant. And don't nag your people about going to their friends. It likely means they too, have discovered this difference first hand. Most people would rather keep their special relationships. It's not worth it to them to risk friendships by selling to their friends. (See Stella's story:

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<http://www.bananamarketing.com/paperback.html>

in If My Product's So Great, How

Come I Can't Sell It?)

2. Train your folks to ALWAYS tell up front that they are marketing the product they're talking about. FIRST thing, before the gushing starts. I don't know of anyone, anywhere, who wouldn't rather buy from someone who loves their product line, who uses it, and who wants to make a difference in the lives of others by spreading the word. We ALL buy stuff anyway, so that's not the problem. Just don't hide it. You have to reveal it at some point. So why not do it up front?

NEXT: Buzz marketing – Is it word of mouth (WOM)?

Kim Klaver is Harvard & Stanford educated. Her 20 years experience in network marketing have resulted in a popular blog,

<http://KimKlaverBlogs.com>

, a podcast,

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giant resource site,

<http://BananaMarketing.com>

which features hundreds of stories, tips, books and

CD programs for those who want to learn the art of network marketing.

Buzzworthiness Via Human Motivation

By Jambhala Rinpo

Creating something buzzworthy can be a challenge, but a challenge worth achieving. If you can create something buzzworthy enough to get everyone buzzing about it and spreading the message virally, then you've succeeded in doing something that most marketers only dream of.

Let's take a look at buzzworthiness from the perspective of the psychology of human motivation. If we can grasp the concept of what motivates us as humans, then we'll have a better understanding of how to utilize the motivation factors to encourage the viral spread of our message through starting a buzz.

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The famous psychologist Abraham Maslow presented what he called the "Hierarchy of Needs". According to this hierarchy, if a human doesn't have their basic needs met, then they will be motivated mostly by meeting those basic needs first, giving less importance to the other needs. Let's take a look at this hierarchy below:

1. Physiological needs: Food, water, shelter, and sex. 2. Safety: Freedom from the threat of physical and emotional harm. 3. Social Needs: Friendship, belonging, and love. 4. Esteem Needs: Achievement, recognition, and reputation. 5. Self-Actualization: Truth, meaning, and wisdom.

After fulfilling one group of needs starting with physiological needs, then we will become more motivated to fulfill the next set of needs, which graduates us to the next set of needs, until we fulfill self-actualization at the top of the hierarchy. This can essentially be seen as a scale of motivation. The things that motivate us are the things that fulfill one or more of our needs.

So here's an example of how to easily create a buzz: Give out free food to famine stricken people. Those people's primary motivation would be to attain food, and if you provide it free, they will be buzzing to get it, because it fulfills their basic needs. Does this example have much relevance to modern marketing? What do you think would happen if you gave out free hamburgers to people at a festival? You'd create a buzz and people would remember you. People walking away with their free burgers would meet other people and say "They're giving out free burgers over there", thus propagating your message virally via word of mouth and creating a buzz.

Okay I admit, there's another concept here that makes it buzzworthy. The concept is to have something unique about your message/product/service. People will buzz about free burgers because A) it fulfills one of their basic needs, and B) the offer is unique because it's free. If burgers were always free, then there would be nothing to buzz about.

For people that have their physiological and safety needs met, it is easier to create a buzz through the motivation to meet their social and esteem needs. A few of the greatest examples of viral marketing such as Hotmail, MyJournal, MySpace, and Friendster are all examples of this. These companies created a buzz because they offered something unique that fulfills the social and esteem needs through social communications, and social networking.

In these cases, the word of mouth buzz gets spread even faster because by spreading the word they fulfill their social and esteem needs at the same time as fulfilling it from the service they're spreading the word about. It works the same even with the example of free burgers. When someone walks away

with a free burger, they are inclined to go tell their friends about it, because it will boost their reputation, recognition, and strengthen their friendship. Their friends will be excited and happy to get a free burger thanks to you being the one to tell them about it. This is a key point in buzzworthiness and if understood and implemented with the right ideas and the right messages, can increase your buzz exponentially.

If you have a message, product, or service that is unique and fulfills one or more of our human needs, then you are on your way to creating a buzz. If it is something that is so good that people's reputation

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and recognition becomes boosted amongst those they tell about it, then it's definitely buzzworthy! The only thing left is to tell people to spread the word about it, and make it as easy as possible for them to spread it (ie. Viral tools such as tell-a-friend scripts, hand outs, pamphlets, e-mail forwarding, articles they can freely publish, etc...).

Good luck creating a buzz!

Jambhala Rinpo is a viral marketing enthusiast and experimenter. For more info, tips, and tools on viral marketing please visit his website:

<http://www.ViralMarketingBuzz.com>

or his blog:

<http://ViralMarketingBuzz.blogspot.com>



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