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**Cause-Related Marketing**

**By Steven Van Yoder**

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Altruism. Corporate responsibility. Philanthropy. These are often used to describe cause-related marketing, an activity in which businesses join with charities or causes to market an image, product, or service for mutual benefit.

Embracing a cause makes good business sense. Nothing builds brand loyalty among today's increasingly hard-to-please consumers like a company's proven commitment to a worthy cause. Other things being equal, many consumers would rather do business with a company that stands for something beyond profits.

Powerful marketing edge

Cause-related marketing can become a cornerstone of your marketing plan. Your cause-related marketing activities should highlight your company's reputation within your target market. Cause-related marketing can positively differentiate your company from your competitors and provide an edge that delivers other tangible benefits, including: Increased sales Increased visibility Increased customer loyalty Enhanced company image Positive media coverage

By choosing a cause you are passionate about, cause-related marketing is emotionally fulfilling. It's a way to merge your profit center with your "passion center" and build a business that mirrors your personal values, beliefs and integrity. If your cause also resonates with your target market, your activities will generate tremendous goodwill and media attention can be its side effect.

**Real-World Success Story**

Cosmetic dentist Mark McMahon made himself a media mini-celebrity with a thriving practice due in part to his high-profile pro bono work in his community, a strategy that landed him radio and TV appearances in areas where he worked.

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McMahon established partnerships with local charities, including a homeless shelter and a shelter for battered women, and offered free dental services to their members. Before each event, he contacted local media and let them know what he was up to. Several TV crews showed up, filmed him treating patients, and later aired the segments on the evening news.

"These events were surprisingly easy to arrange, and every year, they'd help us get press simply by doing these charitable promotions," McMahon says. "Local television news stations loved the emotional element. And it was obviously rewarding to see patients after we'd treated them who'd been in pain for months talking about how glad they were to be relieved of their toothaches."

Another project involved the Delancey Street Foundation, a residential education center for former substance abusers and ex-convicts. "I agreed to treat some of their members' acute dental needs," McMahon says. "I quickly appreciated the media appeal of transforming the appearance of these

rough-looking guys with terrible smiles."

McMahon captured the event with before and after photos. "These guys had missing teeth and terrible smiles," he says. "So I had a professional photographer capture before pictures of these guys in street clothes with their snarling faces. After I fixed their teeth, we took more pictures, but this time dressed the guys in suits and ties, now looking like lawyers and accountants, with me sitting right in the middle. The media loved it, and it was great seeing these men looking like new."

McMahon's TV appearances created name recognition. "After I did the story on a local television show, I was recognized in my gym by a masseuse who had seen the show," McMahon recalls. "She said, 'I was thinking about you this morning while I was flossing my teeth.' She became a great source of referrals."

(Excerpted from the book *Get Slightly Famous: Become a Celebrity in Your Field and Attract More Business with Less Effort*, by Steven Van Yoder)

### Getting Started

Cause-related marketing yields mutual benefit. Look for partners with a similar agenda whose goals can be better achieved by partnering with your business. Take inventory of the assets that make you an appealing partner in a cause-related venture.

There are many types of mutually beneficial relationships you can form with your cause-related partner, including special events, sales promotions and collection plans. An easy way to embrace a cause is to team up with a charity.

Whenever Johnny "Love" Metheny, a slightly famous nightclub owner in San Francisco, opens a new club, he shares the limelight with a local charity. "I have a history of including the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society in my grand openings," says Metheny, who was voted the society's Man of the Year in 1991. "It's not only something I feel good about, but it helps us market our businesses to the community and media at the same time."

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Volunteer with an organization. When Eunice Azzani, an executive recruiter, volunteered to serve on the board of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, she didn't anticipate that it would connect her with executives from Mervyn's, Bank of America, and Wells Fargo Bank, all of who eventually hired her to work for them.

"People don't hire a piece of paper or a process. They hire people they trust," Azzani says. "Volunteering for a position at a local organization makes you very trustworthy." She advises business owners to target causes they believe in. "If you're helping with a cause you believe in, people will see that you care. And they'll realize you will probably care as much about your work."

As your partnership takes shape, become ambassadors for each other. Talk about the charitable organization and have flyers available. Promote the organization (and your partnership) on your website and in your newsletters. Ask your partner to extend the same courtesies to you.

Never lose the marketing focus of your community partnership efforts. Even though the work is philanthropy, your cause should generate interest in your company and motivate people to buy from it. Select a cause that is important to your target market, and make sure your target market sees that

connection.

Steven Van Yoder is author of *Get Slightly Famous: Become a Celebrity in Your Field and Attract More Business with Less Effort*. Visit

to read the book and learn about

'slightly' famous teleclasses, workshops, and marketing materials to help small businesses and solo professionals attract more business.

### **Greater Online Exposure through Press Release Submissions**

**By Hillary Lane**

Every business owner looks for ways to constantly stay ahead of their competitors when doing business on the Internet, or in general. The main component of success involves increasing their website visibility in the search engines. Obtaining better search engine placement and having increased online exposure is a process that takes time, patience, and access to qualified resources. The solution? The implementation of press release submissions will be one giant leap toward a successful online marketing strategy.

Online press release submissions can accomplish many goals that relate to your online positioning strategy. Getting your website content syndicated should be a top priority in your overall marketing strategy. Content syndication will send your website marketing efforts into overdrive if conducted in an ethical manner. I say the word "ethical" because there are many so-called website owners who are using shady techniques to get better search engine rankings and online exposure by utilizing short

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term spam techniques. Consequently, you will be left with short term placement results and have created a bad name for your company within the Internet marketing community.

Online news wires are taking advantage of RSS (Real Simple Syndication) technology in order to extend their marketing reach via the Internet. This enables your company news to be seen on a variety of websites related to your business news. Furthermore, your news will also be syndicated on other websites if they use news related content. This is a popular means of keeping one's web site up-to-date with industry related content.

Imagine being able to see results in matter of weeks, instead of months as with traditional internet marketing. If your marketing efforts are not getting you the amount of online exposure you desire, I would suggest implementing the power of press release submissions through RSS technology. It is time to gain a competitive advantage in your industry and jump start your online marketing exposure. Press release submissions are the key to unlocking your true marketing potential.

Hillary Lane is an Internet Marketing professional who specializes in Writing, Optimizing, and Distributing Press Releases and Articles. Her core competencies are in Link Popularity strategies and acquiring new customers through Search Engine Optimized News Releases. To learn more about her services, please visit

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