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How To Create Profits Using Viral Marketing Techniques

By Jerry Bader

The Difference Among Viral, Buzz, and Word-of-Mouth

There are certain words, jargon that stands in for theory, that starts with marketing industry insiders and before you know it becomes the 'in' subject of books, blogs, articles, and MBA dissertations. But as jargon filters down to the less sophisticated, the meaning and ideas behind these words becomes lost. Such is the case with the current state of thinking on Buzz, Viral, and Word-of-Mouth marketing.

These terms are often used interchangeably but are they the same thing? Dave Balter and John Butman in their book, 'Grapevine,' describe Buzz as a marketing tactic aimed at generating publicity or awareness often without regard to any specific message, while Viral marketing is a means of spreading a marketing message through the use of contagious creative most often Web-video and Word-of-Mouth is the process of product story-telling. Balter's marketing agency concentrates on creating word-of-mouth campaigns for his clients but the name of his company is BzzAgent – no wonder the confusion.

Mark Huges, author of the book 'Buzz Marketing– Get People to Talk About Your Stuff' points out that in order to create buzz about your company or product you must develop a marketing campaign that incorporates at least one, and preferable more, of his Six Elements of Buzz:

1. Taboo, 2. Unusual, 3. Outrageous, 4. Hilarious, 5. Remarkable, and 6. Secret.

It would seem that these six elements are the same elements that generate the contagious spread of information – Viral marketing. In order for something to become viral, people must talk about it, ergo word-of-mouth. But people can talk and spread the word of a video or stunt without ever generating much talk about the product. The famous, or infamous, Oprah Winfrey-General Motors audience car give-away stunt is a prime example of generating talk about a stunt without generating much talk about the product. If as Balter suggest, word-of-mouth is 'product story-telling,' then there is definitely a difference between Buzz and Word-of-Mouth.

So if Buzz is the tactic for drawing attention to your company; and Viral is the method of spreading the message; and Word-of-Mouth is the result; we then have a clear distinction between the three

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marketing terms.

The question is how can we construct a Web-based marketing campaign that uses the Buzz tactic, Viral method, and Word-of-Mouth message to produce the ultimate marketing objective: more sales and profits; and are Huges' Six Elements of Buzz the only media attributes that deliver a marketing stir?

Solve The Marketing Mystery: Discover Means + Motive + Opportunity

We've all watched enough 'Law and Orders' on television to know that solving a mystery requires learning the means, motive and opportunity of the puzzle. For today's marketers these elements are clear.

Motive: to attract attention, breed interest, stimulate desire, and generate action that ultimately produces increased sales and profits.

Means: the advent of relatively low cost desktop digital video tools and the creation of a new class of professional multimedia Web-video producers brings affordable multimedia creative to businesses that in the past could not afford professional video content.

Opportunity: the penetration of high-speed Internet connections plus the Web's ability to delivery multimedia audio and video combined with the introduction of Web-video search databases by dominant Internet players like Google and YouTube create the necessary opportunity.

Why Web-Video Solves the Buzz-Viral-Word-of-Mouth Mystery

1. The 5 Strategic Goals of Marketing 2. The Anthropomorphization of Brands 3. Maslow's Extended Hierarchy of Needs 4. The 5 Elements of Communication

The 5 Strategic Goals of Marketing

Increased sales and profits is every company's prime motive, however, in order to achieve those goals, certain intermediate objectives must be met, especially as it concerns the Web that by its nature is a sterile, remote environment. Marketing campaigns should be constructed to provide the appropriate audiences with five essential elements:

a. Awareness b. Emotional Utility c. Functional Utility d. Process Facility e. Confidence

Target audiences must be made aware of the company's existence and must be made to comprehend its relevance to their needs; and market audiences must be provided with a platform to participate or get involved with the company.

A successful marketing campaign must tap into an audience's need for emotional utility, a quality created in the audience's collective consciousness from brand personality resulting from corporate behavior and audience experience.

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The campaign must also be able to speak to the functional utility of the company's products or services. Hard information and easily understood instructions must be made available so that customers are actually able to generate the promised benefits of the product or service.

The campaign must facilitate the process of moving potential customers easily and conveniently from awareness, to utility, to incentive, to sale. The process must be transparent and mechanisms must be put in place to accommodate customers when things go wrong.

The campaign must also create confidence in the organization's ability to deliver the promised benefits both emotional and functional.

The Anthropomorphization of Brands

More marketers are beginning to appreciate the effect of brand personality on their relationships with customers and prospects. It is apparent that markets have a clear idea as to a brand's personality, whether a company pays attention to it or not. And just as significantly, it is clear that companies can't

just change their television commercials or advertising agency to overcome an unwanted or undesirable personality.

Brand personality is a function of audience experience: everything from the way you respond to telephone inquiries, to users ability to comprehend packaging instructions, to your website and email inquiry response times. No amount of smiling friendly faces in advertisements will make up for the irritation of a multiple-transfer-disconnect when trying to resolve a problem over the telephone.

Companies are ultimately separate entities whose personalities are composed of a collective consumer consciousness created through experience, interpreted from a very human perspective. It is human nature to anthropomorphize non-human entities in order to better deal with them. Batra, Lehman & Singh point out in their 1993 paper that there are five significant human personality traits.

The Big Five Human Personality Traits:

1. Extroversion/Introversion, 2. Agreeableness, 3. Consciousness, 4. Emotional Stability, and 5. Culture.

Jennifer Aaker in her 'Journal of Marketing Research' article, Dimensions of brand personality, relates the Big Five Human Personality Traits to the Big Five Brand Personality Traits.

Big Five Brand Personality Traits:

1. Sincerity, 2. Excitement, 3. Competence, 4. Sophistication, 5. Ruggedness.

When companies build a website or implement any marketing initiative there are consequences in the market collective; managing those consequences is critical to not just developing a brand personality but managing and fostering it to meet your ultimate marketing motive; generating more sales and

profits.

Maslow's Extended Hierarchy of Needs as it relates to Marketing

Abraham Maslow, who was the chairman of the psychology department at Brandeis University in the early 1950's, developed a theory for the hierarchy of human needs. Before his death in 1970 he revised his theory by extending the hierarchy to include higher value components.

The bottom of the pyramid starts with our physiological needs: the need to maintain physical well-being and self-preservation; as you move up the pyramid the needs become more socio-cultural: the need to be accepted in society; while at the top of the list the needs become more abstract and intellectual as they relate to self-identity and the need to communicate that identity to others.

Maslow's Extended Hierarchy of Needs

1. Physiological Needs Water, food, sleep, warmth, health, exercise, sex.
2. Safety & Security Needs Physical safety, economic security, comfort, peace, freedom from threats.
3. Social Needs Peer acceptance, group membership, love, and association with successful groups.
4. Self-esteem Needs Association with importance projects, recognition of strength, intelligence, prestige and status.
5. Self-actualization Needs Need to take on challenging projects, opportunities for innovation and creativity, learning at a high level.
6. Cognitive Needs Need to acquire knowledge and to understand that knowledge.
7. Aesthetic Needs Need for beauty balance, structure.

As marketers, Maslow provides us with a blueprint for developing a brand personality that can effectively deliver a compelling, comprehensible, effective marketing message. Decide which of Maslow's needs your company satisfies and then construct a marketing plan that delivers both the personality and message that speaks to those needs.

We are lucky to live in the age of the Internet, for even the smallest of companies has the opportunity to communicate its brand personality and marketing message using the most effective communication environment ever invented, The Web.

The 5 Elements of Communication

To effectively take advantage of the Web's ability to communicate, you must understand the five elements of communication:

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1. The Environment: the Web is a sterile environment that needs to be humanized in order to effectively deliver your brand personality and marketing message.
2. The Message: the Web is an information–infotainment environment where compelling, informative, memorable content is paramount.
3. The Messenger: the Web is a one–to–one communication system compared to traditional broadcast and print communication that is a one–to–many system.
4. The Audience: the Web is a place where visitors choose to visit you, do not short change them with second–rate information, poorly delivered in unimaginative, ascetically challenged presentations.
5. The Process: the Web's multimedia audio and video capabilities combined with the penetration of high–speed access makes for the perfect system to deliver brand personality and needs related marketing messages that humanize your website, speak directly to your audience on a one–to–one basis, and inform, enlighten and entertain your audience in a compelling, memorable manner.

Conclusion

There has always been an ongoing business battle between those responsible for technology services and those responsible for marketing services. The Internet may be a great technological achievement, and it no doubt can be used to provide extremely useful technological solutions, but at its core and from its earliest pre–Web days, it was always a way to connect and communicate information and ideas, and isn't that the essence of marketing?

The need for businesses to create awareness (Buzz), to spread that awareness throughout the marketplace (Viral), and to involve an audience in the spread of needs fulfillment (Word–of–Mouth) is achieved by taking advantage of the Web's multimedia communication capabilities. In short, the Web is a communication tool that can be used by marketers to speak with a human voice and human face directly to your attentive publics on a personal, human, one–to–one basis in order to achieve the prime business motive: more sales and profits.

Jerry Bader is Senior Partner at MRPwebmedia, a Thornhill, Ontario based website design firm that specializes in delivering their North American clients' marketing messages using the latest audio, video, and interactive Flash presentation techniques to create compelling, informative and memorable Web–experiences that enhance brand personality and increase sales and profits. Visit

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Viral Marketing...Is Your Website Infected?

By Bret Forster

Viral...Viruses...Infections...not pleasant subjects for most situations. Unless you're discussing Viral Marketing! Viral marketing techniques can help you create huge increases in both targeted traffic and customers for your website. In this article we'll briefly discuss some of the most effective methods of Viral Marketing.

Before we discuss the different Viral Marketing Techniques, let's clarify what Viral Marketing is. Viral Marketing has nothing to do with computer viruses, causing damage to someone's computer or property, or using deception to create traffic and customers. Viral Marketing includes using legitimate techniques like viral opt-in email, viral ebooks and reports, viral ecourses, and many more!

Let's discuss some great examples of Viral Marketing...

Jimmy D. Brown, the Master of Viral eBook Marketing, has created an Internet Business Empire using free and paid-for viral eBooks and eReports! He creates eBooks and eReports and then allows his affiliates and customers the ability to brand them with their own website and affiliate links. His website, Profits Vault Monthly, offers a monthly membership where he creates a great new eBook product each month. He then allows his members to brand the website links with their own affiliate program links. You can find out more about his program at:

Creating Viral eBooks and eReports and distributing them to your affiliates and website visitors is one of the most effective ways to create viral traffic explosion on your website!

Free Viral Opt-in Ezines -

Viral Opt-in Ezines are another great Viral Marketing technique that uses a very powerful combination. Opt-in Email newsletters or ezines combined with word-of-mouth marketing. The ezine can be HTML-based, email-based, or website or BLOG-based. The key element that makes the ezine viral is getting your subscribers involved. Allowing your subscribers to participate in discussions, creating content, etc. can create a viral word-of-mouth traffic stampede to your website!

Free Viral Reprint Articles -

Viral Reprint Articles are short articles that you allow other webmasters, affiliates, and ezine publishers to reprint or use on their website for free. The only rule for the use of your viral article is that they have to leave your resource box at the bottom of your article. This resource box includes your website link.

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This creates a viral effect because your viral article gets passed around the Internet on websites and ezines.

Free Viral eCourses -

Last but not least, there's Viral eCourses. Viral eCourses are divided into a series of articles and lessons and are published on an autoresponder. When a person e-mails the autoresponder address, he will receive his first lesson via e-mail within seconds or a few minutes. Then usually every one or two days they will receive the another lesson until the e-course is complete. I've seen e-courses that have ranged from one lesson clear up to 52 lessons long. The most common are 7 lesson or 7 day e-courses. Viral eCourses are extremely popular! Allow other webmasters to use your viral eCourse full of useful information, and watch the highly-targeted web traffic epidemic occur.

In this article, we have covered several Viral Marketing techniques. But we haven't even scratched the surface! Use your creativity and come up with some other great ideas. Just don't discount the power of using Viral Marketing!

Bret Forster has been doing business on-line for over 4years. His website,

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offers

the Secrets of How To Unleash Your Own Marketing Virus That Generates More Traffic, More Customers And More Money In Record Time – Or Your Money Back Guaranteed! Visit his website at

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