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WHAT IS "GUERRILLA P.R." ANYWAY?

By Michael Levine

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If you're going to apply the principles of Guerrilla P.R. to the age of the Internet, you have to know something about Guerrilla P.R. itself. In case you have not worn out a copy of Guerrilla P.R. or have forgotten some of the finer points since that book was published in 1993, let's take a fresh look at the concept. After all, the world has changed.

Public relations is the art, as one of my colleagues put it, of "offering people reasons to persuade themselves." In other words, we are not Madison Avenue; we don't tell people what we want them to think. Rather, we give them evidence, facts, and opinions that help them reach a conclusion. If we're good at what we do, they will reach the conclusion we've been hired to promote.

The differences between traditional public relations and Guerrilla P.R. are relatively simple. First of all, public relations firms like mine are available to people with a lot of money, because we charge what we consider to be reasonable fees, which are out of reach of many small or one-person businesses. So entrepreneurs and small business owners need to learn and apply the same skills I use every day in service of their larger, more well-heeled rivals. But these skills can't be used the same way, since they require more money than most small businesses can afford. Not everyone can buy a minute of time on network TV to get the message across.

That's where Guerrilla P.R. comes in. This down-and-dirty offspring of the traditional method is based on an idea I developed called the Tiffany Theory. The Tiffany Theory is an idea that sounds simple but, like most such theories, is so basic it contains numerous truths.

My Tiffany Theory states that a gift delivered in a box from Tiffany's will have a higher perceived value than one in no box or a plain box. That's not because the recipient is a fool; it's because in our society, we gift-wrap everything: our politicians, our corporate heads, our movie and TV stars, and even our toilet paper. Tiffany paper places a higher perceived value on things.

In effect, what I do each day is gift-wrapping. I take a message and wrap it in the finest paper from Tiffany's. No matter what the message may be, I try to make it sound more appealing, more

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interesting, and more useful. If I do my job correctly, the consumer (who gets the message through television, newspapers, radio, or the Internet) will get the message. But first, that message has to go through editors, producers, reporters, and website managers. The Tiffany paper adds perceived value and cachet.

Notice, now, I said, perceived value. In public relations and publicity, perception is truth. It isn't what happened that counts, it's what people think happened. This is the absolute day-to-day currency of politics, entertainment, and most other industries. In our case, we're looking at how the public—that is, the segment of the public you believe is your customer base—perceives your company. Not what your company actually might be.

Does that mean you should lie? Never. Lying, besides being morally wrong, is quite literally

indefensible. That means, at some point, you're going to be found out. And even if you weren't, you would have to start living the lie—remembering what you told the people interested in your business, and hearing people call you what you said you are. It's too hard, and it's not worth it. Besides, it's plain bad business.

When I say that the perception of the truth—rather than the truth itself—is the stuff of great publicity campaigns, I mean that the truth will take care of itself. But you have to make sure that the image you project, the perception you offer to potential customers, is what you want it to be.

For example, a man named Dave Schwartz decided he'd start a car rental company that would lower rates to the consumer by featuring cars that weren't 100 percent new off the showroom floor. He had a choice to make in terms of the perception of his new company, and he chose to beat critics to the punch with a strong sense of humor and a catchy company name: Rent-A-Wreck. Now, Dave didn't lie (his cars weren't wrecks, they drove just fine, so maybe he exaggerated a little), and he didn't fall into the trap of emphasizing price. After all, his competitors already had names like Thrifty and Budget. He hit you in the funny-bone, made his impression of a fun car rental company—with the implied promise that the cars would cost less because they weren't brand new—and launched a very successful business.

It's all in the perception. But is this a contradiction of the Tiffany Theory? Did Dave actually wrap his cars in Kmart paper to make his point?

Not really. Dave still wrapped his message in Tiffany paper. He made sure local news outlets, publications, and media companies knew about his company, and he emphasized exactly how reliable and economical the rental cars at Rent-A-Wreck would be. By downplaying the appearance of the cars—calling them "wrecks" he allowed the media to expect dented, scratched, beat-up cars. When they toured his facility and saw cars that were only slightly used, Dave didn't have to say a word. The message got out that the "wrecks" in question were very reliable, attractive cars that would be available for a lower rental rate because they were used. A brilliant, subtle piece of Tiffany wrapping.

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The Tiffany Theory applies to the Internet in ways it never could with traditional media. Keep in mind that more information is available on the World Wide Web than you can possibly track, let alone control. So it's always important to keep your information true. But unlike information in newspapers or magazines, the data you provide on a website is yours, and you provide the Tiffany paper. Use photographs, charts, quizzes, and prizes, if you can, to keep surfers' interest alive on your site. And remember to wrap every fact in a nice neat piece of Tiffany wrap.

Guerrilla Marketing Comes of Age

By Shannan Hearne–Fortner

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When Jay Conrad Levinson first began writing and speaking about Guerrilla Marketing, he was part of a team developing the most successful ad campaign ever. The Marlboro Man. Whether you smoke or not, unless you've lived under a rock you are familiar with The Marlboro Man.

Guerrilla Marketing is in effect the use of wide and varied unconventional marketing tactics to achieve the most conventional of business goals, which is profits. Back in the day when Levinson coined the philosophy, the internet age hadn't arrived. And still, he developed hundreds of guerrilla marketing tactics that millions of successful businesses used to grow and prosper.

Now that the internet age is moving beyond its infancy, and the majority of homes have at least one PC with access to the internet, guerrilla marketing is ready to come of age. The internet lends itself to guerrilla marketing because it makes optional so many low-cost, viral marketing alternatives.

By the standards of a guerrilla, a successful business is one that is making a profit. Obviously, Amazon.com wouldn't have been considered successful by guerrillas even though they were growing by leaps and bounds.

Guerrilla marketing is perfect for small business working on shoestring budgets. As I've heard many a Success Promotions client say, "frayed and short shoestring budgets". According to the original list of Guerrilla Marketing Arsenal Techniques (which included 100 weapons) sixty-two were free. Guerrilla marketing is incredibly useful to internet marketers because there are so many free and low cost advertising tools and tactics available via the internet.

Jay Conrad Levinson always preached using ALL the technology available to you. Your computer. Your fax machine. Your telephone. Your cellular phone. Your pager. Your Palm device. Your laptop. Your digital camera. Your

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wireless accessories. EVERYTHING.

In an age where technology is advancing by leaps and bounds, Guerrilla Marketing is truly coming of age. I was just cutting my teeth in marketing when Levinson was fine tuning Guerrilla Marketing. And I bought into the concept lock, stock, and barrel. As a result, I am all about marketing on a frayed and short shoestring budget.

So the next time you are in the store or on e-Bay or thumbing through a

catalog and trying to decide if a digital camera or a web design program or an contact management program is a good investment, listen for the drum beat and the rolling thoughts of Jay Conrad Levinson. If you don't think the technology item is a good investment, perhaps you should pick up a copy of one of Jay's latest books. If you do think it is, instead of letting it lie around your office collecting dust while you wait for time to learn how to use it, plug it in and get rolling.

The day of the Guerrilla is upon us. And the worm no longer just goes to the early bird. It goes to the bird who uses every tool in his work hunting arsenal to catch the worm. Be the Guerrilla. Buy the technology. And get started marketing. Guerrilla Marketing has come of age.



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