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Walt Disney Knew How To Get The Word Out

By Stephen Schochet

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By Stephen Schochet

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You need to get the word out about your products but your economic resources are limited. That was often the dilemma that faced Walt Disney. Often burdened with heavy debt, he found many creative ways to let the public in on what he was doing. His innovative marketing ideas could be used by businesses seeking publicity today.

1) Capitalize on current events: In 1930 Walt felt that Mickey Mouse who was constantly surrounded by barnyard animals should get a dog. He vividly described to his artists a funny mutt that his family kept on their farm when he grew up in Marceline Missouri, to the point of getting down on all fours, sniffing around and making barking noises. Animator Norman Ferguson transformed Walt's great acting performance into a cartoon canine named Rover . . . for five months. Then Disney read that an amateur astronomer named Clyde Tombaugh had discovered a ninth planet in our solar system called Pluto and Walt cashed in on the resulting publicity by giving Mickey's pet a new name.

2) Get your employees behind your product: Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs (1937) took three long years to complete and Walt suffered through many doubts about the film's marketing direction. He worried when the press called it "Disney's Folly" , then realized it was good to have people talk about it. He rejected a salesman's idea that he should eliminate the dwarfs from the advertising, pushing the love story between Snow White and the Prince instead. But throughout the stressful production his cartoonists stayed loyal and enthusiastic, often using their free time to run around Los Angeles to tack up advertising posters. Snow White was a world wide success but perhaps the artists got a little too

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excited. After the money rolled in Walt threw his animators a party in gratitude. He later regretted it when his some of the more bohemian members of his staff chose the occasion to let their hair down, and the family event turned into a wild orgy. Any rift that the outrageous behavior caused with the boss was forgotten by 1953 when many of his employees came to Walt's aid to financially back Disneyland.

3) Embrace new technology: In 1927 Walt made two Mickey Mouse cartoons that were rejected by distributors. Then sound was ushered into the movie business with Warner Bros. *The Jazz Singer*. Fearful silent film stars began consulting astrologists to predict the future, but most movie moguls shrugged off actors talking as a fad. Movies without dialogue sold throughout the world, who wanted to rock the boat? The unknown Walt Disney seized the opportunity, and with great difficulty added synchronized sound to the third Mickey Mouse cartoon, *Steamboat Willie* (1928) which resulted in the rodent becoming a national craze. Later history repeated itself in the early 50's when most of the

moguls rejected the idea of television. Walt embraced the new medium as a way to keep the public informed about what his studio was doing.

4) Publicity is better than advertising: Today the Walt Disney Company is an aggressive marketing behemoth that spends up to fifty million advertising individual movies. Recent campaigns have included displaying the title of films on grocery divider sticks at supermarket checkout stands. But their founder had a different philosophy. As a young man Walt had left his job working for an advertising firm to start his own entertainment company and never wavered from his preference. When he entered television he always frowned on commercials, preferring instead to get publicity with fun, behind the scenes looks at new projects. He eventually left his first network ABC, accusing them of ruining the very popular Mickey Mouse Club (1955–1959) with too many interruptions.

5) What's In A Name?: Originally the studio started in 1923 was called the Disney Brothers. The younger, temperamental and risk-taking Walt was in charge of the creative direction, while the older and more cautious Roy, a former bank teller, kept the books. For forty-three years their partnership was a combination of love, ferocious arguments and give and take. In 1926 Walt convinced Roy that they should change the name of their enterprise to Walt Disney, it would make their products more identifiable. A bemused Roy went along with it, sensing his sibling's greater need for fame. The name Walt Disney remained associated with family entertainment even after both brothers passed on.

In 1994 Warner Bros. had high hopes for a feature cartoon called *Thumbelina*. But preview audiences found it boring, a reaction that bewildered disappointed studio executives. A week later they showed it again with a small change: The exact same film said Walt Disney Presents in the opening credits. The test scores went way up and several people in the audience inquired where they could buy *Thumbelina* merchandise.

Want to hear more stories? Stephen Schochet is the author and narrator of the audiobooks *Fascinating Walt Disney* and *Tales Of Hollywood*. The Saint Louis Post Dispatch says, "These two elaborate productions are exceptionally entertaining." Hear RealAudio samples of these great, unique gifts at <http://www.hollywoodstories.com>.

Planning Your Walt Disney World Vacation

By I Henman

While it's always thought that children are the ones who dream of Walt Disney Vacations, there are adults that think of Walt Disney World as their ideal vacation spot as well. The greatest appeal for families to Disney has to be the ability to find something for everyone to do. Of course we're not just talking about group activities, but things for every individual too. This is probably one of the big reasons that families will go back each year, yet they never seem to get bored.

If you're seriously considering taking a Walt Disney vacation you should start your research on the Internet. Of course you can book a vacation right on Disney's website, there are other online travel sites that also have special family destination packages that might include Walt Disney world, as well as airfare, and hotels.

An important thing to keep in mind is that Walt Disney world vacations vary in price depending on the time of year you want to travel. Disney is also busier at particular times of the year than others. Choosing to go to Disney in the off season will often mean you'll get a better deal. It's a funny thing really, Disney never has a shortage of visitors whether it's peak season or not, yet you can always find a deal. This is likely another one of the big attractions as a vacation spot, there is always a good deal to be found.

There are a few ways to book your trip to Walt Disney world. First off you can book it online, via a travel agent or by phoning Disney. Each option has benefits, when calling the operator on the other end might be able to dig a bit deeper and find you a better deal than is available online or at your regular travel agent. If you do intend on calling to book your trip you should either call in the evening or early morning. Calling throughout the day is the busier time, and you'll be more rushed to book and get off the phone so that operators can serve other clients.

Another attraction to consider when planning your trip to Disney is the special events they hold. While you likely won't find a deal during those special events it can make your vacation that much more enjoyable. Attractions such as concerts for children under five, or special character appearances often occur but aren't part of Disney's regular attractions. Also keep a watch for Disney anniversary specials. Catching specials that don't happen all the time can create wonderful vacation memories, and be that much more fun for you and your family.

For more getaway travel ideas take the time to visit our website at

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