

TELL SOMEONE WHO CARES!

Action Mailing lists
18 Hotham Street, South Melbourne Vic 3205
P: 03 9686 9700 F: 03 9686 9800
E: clientservices@aml.com.au W: www.aml.com.au



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I was cruising around www.ted.com the other night (while some of you will say: "Get a life!" those that have had the joy of visiting this website will recognise my genius... but we digress). I came across an older presentation from Seth Godwin. Recognised as one of the founding fathers of this modern marketing phenomena, he delivered a 20 minute insight to the contemporary thought processes and targeting of today's consumer.

One of the many things that we hope our direct marketing will do is to start and re-fresh "word-of-mouth" referrals for our product or service. Quite frankly, this has to be the greatest redeeming factor of sending direct marketing, usually if we have crafted our offline or online piece well, we all quiver with the excitement of sending it onto someone that may well be in the market for the product that is being promoted. Seth Godwin has labelled this as "idea diffusion". It is the concept of touching people with enough relevancy and/or consistency that they are reaching for their credit card even before they have finished reading the promotional copy.

The premise is that consumers have little or no care about you, your organisation or your offer, until they are ready to buy what you are selling. Today's consumer is suffering from an avalanche of choice and no time to carefully evaluate one offer from the next, so they basically have built an inner mechanism to ignore everything you have to say. That is until you come up with something 'remarkable'. And, it has to be remarkable in the true sense of the word, i.e. worthy of a remark. The words NEW, EXCITING, DIFFERENT etc... all hopefully leads the consumer towards remarking on your product.

So, if you are 'remarkable' in what you are about to push out to consumers, Seth's thought is that you would attempt to market directly to Innovators and Early Adopters. These behavioural segments are easy enough to reach because they are prepared to listen and then do. When they 'do' they then tell people that they have adopted a new product and then the word starts to spread to the rest of us laggards.

Many organisations have attempted to use social media to kick start this process and their attempts to stimulate user based conversations about something 'new' will get the right people engaged and referrals should follow. Many have pushed too hard and seen their so called advocates turn nasty and dump on their products or services. Be warned falsehoods, hyperbole and exaggerations have no place here. Facts and real evidence will be the only thing that will hold water in the hands of a savvy consumer.

Seth gave me a three point check list, let me share them with you:

1. **Design is free when you get to scale. Design is everything these days.** If your product is efficient and effective, yet looks clunky and daggy, then you are doomed. Is the iPhone really, technically speaking any more efficient than a blackberry? I suggest that the answer is no. However the seamless intuitive design that has been incorporated in the iPhone make it one of the most sought after pieces of technology in the world.
2. **Safe is risky.** You no longer can develop and design campaigns for the average person. Look to innovate and create the 'new' through the use of media and channels that are relevant and timely. The impossible of yesterday is the 'do'able' of today. Focus on the offer and develop the WOW! The courage comes from the understanding of your market and the competitiveness of your offer, just how good is it? If you have to ask then you don't know. Find out what will put you on the edge of the market, not the middle ground.
3. **Find a group that cares and grab their attention.** Give the Early Adopters a reason to take notice, you need to be considering edgy and innovative campaigns that cut through the noise that invades most of our lives. Being 'very good' is like being poor. Think 'remarkable' then create. Work out what part of your audience is going to care the most and touch them personally. Give them the tools and resources they need to become advocates and then support their mission. Dare I say that your data will tell you who you should be speaking to and what you should be saying.

Seth made the point that the intangible value of a product is the greater part of the economy. Even though there are many values that have been attributed to a brand, the true value is what a consumer is prepared to say and do about a brand. A consumer's advocacy towards a brand is the most valuable asset that an organisation is ever likely to have, so the protection of this advocacy is critical. In many ways this is about perception more than reality. The adage that people buy with emotion and then rationalise with logic is truer today than ever in the history of consumer product marketing. Consumers face choices both here and with a click of a mouse, anywhere in the world.

So you have to ask yourself, why would a consumer buy from you? If your answer does not contain the word 'remarkable' (in the true sense of the word), then perhaps you may need to think again...