

CREATIVE COMPOST



Where Great Marketing Ideas Grow

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Take my product...please!

Marketing trends say OK to show a little personality

In this impersonal era of do-it-yourself checkouts, faceless email correspondence, and insular SUVs, no wonder the majority of businesses resist letting a little personality shine through during the selling process.

But with consumer resistance to sales messages at an all-time high, that approach may be changing. According to a recent Yankelovich Partners study, 59% of consumers feel that most marketing and advertising has very little relevance to them. Sixty-one percent feel the amount of marketing and advertising in their world is out of control, and a whopping 69% would gladly explore tools that would help them block or skip right over your marketing message.

From unwanted spam and telemarketing to poorly targeted direct mail efforts, unwary marketers are creating a highly polarized view of the profession. What's a legitimate marketer to do?

Forward-thinking businesses big and small are turning to humorous or self-effacing messages to reflect their more human side. Hopefully, these trendsetters are making a few friends and influencing upward sales trends in the process.

Here are just a few examples you may have spotted in recent days:

- The “V” in Viagra’s new print ads is positioned behind the model’s head, creating some impish horns. In the interest of decorum, we’ll avoid stating the obvious linguistic connection.
- A graphic on the doors of delivery trucks for Edys/Dreyers ice cream prominently proclaims: “Warning: Driver does not carry spoons.” Similarly, BMW’s hooded car carriers had this message in the past: “We’re delivering somebody’s baby.”
- Cottonelle toilet tissue claims to be lab tested...accompanied by a warm and fuzzy shot of a Labrador puppy wrapped adorably in its premium toilet paper. A stretch, perhaps, but a fun attempt at humanization (canine-ization?) nonetheless.

Even some technology companies are taking a decidedly more warm-and-fuzzy approach in their latest branding efforts. Peter Conway, CEO of NJ-based Business Tech Solutions Group, a provider of hardware and software solutions, chose to veer from the high-tech path when positioning his new technology support service. Instead of the typically cold and clinical name, he’s mulling over ideas that evoke a warmer, more creative and artistic mindset in the eyes of his clients — and maybe give them a giggle in the process.

So, why the change in tactics? According to strategic development guru Terry Viney of Plus Factor, “the phrase ‘laugh and learn’ is common among trainers, because studies have repeatedly shown that recall is higher when audiences laugh. It’s only logical that businesses — and even individual salespeople — would use humor to make their messaging more memorable as well.”

(cont’d on p. 4)

Start ‘em young

In many marketers’ eyes, the best way to build solid brand loyalty is to establish a relationship with the consumer as early as possible. That’s the genius behind programs like *Newspapers in Education*, which puts copies of a paper — along with special themed curriculum — into classrooms across the country.

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Calling all Authors



Branded Brands: The Power of Partnership

From the brilliant minds at *Trendwatching.com* comes the idea of “branded brands”...well-respected names cashing in by enriching each other’s brands, bringing to the party their particular core competence or signature ingredients.

Can’t picture the concept? Here’s a quick snapshot:

Heineken and Krups — Professional beer tap and proprietary little four-liter kegs for the home. In the first week after the product’s launch in The Netherlands, Heineken sold over 3,000 taps.

Sony and Tokyo Tower — Sony designed six branded apartments in the new Tokyo Times Tower. Each room comes complete with cutting-edge entertainment, networking and home automation gear.

BMW and iPod — A special adapter enables iPod owners to plug the music player into a cable in the glove box, connecting it to the car’s stereo system. Tunes can then be controlled through buttons on the steering wheel.

Nike and Hummer — Nike’s Sphere material was used in the new H3T’s seats. The lightweight material is designed to cool or warm the body as needed. It also conveys a technical aesthetic that looks perfectly at home in the H3T. The seats also feature integrated Nike Epic backpacks, which are removable with the click of an elastic bungee.

Start ‘em young

(from p. 1)

For example, the *New York Daily News* offers “Jets Geography,” which follows the NFL team to various cities during the season, incorporating geography lessons developed by experts along the way. Tell us a nine-year-old whose school receives a visit from a real live NFL player courtesy of the *Daily News* will ever grow up to read the *New York Post*.

A Chicago-based firm takes kiddie loyalty one step further, helping schools extend dwindling field trip budgets in the process. Field Trip Factory works with companies like Petco and Dominick’s Supermarkets to organize educational tours for corporate clients. These retail field trips are part education, part marketing, and the hottest new thing for schools, summer camps, and scout troops. For example, a supermarket trip might incorporate a lesson on nutrition, schooling kids to “shop the perimeter” for fresh fruits rather than sugar-laden snacks.

Though critics may decry these trips as sneak attacks on unwary young consumers, cash-strapped schools benefit from the low cost and ability to create unique educational experiences. In an era of slashed budgets and unreasonable expectations, that may prove to be a win-win situation all around.

Sources: fieldtripfactory.com;
nydailynews.com

Creating new revenue streams

Have an internal think tank with phenomenal, transferable expertise other businesses would kill to get their hands on? Consider spinning it off into an independent entity...and a brand-new

profit center. Proctor & Gamble did just that with Tremor, its internal buzz-building factory. Tremor’s teen marketing programs are now available to companies outside the P&G stable.

Profitable? You bet. So, if your company has some special internal expertise that would benefit non-competitors, why keep it to yourself? Spread the word and reap the benefits to your bottom line.

Source: tremor.com

Testimonials: Feel the love!

Tired of reading all the compliments your competition’s racked up on its website? Besides finding more productive uses for your free time, here’s how to collect some quote-worthy testimonials all your own:

- Survey clients at the close of every project. Ask for written feedback on specific areas of performance, and conclude with a request to use the comments in your marketing efforts. Effective not only for testimonials, but for a regular performance pulse-check.
- Gather some great catch phrases — I wish someone said that about me! — and have them at the ready when a customer says, “If you put some ideas together, I’d be happy to sign it.” One caveat: be realistic and shoot for the ring of truth, not an over-the-top love fest.
- Finally, sprinkle testimonials throughout your brochures and website. That’s much more effective and likely to be read than an isolated block of copy. Try to match them up with relevant content — for example, if someone is praising your firm’s extensive knowledge of the industry, use it next to bios and head shots of your management team.

Tools of the marketing trade

NEED TO CONDUCT A SURVEY, collect RSVPs, fulfill literature requests, or make a special offer? RespondToday.com captures responses online for your various programs or promotions. Save on BRC costs and track results in real time with unique response codes. Pricing is based on the number of responses captured.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR next direct mail drop with Customized MarketMail, USPS-speak for die-cut pieces that mail without an envelope. Sizes range from 3-1/2 x 5" to 12 x 15" and, yes, you're reading this right, up to 3/4-inch thickness. Ship-Shapes.net prints your art — up to 4/4 plus spot colors, metallic inks, or UV clear coat — on specially engineered plastic that can be cut to any shape your heart desires.

LOOKING FOR EXHIBITING opportunities to unveil a new product, reach a vertical market, or scope out the competition? Try TradeShowWeek.com's free database of shows worldwide, searchable alphabetically, by industry, or by location.

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INKLINGS...from the Fahoury Ink staff

"When you lose, don't lose the lesson." Tibetan proverb

Note to all my fellow control freaks out there: unless you happen to be Bob the Builder, a large-scale home renovation is a great way to drive yourself crazy. A series of projects around the Fahoury homestead have consumed our lives over the last 18 months, sorely testing my ability to control both the process and the outcome whenever possible.

When it comes to construction, some issues are understandable: weather delays, scheduling snafus. But others are simply mind-boggling, ranging from simple non-responsiveness to downright ineptitude. One incident had me particularly incensed, until I saw its unintended value. This vendor could have easily "saved the sale" by taking a minute to really listen to what I was saying. Instead, he chose to have the last (rude!) word, which may have given him a brief burst of satisfaction, but in the end contributed zero to his bank account.

After stewing for a few hours, fury turned to introspection. What an eye-opener on taking customers for granted! How often do we lose perspective in an attempt to have the last word?

Sure, customers can be demanding, unreasonable, even downright bullying. And, no, I'm not advocating the simplistic "customer's always right" credo, because there will always be self-serving jerks out there who don't deserve your consideration.

What I'm talking about are the moments when an otherwise reasonable client might simply be looking for a little extra handholding. Maybe it's an issue you thought had been covered ad nauseum, or a question long answered. Clearly, if it's being brought up again, it's still unresolved in the customer's mind. Rather than losing patience, do a little digging. You may be greatly surprised at the insights that are brought to light.

The next time you have a frustrating encounter in your role as a customer, you may lose the battle, but don't lose the lesson. Turn it into a means for improving your own responsiveness, and both your clients and your bottom line will reap the rewards.

To your marketing success,



Lisa Fahoury
Editor



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See page 2 for tips
on creating powerhouse
testimonials...

Marketing personality (from p. 1)

Whether you're a B2B or B2C marketer, making prospects smile or trying to establish a more personal connection can certainly break your sales message out of the pack. But be wary of overkill, especially on the personal side. E-marketing consultant Jane Tabachnick points to a well-known online guru who incorporates personal anecdotes, updates on her life adventures, and pin-up type photos of herself in her newsletter, claiming such details improve business by adding a personal touch.

"To me, it's 'over-share'," says Tabachnick. "I'm interested in business information, not the margaritas you had with friends on your birthday. Maybe it's a generational thing, but I find that level of detail

unprofessional." What Tabachnick does appreciate is how another marketer uses personal experiences to create useful case studies, illustrating "how her real-world experiences exemplify good and bad marketing," according to Tabachnick.

So, take a lesson from the big boys...and even the not-so big boys. When 60% of consumers have a much more negative opinion of marketing and advertising now than just a few years ago, a bit of the human touch can go a long way towards deflecting the backlash.

Quick tip of the month

Don't let your online store become *too* web-centric. If you don't mail a traditional print version of your catalog, offer a downloadable version on your site.

Remember, not everyone has a computer, so you're missing out on pass-along sales, and even shoppers who are online may still be using a dial-up — pure agony to photo-rich sites. Regardless of the reason, there will always be people who simply prefer to browse a paper catalog...even if they have to print it themselves.

Calling all
authors...

Creative Compost is looking for the next great marketing classic! If you've written an insightful new book and would like us to consider including it in an upcoming issue, send a review copy to:

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