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How a crowdsourced advert for crisps can boost your marketing

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How a crowdsourced advert for crisps can boost your marketing



By Professor Jim Saker

One of the most interesting changes in the business world over the past 16 years has been the impact of the internet and social media on the traditional marketing function.

Marketing used to be something an organisation did to either an individual or another organisation. It was characterised by uni-directional communication of increasingly sophisticated messages in an attempt to persuade someone the product or service being offered would be beneficial.

Since the advent of the World Wide Web, this one-way communication has increasingly been sidelined. With the connectivity the web delivers comes the ability to acquire services, ideas or content from any part of the broad online community. Crowdsourcing means there is no longer a need to rely exclusively on the staff of an organisation or its suppliers.

This process has been used for some time for people looking for finance in the form of crowd-funding, but increasingly this philosophy has moved into the area of marketing.

Some crowdsourcing activity comes about without any real push from the organisation involved. You Tube videos go viral and can have an impact far greater than was originally thought. It has been argued that President Obama's first presidential campaign was the first example where user-generated marketing content on social media put on by a candidate's supporters exceeded that produced by their own marketing team. The momentum generated became self-perpetuating and Obama's marketing and PR people were able to sit back and let the viral campaign unfold, simply monitoring the contributions for any they felt to be inappropriate.

Crowdsourcing of information has been evident from the very start of the web. The development of Wikipedia as a crowdsourced online encyclopaedia was one of the first initiatives in this field. By its very nature, the authenticity and accuracy of some of the items included can be suspect, but it is surprising how many people use the site as a source of basic information.

This type of crowdsourcing has been taken further by organisations, such as TripAdvisor, who focus on the idea of third-party recommendation as being a major driving force in marketing communication. This online word-of-

mouth endorsement has the ability to shape whether people opt for one hotel over another.

Kia has perhaps taken the lead in the automotive sector by publishing the opinions and views of their customers and making them readily available for all to see. To some extent, this can be seen as being crowdsourced marketing content. As opposed to getting an agency to come up with a new marketing campaign or brand message simply by giving access to other peoples' views, the company has produced a vast array of third-party endorsements, which come over as both authentic and convincing. To some extent, the customers dictate the marketing message.

Taking this idea forward, one of the most interesting developments has been in the crowdsourcing of advertising.

Perhaps the best example of this is the Doritos 'Crash the Super Bowl' campaign. Each year, Doritos runs a competition in the US for people to produce an advert promoting Doritos that will be shown during half-time at the Super Bowl. The winner receives \$1 million and a job with a commercial production studio. People submit their adverts and the best are available on YouTube. The general public then votes for the one that they think is the best and the winning advert is shown on this prime advertising slot. The impact over recent years has been enormous, with betting taking place on which one will win.

The neat trick is that this type of crowdsourced advertisement has a completely different feel to it than typical corporate advertising. It comes across as being more authentic and feels more like a third-party endorsement.

From Doritos' perspective, it is a 'win-win' situation. They have to be one of the only companies in the world that has people waiting in anticipation for their advert to come on the television in a specific time slot.

In addition, it is unique in that the voting process gets the general public to not only view eight different adverts for Doritos, but also to examine them in some detail to determine which one they thought was the best. The interest in the competition is high, so people openly discuss their preferences making the Doritos ad the most talked or tweeted about prior to the Super Bowl.

I have heard many people in our industry say their customers are their best sales people; with the advent of crowdsourcing, they could become the best marketing agency as well.

Professor Jim Saker is director of the Centre for Automotive Management at Loughborough University's Business School and an AM Awards judge. He has been involved in the automotive industry for more than 20 years.

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