

# The Social Network Marketing Mystery

Contributed by Joe Liska

The social network phenomenon has taken the internet by storm. Most companies have yet to figure out how to deal with them and marketers are scrambling to find out what works. Catch up on the latest success stories and find out how you can make them work for your company.

Within this ancient Chinese proverb lies the key to solving the mystery. Although communicating within social networks is not very different from normal social behavior, (loud boorish people are usually avoided at parties) the strategies of traditional marketing no longer apply. "Pushing" a message only alienates people who have control over the process. The key to success is building relationships. It's about having a conversation and not about hitting someone over the head with an ad.

If we act like a bull in a china shop no one will want to stick around. By learning the rules and the language of the social network businesses can become an integral part of the community. This requires a familiarity with the environment and a willingness to follow the protocols. Another important point is to contribute in a positive way. Add value to the community and you will be appreciated. Answer questions, start a dialogue, provide unique and exciting opportunities, give and you shall receive.

## "Armies of Brand Ambassadors"

How do we know its working? "The ability to measure success in social networks can be gauged by the amount of time users spend on your site, friend bases and how often your products or company is mentioned in conversations. Charlene Li, VP and principal analyst at Forrester Research, provided an example how Ernst & Young used Facebook to recruit employees. Ms.

Li said. "They put up a schedule and provide all the recruitment information, and when people write questions, recruiters are there to write them back." In this way the company is able to maintain a dialogue with prospective employees and add value to the experience.

"Disney was able to use MySpace to promote a sequel to one of its movies that showed in an in-theater Nielsen NRG survey 58% of those with a MySpace profile recalled seeing an ad or information for the sequel, while only 26% of those without a profile remembered seeing anything about the movie."

"Jack Pan, VP-marketing strategy and special projects for Disney, said "It's one of the great things you can do on MySpace, users were able to interact with the movie's director and stars, participate in a variety of contests, win a chance to appear in the movie and gain admittance to an advance screening of the film, where they met and spoke to stars of the movie and its soundtrack." Mr. Pan said that what he especially likes about MySpace is its ability to create armies of brand ambassadors."

Like Captain Picard says "Engage!"

Engage your audience, give them a reason to come back, provide a forum for discussions, allow people to share their interests, provide value and you will reach a segment of the community that is enthusiastic about your company and your products and willing to do marketing on your behalf. To quote Mr. Pan "a successful presence on MySpace is like having a digital street team". Engage!

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