

## **Exercise #2**

### **Adapt a Case History**

In this exercise you will have a chance to practice adapting successful word-of-mouth approaches to marketing the library.

1. Read the case history assigned to your group. Think about how you might adapt the word-of-mouth approach described in the case history to the library world. You can choose a public library, special library, or academic library. It might be helpful for you to think in terms of your own library and then share it with your group. Once you have discussed the case history with your group be prepared to share your thoughts with the rest of the class.
  - Is the "target group" described in the case history similar to a group of users a library might like to reach?
  - Are there library services that might be discussed in the same way as in the case history?
  - Who are the people who might carry the message for the library?
  
2. Here are some things to think about and discuss:
  - a. Who are the people you want to reach?
  - b. Who are the people you will enlist to talk about your library service or program?
  - c. How will you reach them?
  - d. What are you going to do to give them something "to talk about"?
  - e. How will you evaluate your word-of-mouth campaign?

#### **1. Connector Moms Spread the Word**

Proctor and Gamble is recruiting 600,000 moms to chat with the company's most important decision makers: other moms. "Connectors" talk to their friends about P&G products like Dawn and Febreze, as well those from other companies that have hired Vocalpoint, P&G's new word-of-mouth marketing program.

What do they get for their talk? Coupons and "a voice that is going to be heard," according to Steve Knox, the CEO of Vocalpoint. Their opinions are solicited in a weekly e-newsletter that asks their opinion about everything from express mail to the design of the newsletter that they are reading

The connector moms are found through banner ads on websites like iVillage. Their large social networks makes them special – the average moms speaks to five contacts a day, Vocalpoint's connector moms average 25-30. Sales of a new product called Dawn Direct Foam, were doubled in test markets that employed word-of-mouth marketing.

The company does extensive research to understand why a user would want to share a product with a friend. "We know that the most powerful form of marketing is an advocacy message from a trusted friend," said Knox. "We have to enable a conversation to take place."

**OVER**

P&G does not require its connectors to disclose their affiliation with the marketing program, which has caused criticism from the Federal Trade Commission and the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association. Knox counters that all the coupons distributed by connector moms are clearly marked that they originate with Vocalpoint and that P&G does not believe it should program this one-to-one interaction. “We have a deeply held belief you don’t tell consumers what to say.”

“I Sold It Through the Grapevine.” Robert Berner. *Business Week*. May 29, 2006. pg.32-34.

## **2. General Motors Opens Up With Blog**

Bob Lutz, vice chairman of General Motors Corporation, eschews the spin control of public relations professionals and talks to GM customers directly in his GM blog. According to Lutz, “you have to have a certain amount of faith. If you’re not willing to accept consumer feedback, and you want to ... make sure nothing gets disclosed, then you should not do this.”

“He’s doing more than writing a blog. He’s communicating a philosophy of transparency, openness and dialog,” said Max Kalehoff, a word-of-mouth marketing consultant. Readers post advice about market strategy, ask questions about features, and sometimes get downright cranky. Lutz started the blog because he found that he was spending a lot of time answering customer questions on his GM email. Some of it was positive, some of it was negative, and some of it included misconceptions about GM that he wanted to correct. The next step was to expand his email conversations to a blog to which he and other GM executives could contribute.

The audience for the GM blog is made up of car enthusiasts; people who influence the kinds of cars their network of friends, families and acquaintances buy. Andy Sernovitz of the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association said, “Anyone taking the time to read a GM blog really cares about GM. That’s why they’re there. These are the people you want to pay extra attention to... People complain about products anyway, it’s very smart to have them do it on a GM site, where executives can respond and show they care, rather than having it be buried in some chatroom somewhere with people getting angrier and angrier.”

“*Motor Mouth.*” Sarah Mahoney. *Point Magazine (Advertising Age)*. Chicago, IL. December 2005. pg..8-13

## **3. Hair Stylists Tout Mammograms**

In the cozy, feminine atmosphere of the hair salon, intimacies are shared and close ties are forged. Hair stylists are trusted with more than their clients’ hair. “Women confide in their hairdressers. It’s their time,” said Nancy Snowball with the Alberta Cancer Board.

Who better to talk about mammograms than hair stylists? In Alberta, Canada the “Be A Friend” campaign enlists the help of beauticians in spreading the word about the importance of regular mammograms. Hairdressers display “props” that start conversations - a poster, a postcard or a book authored by a cancer survivor. When a conversation begins, the beauticians discuss the importance of mammography and encourage clients who have not had a recent mammogram to get one. An earlier project in North Carolina found that women who had been given mammography advice from their stylist, when asked a year later, were twice as likely to have had a mammogram than the control group who did not discuss mammography with their stylist.

*“Hairstylsts Recruited to Put Crimp in Breast Cancer.” Karen van Kampen. The Calgary Herald, Calgary, Alberta. March 9, 2006.*

*“Using Informal Caregivers to Communicate With Women About Mammography.” Elizabeth Howze, Robert Broyden and James Impara. Health Communication. 1992, pg. 227-244.*

#### **4. American Idol: Honesty, Controversy, and 10,000 Hopefuls**

“American Idol,” the phenomenon of popular culture, television and advertising, almost didn’t make it on the air. Given the uninspiring ratings of a similar talent show on the WB channel, the conventional wisdom was that this was a television show without potential.

The show’s producers proved conventional wisdom wrong with three strong “buzz” builders: honesty, controversy, and user involvement. “Idol” contestants are not “prettified” or styled like they are on other reality shows. Their clothing, hairstyles and make-up appear to be their own. Viewers get to know them during their show, meet their families, learn about their hometowns, and hear about their aspirations. Controversy is personified in Simon Cowell, the uber-critical judge whose putdowns are vicious. While Cowell and his fellow judges choose the finalists, the ultimate choice of the “Next American Idol!” is made by the viewers’ votes.

Honesty, controversy, and involvement are great ways to inspire talk around the water cooler, but they do not account for “Idol’s” immediate ratings success. In six cities across the country, more than 10,000 individuals spent all day waiting in line for a chance to audition for “American Idol.” They were a natural start-up audience for the show, along with their networks of families and friends, who had been primed with stories about the contestant’s brush with fame.

*Buzz Marketing. Mark Hughes. Penguin Group, New York, N.Y. 2005. pg. 62-77.*

#### **5. “Open Source” Footwear**

Taking customer feedback a step further, John Fluevog encourages his most enthusiastic customers to submit their own designs for the high heeled dress shoes, boots and sneakers he manufactures. He posts the designs on his website ( [www.fluevog.com/files—2/os-1.html](http://www.fluevog.com/files—2/os-1.html) ) and asks customers to vote for their favorites, which he then manufactures and sells. “Customers want to express themselves, to be involved with the brand. For so long, people would hand me a drawing of their personal design or a shoe or ask if I had considered an idea they liked. This program is a natural outgrowth of that desire for connection.”

His stores include designs from customers from Provo, Utah to Moscow, Russia. Out of nearly 3000 finalists, ten styles have been manufactured and sold. “Some of the ideas from customers are striking, but impossible to make. But even submissions we can’t make add to the stimulation. Our customers get more involved, and we get insights into who they are and what they’re doing. It’s better for both of us.”

*“To Charge Up Customers, Put Customers in Charge.” William C.Taylor, New York Times, New York, N.Y. June 18, 2006 pg. 3.5*