



MAKE IT FUN

MAKING YOUR MARKETING fun for customers is what makes them tell other people about you. This is the basis of viral marketing—the word of mouth that ultimately generates more business than all the advertising campaigns put together. Humor is good, but something that encourages customers to pass on messages to friends, business colleagues, family, and indeed anyone else will result in improved brand equity and increased awareness of what your company is all about.

The message need not be too serious, either, or indeed be an overt marketing plug. Just passing the brand name along, and having it associated with something entertaining and fun, is quite sufficient. Your other marketing promotions will fill in the gaps, and anyway no single promotion will ever cover all the communication you want it to—the best you can hope for is that one communication will sensitize the customers to receiving a later one.

The idea

Radisson Hotels serve a predominantly business clientele. Business travelers typically spend a great deal of time in their rooms: they tend to use the time to catch up with work rather than go out sightseeing or to entertainment venues, since this allows them to spend more time with their families.

Radisson hit on the idea of supplying each room with a plastic duck to play with in the bath. The duck came with a note saying that the guest was welcome to keep the duck, perhaps to take home for

his or her children: if the guest preferred, however, the duck could be mailed anywhere in the world in its own special crate, with a message from the guest. Mailing the duck incurred a nominal charge that could be added to the guest's final bill: the charge was, in fact, more than enough to cover the costs of the duck, the crate, and the postage, but in luxury hotel terms it was small.

The result of this was that hundreds of thousands of Radisson ducks were soon finding their way across the world. Children, girlfriends, husbands, wives, friends, work colleagues, bosses, and business associates began receiving the ducks, which no doubt raised a smile. The effect was to raise the profile of Radisson, but more importantly it changed the brand personality—the stuffy, formal image of the typical business hotel chain was modified, showing that even a top-class hotel has a sense of fun. The shift in perception contributed to a growth in Radisson's weekend family trade, and made business travelers more likely to stay.

In practice

- Do something that is fun.
- Ensure that it is as easy as possible for someone to tell others about the experience.
- Try to have something tangible attached to the experience so that there is a permanent reminder of the event.
- Be careful that the message (in this case, “We like to have fun”) does not detract from the rest of the brand image.