



TEASE YOUR CUSTOMERS

CUTTING THROUGH ADVERTISING clutter is a perennial problem. Most people in the developed world are pretty adept at dodging marketing messages—and most marketers try to get around this simply by shouting louder, which is counterproductive, or by exaggerating their claims, which is of course even more counterproductive.

Research shows that the more someone is intrigued by the message, the more he or she remembers it and acts on it. The problem, of course, lies in generating enough interest in the message at the outset for the individual to want to hear the rest. Most marketing messages (such as press advertisements or billboards) try to get the basic message across in a few words, or even with no words, and there are many attempts to make the message stand out by using bright colors, unusual writing, etc., etc.

An alternative method is the teaser campaign, where the message itself takes a while to come through—but the preliminaries are intriguing. Usually, these are executed as billboard advertising, so that the timing of the messages can be controlled accurately, but there is no reason why they should not be executed as mail campaigns, as this example shows.

The idea

The world of textbook publishing is not the academic ivory tower one would imagine—it is a fairly cut-throat business, with publishers battling to persuade lecturers to recommend the books to the students. A good adoption can create a long-term income stream

for the book, so there is a lot at stake, especially for the big markets such as introductory texts.

When my introductory marketing text was launched, the publisher's marketing manager decided to run a teaser campaign. He began by mailing out sets of chopsticks to every marketing lecturer in the country: the chopsticks were packed in metallic silver envelopes with the message "First you eat." This created an instant message intrigue—the physical product (the chopsticks) and the enigmatic message combined to create a feeling that something interesting was about to happen. About a week later, the same lecturers were sent another envelope containing a tea bag and the message "Then you drink." This further increased the sense of anticipation—what would arrive next? The next package contained a fortune cookie and a sample chapter of the book, with the message "Then you see your future."

Of course, the fact that this innovative campaign (which won an award) was aimed at marketing lecturers certainly helped—many of them used it as an example in class, and naturally then felt obliged to recommend the book—but the basic principle applies to almost any situation.

In practice

- You need a good, clean mailing list.
- Get the timing right. Too short a period, and the tension doesn't build. Too long a period, and people forget the previous message.
- Don't string it out too long, i.e., send too many messages, or people get frustrated.
- Use something tangible to accompany the message: such things often sit on people's desks for days and act as a reminder.