

## MARKETING

### Trump – the Marketing Channel

Brand loyalty is important, but it is also hard to keep. With the effectiveness of conventional TV advertising on a declining trend, building and maintaining a brand is becoming difficult. Marketers would need to think about new ways to get their brands exposed.

If we think hard enough, we can find that the popular TV series 'The Apprentice' is not an ordinary show. It is a big advertising channel where promotion of products and services is cleverly embedded in the story and the audience unknowingly gets treated into an hour of advertising each week.

Henry Jenkins from Massachusetts Institute of Technology shared with us the latest strategy for 'product placement' (a new term for 'advertising sponsorship').

#### 1. The Protagonist

Donald Trump, as star of his show, does not miss any chance to advertise himself, the brand name 'Trump' and show off his famous 'World Trump Tower' in every episode of 'The Apprentice'.

#### 2. Sponsors as Task Masters

Donald Trump allows product sponsors such as Mattel toys, Ciao Bella ice cream, Crests toothpaste, and so on to be featured in his shows. Contestants, for example, have been asked to design and develop marketing strategies for their new product lines.

#### 3. Agencies as Helpers

Besides product sponsors, advertising agencies were involved too. The teams were asked to seek 'external' help from the supporting agencies when they develop product strategies. In return, these agencies would get exposures to millions of viewers through the TV.

#### 4. The Trump brand as a Prize

At the end of almost every episode, the winning team would be awarded and treated by Donald Trump to one of his many establishments – his



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restaurants, his products, or Trump's services. Other than giving slots to sponsors, Donald Trump reserves some for his own products.

#### 5. *Selling All the Way*

- Personal Statements: Some contestants were seen wearing T-shirts promoting different brands.
- Tie-in: In one episode, contestants designed new ice cream flavours and a week later, viewers were able to order samples of the new inventions online.
- Internet Community: Friendster.com, an online social community network helped the contestants built their individual profiles. This allowed TV producers to collect real-time data on viewers' response. The network and the contestants were selling.



What is the purpose of Donald Trump taking out a bag of Chips Ahoy, sipping Pepsi, and his assistants jotting down notes using Mont Blanc fountain pens, failed contestants hopping on a cab carrying a signage of 'Yahoo! HotJobs' (no pun intended) .... ? Adding all these together, you would find one big orchestrated advertising show promoting to the subconscious minds of the viewers.

Even for TV programmes with a high viewing rate, there are still ad-skippers. 'The Apprentice' strategy is to fuse

entertainment and branding so the audience cannot escape from skipping adverts.

If you are a fan of American TV series, or even some video games, you would probably notice the same branding strategies there. Nowadays consumers are turning smarter and their attention spans shorter, marketers would need to keep exploring for new channels to put their messages across. Americans are obviously finding approaches other than direct push TV advertising.

In Hong Kong, where traditional advertising is still the dominating approach to reach the market, we have just started to see these, comparatively, more subtle ways to promote one's brand. Probably they realised the decline of conventional advertising channels and would need to explore other new methods to get their brands into the mind of consumers. Sponsorship advertising (or product placement) in local TV series is now a norm, and we can expect more to come.

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[http://jot.communication.utexas.edu/flow/?jot=vi  
ew&id=411](http://jot.communication.utexas.edu/flow/?jot=vi<br/>ew&id=411)*

#### MOTIVATION

### **Managing the Untalented**

'You can't have an orchestra full of soloists,' said Anna-Marie Detert, a HR consultant. In any organisation, said Detert, only 10%-15% of the workforce is likely to be outstanding performers. 'More than 70% of the people making up an orchestra are people who keep the business running.'

Talent is really an exceptional natural aptitude or ability. The rest will be working at an acceptable level, but many managers tend to neglect them. 'You need to keep these people around – you can't function without them. They are critical to your business.'

#### *The Competent*

Middle of the road workers cannot be ignored – they are the majority and are needed to be around, to care about the organisation. For this group, the most important factor that motivates them is the sense that senior management are interested in them. That comes when executives make themselves visible: visiting shops, factories and offices, walking and talking, or holding lunch-and learn sessions where relatively junior staff can meet the CEO.

"The number one thing employees want is appreciation, a pat on the back and a thank-you-very-much,' said motivation expert Shaun Belding. 'You don't have to fawn over people; you just have to say: "That was really nice." That will keep people going for a month.'

People need clarity about their role in the workplace too. 'We have had years of management by objectives and target-setting, and these are all wonderful things,' says Doug Crawford, another HR consultant. 'But for a lot of people there's still an ambiguity about what's expected of them.'

Quite often, we put people into a position and let them get on with it. If they have the right skills, on the other hand, they expect to be allowed to exercise them. 'If we reduce

the scope and discretion of people to do their jobs,' adds Crawford, 'they'll just get switched off.'

#### *Underperformers*

Apart from the quietly competent, 5%-10% of people in an organisation are difficult and underperforming. In some cases, discipline and eventual dismissal are the obvious solution. HR professionals employ a range of euphemisms for this process, and are invariably convinced that it's for the employee's own good. 'There are some people who are probably better off being set free,' comments Belding.



"Not you, Hobson."

[www.cartoonstock.com](http://www.cartoonstock.com)

Taking the eventual action is often a traumatic experience for both sides. Crawford sees disciplinary action as the last resort, to be avoided in all but the most extreme cases.

Instead, managers need to develop the habit of having 'more open, honest, constructive

conversations with people'. He elaborates: 'We are very good at not confronting issues. We're not so good at giving or receiving feedback. We tend to avoid the issues until it becomes a major problem.'

As managers, we fear confrontation and conflict; as employees, we have a remarkable capacity for not hearing what people are saying to us.

For Detert, the difficult minority come in three categories. People who have marketable skills but not the skills you need are best 'managed out', gently, with counselling and career advice. 'You want them to speak positively about you when they have moved on,' she says.

Those who just don't have the skills can be retrained.

*The problematic*

The third group is the most intractable: those with attitude problems. 'Attitudes are very deep-seated,' adds Detert. 'Some people have a chip on their shoulder, and it may have to do with their family background.' The answer is frank, unambiguous feedback. The trick here is to depersonalise the discussion, to deal in specifics, to present evidence of the negative consequences their behaviour and attitudes have caused. After that, they can either adapt their behaviour or march towards the door marked Exit.

Belding recommends what he calls the 'manure sandwich': wrapping the criticism between two slices of praise. 'We need a firm but gentle hand. The best bosses are never the most lenient ones.'

Underperformance, he believes, is one of those areas where managers need to take a long, hard look in the mirror. You can dismiss someone, but you must always analyse how the wrong person originally came to be in the wrong slot. 'Otherwise you are going to make the same mistake, and you'll make it over and over again.'

Unfortunately, not all of us are equally good in this area. 'A lot of managers are selected on the basis of their technical skills and expertise, as opposed to their people skills,' says Crawford. 'A lot of managers are there for the wrong reasons. We need to hold managers accountable for the management part of their role.'

*Adapted from an article by John Morrish in February 2007 Management Today, Haymarket Publications*

ENGLISH

**Words Worth**

WRONG		RIGHT	
X	The doorman insisted to help us	✓	The doorman insisted on helping us
▪ <i>Insist on should be followed by a verb with '-ing'</i>			
X	She insisted me on carrying her bag	✓	She insisted on me/my carrying her bag
▪ <i>'Insist on' something/ someone doing something/ someone's doing something</i>			
X	We insisted that he wrote the letter	✓	We insisted that he should write the letter
▪ <i>When a verb such as insist, decide, suggest, intend, suppose, etc., is used in a sentence with a construction like 'that ... (verb)', the expression should be in the form of 'that .... should (verb)'</i>			

