

Lesson 13: Creative Magic

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In addition to understanding the nuts and bolts of a marketing initiative, there comes a time when you have to be a creative creature in order to get attention. It doesn't matter how many dollars you spend on advertising if the copy is boring or the graphics unappealing. Even in the world of social networking, creativity is a must. Anyone can wiggle a mouse and type an update on a web site. That alone is not going to get you noticed. If you want the love of the masses, you have to give them content that they're enthusiastic about consuming.

Following the muse is hard enough when you're drawing on your strengths. It's almost impossible when you're trying to force something that doesn't come naturally to you. Casting a wide net can be good, but one wildly successful viral video is worth a thousand uninspiring activities. Others have built a huge following with articles, and of course there are many more ways to gain attention. That said, in order to deliver an effective campaign, you must first know what areas you're the most creative in and capitalize on those strengths.

Graphic Design

Humans are a visual lot, and appearance matters in more ways than may be obvious at first glance. In fact, countless hours have been expended over the years in research on the emotional impact of everything from geometric shapes to colors. If you need further proof that the way your materials look is important, consider this. Each and every product you see in the supermarket has a colorful label, effective copy and in general a design that the company spent a fair amount of money to come up with.

If cosmetic considerations didn't drive sales, the aisles would be full of plain white boxes and simple black lettering, for one simple reason. Why would anyone spend money if there wasn't a compelling reason? The good news is that there's obviously a return on investment for graphic design or it wouldn't be the standard for marketing that it is. The same applies to each and every marketing task you perform. For best results, make sure that your stuff looks cool to the audience you're trying to reach.

Copywriting

Just as important as visual considerations are the words that they clothe. There's a reason that professional copywriters command top dollar. They've learned how to connect with people, inspire them, delight them and most importantly, motivate them to buy.

In today's computer driven world, most anyone can fire up a word processor, run the spell checker and crank out a batch of prose. As you may have discovered, however, all words are not created equal. This

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is why much of the work generated by low quality content farms lacks the punch that will move the merchandise.

If you find yourself in a position where you can't afford to hire professionals and have to do it yourself, your best bet is to study success. Find the bestselling products and services that most easily relate to your own. Then study the way they approach their writing and learn from it. Since many of us learned to play guitar by listening to rock stars and emulating them, you'll be joining in a time honored tradition that's also quite effective.

Music

Speaking of rock and roll, don't forget the importance of a good sound track. Purchasing is often an impulse or emotional decision where people leave logic in the back seat of their car when they walk into the store. We can only hope they're considerate enough to crack the windows. Nonetheless, music moves us in a very fundamental manner, and each style evokes a certain type of emotion.

While it's tempting to head out to your favorite torrent site and simply download the music you feel is appropriate for your efforts, it's an urge you should resist for practical if not ethical reasons. When you use someone's music in a commercial endeavor, you're required to pay usage fees. If you listen to pirated music on your mp3 player, no one's the wiser. Slap it onto a marketing message that you want to carpet bomb the world with and it's a sure bet that you're going to get noticed by the copyright holders. That's going to get expensive in a hurry, in a variety of ways.

Fortunately, there are many places where you can buy royalty free stock music. This doesn't mean it's free – it's typically not. What it does mean is that you pay only once, and can then use it over and over without paying a per use fee.

Of course, it's even better still if you happen to have a guitar sitting in the back corner and can create your own music. No matter what your solution, though, it's important to understand how your choice in music supports or works against your marketing message.

Video

One of the hottest up and coming marketing tactics today is video. It has everything – visuals, writing, music and an almost physical way of telling your story. The cost of cameras and software run the gamut from the expensive stuff used by major networks to the inexpensive gear you use to capture your kid's soccer game for posterity. Quality will certainly vary, but many times that's not the most important consideration when you remember that much of it will end up on video sharing sites like You Tube.

As you grab your megaphone and prepare to yell, "Action!" remember what you've learned by going to the movies. Some shows are blockbuster hits. Some are so terrible that we want to take a shower when we get home. If you think about it, technology was rarely the make or break factor. In the end, it all comes down to how compelling the story is and how well it's told.

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When putting together your video masterpiece, refer back to the work you've done so far in understanding your customers. Consider what they care about, what entertains them and what they want to know. Speak to that and tell your story well. Remember, everyone hates commercials. That's why the mute button was invented.

Don't Forget To Sell

While we're on the topic of commercials, there's one thing that you should always keep in the forefront of your mind. It's easy to get caught up in the joys of creativity, whether you're doing the creating or working with others who can help you realize your vision. Never forget that the purpose of your efforts is not to win an award. You're doing this to move the merchandise. You need to be clever, polished and subtle to avoid turning your audience off, to be sure. However, if you're not making sales, nothing else really matters.