

The 12 Principles of New Media

Interest and then Engage

Conversation video transcript

Subject: The viral fallacy

GARY A. BOLLES

MICROCAST

I would love it if "viral" were stricken from the marketing lexicon because it doesn't connote what I think people want it to connote.

CHRIS HEUER

SOCIAL MEDIA CLUB

The first thing we talk about is capturing lightning in a bottle like Diet Coke and Mentos only happens a few times a year. And there are millions of people literally working to solve that same problem. So we try to set expectations around it.

GREG STERLING

STERLING MARKETING INTELLIGENCE

It's very challenging to do that in some sort of "go and do it, create a viral campaign." My eyes roll back in my head, pretty much. Because it's like people now think it's something that can be done like buying air time or flipping a switch or something. I think it's a much more elaborate and complicated and nuanced process.

GARY A. BOLLES

To me, the way that I read a client asking about making something viral is that they want to do something on the cheap.

CHRIS PETERSON

CHAUTAUQUA COMMUNICATIONS

Typically a client will want something viral because they see the efficiency of it, right? You see something of manageable scope rip through a market overnight. And you see the reach with it. And you see the level of engagement of it. But the reality of it is great viral efforts are based on entertaining content. And you can't design in viral very well.

GARY A. BOLLES

Basically, I want you to go out and create this thing that is going to not make me have to buy all the attention I need to buy.

CHRIS SHIPLEY
GUIDEWIRE GROUP

Viral is about the marketplace taking some ownership of your product and your message and communicating that. And you can put hooks into your message or your campaign that make it easy for people to share. But at the base, viral happens because you've delivered a great experience or great product to a community that's been so affected by it that they talk about it.

SUBJECT: How to build

CHRIS HEUER

So I start with the idea of what is it I want them to know at the end of this. What is it I want them to feel perhaps at the end of this.

SAMANTHA MUCHMORE
DRAFTFCB

In order for something to be successful virally people have to like or want the content. And so suddenly you find yourself in a room with a blank piece of paper saying gosh what on earth is our content that's going to be so exciting that people not only are going to want to forward it to their friends but they're also going to want to search for it and get access to it.

CHRIS HEUER

If we go back and look at the Diet Coke and Mentos example though, the reason why that worked is there was a sense of wonderment that was going on. Like that was even possible.

CHRIS PETERSON

What you can do is start with a story and content as a strategy. And then take a look at well, how do you make this as entertaining as possible. How do you make the content go to the fringe? Basically, to the point where you're pushing the boundary of brand itself, but not necessarily crossing over it. Then you've got the potential for something to be viral. But the reality is designing viral from the start is putting the cart before the horse. It just doesn't happen by itself. And you're lucky when it's a huge success. You can't manage for it. You can't plan for it. You can try it. And you should try it. But you can't bank on it.

GARY A. BOLLES

Those types of pass along processes are absolutely unpredictable. What you need to focus on is creating a content or activity that is great interest to your constituency.

SUBJECT: What worked

BRIAN POWLEY
ICROSSING

We've had one client which is really interesting. They're in the recruitment area and they didn't have a traditional big marcom budget to brand advertising on TV or the print or that sort of stuff.

We put together low budget, shot some video of a bunch of interviews, mock interviews. They were a recruiting company. Mock interviews. We called them interviews from hell.

You clicked on that and it launched this video of an interview. But a really bad interview. And it was someone who was completely overselling themselves. Complete spin. Complete BS. But it was hilariously funny and very relevant to the sector that we were helping them with. This thing became so massive...It won a major online award for being the most effective. Very cheap to actually produce. Not risky, but very entertaining and fun for the client.

BRIAN POWLEY (cont'd)

It was so relevant. If you were a client seeing this viral piece knowing you want to hire these types of people. You've interviewed those people. You just go, "Oh My God I've interviewed someone like that in my lifetime." And if you're on the other side as the person looking for the job you can say, "Oh my God there are people like that who go for jobs that I'm going for. I know I can get that job."...Whichever side looked at it was just so relevant to the situation and it was funny and entertaining and I think that was the success. The client love it and it was low cost and low budget and it was very successful.

SAMANTHA MUCHMORE

Space and place in a way can be content. So a space or a place, a microsite of sorts if you will that offers content but also offers a certain level of play. Whether that's literally playing a game or actually creating a recipe. Where the consumer can be in the space and engage on multiple levels as they want. And when they have option to engage as they want with something that's playful or something that's useful they might be more apt to pass that along and tell their friends about that. And quite honestly that might be something that's a little easier to get through the system because it's not just 100% new content.

GREG STERLING

Wendy's tried to create commercials which were videos. They tried to spin it like it was User generated content. People saw through it. There was some success in that people were commenting on the lack of success of the campaigns.

SUBJECT: Don't plan for it

CHRIS HEUER

And the very nature of producing media, if you do it with wit in particular is viral. So we can learn a lot from what some successful people are doing right now, but in the end it is capturing lightning in a bottle and there are no promises we can make around this.

GARY A. BOLLES

Often cases it's not something you're doing overnight. It's a program you're trying to bake into your marketing processes so you're doing it an ongoing basis. It's gratifying for everybody. The customer gets a tremendous amount out of it. The company gets a lot out of it because they see this feedback from the customer and ultimately it's going to result in the sales that you want.