

The buzz

Certain things are just not advertised, but you know about them anyway. That is the power of buzz. I think one of the most buzzed about items is Facebook. Even I am buzzing about it. Yet, you probably haven't ever seen a Facebook ad, received a piece of mail about Facebook or picked up a Facebook brochure. In fact, if you are on it, it is because you got invited to "friend" someone you know. Or, you read about it (Facebook does engage in public/media relations). In fact, in the last couple weeks I have read two articles in women's magazines about Facebook. One talked about the addictive quality of Facebook, and the collecting of friends, where the other discussed pros and cons versus the other large social networking site, MySpace.

I just bought some prints on Shutterfly. You never see ads for it, or its competitors like Snapfish. Yet everyone is using these sites to print out their digital photos. Or at least it seems like everyone is doing it—and that is exactly what buzz is about. Truly, buzz marketing is the ultimate type of marketing. It puts in question the future of people like me and other marketing people. Buzz depends on word of mouth. It creates an epidemic, to borrow from Malcolm Gladwell's excellent *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. In fact, *The Tipping Point* is buzz's bible, since it explains just how the buzz phenomenon can "tip" something, that is, making it bigger and badder. According to Gladwell, ideas move through society because of three types of people: connectors, mavens and salespeople. Basically, they all influence their circles and in interconnection, they influence the larger sphere. Facebook is a great example of something that has tipped. Today, it has become a larger phenomenon than its competitors and it is everywhere around the world.