

# Interest and Julie & Julia

Last night I saw the movie Julie & Julia, about Julia Child and Julie Powell. Julie Powell wrote a book about her experience blogging about cooking her way through Child's Mastering the Art of French Cooking. I liked the movie and would recommend it, especially if you enjoy food and want to feel inspired.

But this is not a movie review blog, it is about marketing communications. And here's the thing: the movie has stimulated the sales of Julia Child's books, biographies and of course, of Julie Powell's Julie & Julia. In fact, there is a renaissance in interest in all things Julia Child. This is probably due to Meryl Streep's excellent personification of Julia on screen and a compelling storyline about following your dreams and believing in yourself.

The marketing lesson to draw from the success of Julie and Julia is that interest stimulates action. It goes back to the AIDA principle we have discussed before: attention, interest, desire and action. If you make something interesting, you will stimulate action on the part of your intended target audience. The movie made all things Julia and Julie interesting. The audience was loving the food, and now, naturally, wants to partake in it. The audience was inspired to learn more about Julia (and Julie for that matter).

Movies are great marketing vehicles because they reach mass, captive audiences. This is why we see so much product placement in the movies, and why there is advertising at the movie theater. A good movie is by nature, interesting. If it has to do with a historical figure, we want to learn more. If it showcases music (like Walk the Line did for Johnny Cash), you want to go out and listen to the music again.

The other lesson is to put things in front of the right

audience. In Julie & Julia's case, the thing is both cooking and following dreams, for a female audience. Last night, I would say that 90% of the audience was female, and I would venture to say that most were under 45.

In any case, Julie & Julia reached its intended audience and is proving that people always want to know more if they are stimulated to do so.

Did you see the movie? What did you think?

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## The best marketing

The best marketing is positive word of mouth, no doubt about it. Think about it: If a trusted friend raves about something or someone, you are more likely interested. Even if your friend just gives you a name without a rave, you are more likely to check it out.

Companies do not seem to grasp the importance of positive word of mouth and instead rely on expensive ad campaigns. Take Comcast for instance. They spend mucho dinero on all sorts of print and broadcast messages, but everyone knows someone who has had a bad customer service experience with Comcast. In fact, Comcast probably NEEDS to spend that much money to overcome all the negative reviews out there.

On the other hand, no company should rely solely on word of mouth. For instance, near me there is a pizza shop. It is always jammed at lunch, which is a good indicator. However, the store does not list its hours. It doesn't have a website, or provide menus, or have flyers in the local coupon book. Unless you are in the know it seems, you don't know.

What are your thoughts?

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## What's it all about?

This post is about “about” pages. You know, the pages that describe your organization. On blogs, the about pages gives a sense to visitors who the author is. I would say this is crucial information. It helps us judge the trustworthiness of the content. Say that I am a student of public relations, at the PhD level, and I say so on my about page. You may surmise that my content has a scholarly bent based on my research. However, say that I am a student, in high school. And I write about public relations. You may conclude that I am still learning and that my blog is an attempt to explore social media.

I have come across many blogs lacking an about page. That is a mistake. A big mistake. Your about page does not have to be long and fancy. Just tell me who you are and what you are doing. That's it. Use it to build your credibility.

Just today I came across this blog: <http://prnext.wordpress.com/> It purports to be a monthly ezine about PR. It gives some rather dubious advice and info (like PR took a backseat to advertising in the 90s, really? says who?). In any case, I want to know who is behind the blog, and guess what, the about page is blank. Immediately, I think these people do not know ANYTHING about PR if they don't even have any basics about themselves. So, their credibility is challenged.

Take a look at your blog, your website, your LinkedIn. What have you done in the about sections? Have you communicated who you are and what you do, at the very least?

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# Enewsletters

How many of you use enewsletters? I bet a fair amount do, and a larger amount receive many enewsletters each day.

Certainly enewsletters are more environmentally-friendly than printed newsletters, and are more timely, since there is no lag time getting to a printer. And for sure, enewsletters are cost-effective, costing nothing to a few centers per newsletter. But, and this is a big but, are enewsletters effective in achieving their objective?

An newsletter intends to inform or to promote or both. There are internal and external enewsletters too. Some serve as employee communications, others as corporate communications.

What I am wondering is with the overwhelming amount of information (email, Twitter, Facebook, RSS feeds, blogs, news aggregators) that we are exposed to each day, are enewsletters serving their purpose? Or have they become one more piece of nuisance in our inboxes? I am not sure, but I sure would like to hear your opinions. Vote in the poll or send me thoughts in the comments.

[polldaddy poll=1714351]



# The answer to your marketing needs

I recently read that to get leads for your business, white papers are the answer. (For those that don't know, white papers are backgrounders, in-depth write ups about a subject area.) For one second I thought, yeah! that is the answer and I was about to put it on my to-do list. But wait, I thought, there is never ONE answer to marketing. That is the magic bullet thinking that gets lots of people in trouble.

Marketing should be about using a mix of strategies and tactics that can promote your service or product to its target audience. For instance, say you are marketing denture paste. You could advertise in the AARP magazine (if the budget allows) or in a local seniors newspaper. You could sponsor an event targeting those 65+. You could do many things, but you wouldn't necessarily advertise in Blender Magazine or choose a skateboarding teen as your spokesperson. You have to go where your target audience goes.

So, my advice to you is that if someone tells you that to market your business, all you need to do is this one thing, walk away. Walk away fast. There is never a one-size solution nor any kind of magic bullet. Marketing is about creating awareness and that can take time and many forms.

I had a client once who was looking for the magic bullet. So, he hired me to re-do some copy, and he hired a PR guy to get some publicity, and he redesigned his website. He thought that each thing he did would bring a huge influx in business. And none of it did. Sure he got a better website, and good publicity, but because nothing was strategic and everything was a quick response to I need to get more business, it didn't work. And he kept wasting money wanting to find the one thing that would work instead of working on many different tactics

that would give his brand cohesiveness. I could never make that client happy because one piece of copy or one press release is not going to turn you into a million dollar business.

A couple of nights ago, I was watching CNBC and they had a show entitled The Oprah Effect. As you no doubt know, anything that is seen on Oprah, almost automatically becomes a bestseller. You may think then that Oprah is a magic bullet. Well, yes and no. It does get you tremendous exposure, but in order to get on Oprah, you have to have a good product, good marketing and a good story. Those are part of the marketing mix. You also have to be ready to play in the big leagues. What if you can't deliver? Then your business is going down the tubes.

In sum, stop looking for one solution and look at the whole picture. What do you need to do to give yourself a marketing boost?



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## Are you hosting an event?

When you host an event, you want people to attend, right? If you don't think so, just ignore this post.

So, how do you get people to attend your event? It may seem self evident, but many organizations do not follow these promotional tips:

**0) Before you start, be sure to have all the following info for inclusion: title and purpose of event, date of event, hours of event, exact location and directions to event, cost, contact information, whether you need to RSVP or not (and who**

**the RSVP contact is). You would be surprised at how many invitations miss some of this critical data.**

1) Invite people. Be sure to send out an invitation to all members, interested parties, people who have attended your events in the past, etc.

2) Post the event on your website or blog or both. Ask a third party to check and see if you have included all necessary information.

3) Send a calendar item listing to your local newspaper, event aggregator, tv station.

4) Include in your newsletter. If it is an annual event, add to your signature line on email and include on all communications, internal and external.

5) Remind people. There are many events competing for people's attendance, so be sure to send reminders. This is where social media like Twitter could be useful.

6) Create an event page on Facebook or other social media sites.

7) To be really efficient, you may want to use an electronic event management database to help you to keep track of attendees, send out invites and take RSVPs. Two that come to mind are Cvent and EventBrite.

A note about timing: You want to give people enough time to plan to attend, but not too much time so that they may forget about the event. Perhaps you can invite three to four weeks in advance, and remind people two weeks and one week before the event.

Again, the most important thing about publicizing an event is to provide all the information somebody would need to attend the event. Don't take this for granted. I can't tell you how many events I have seen listed that lack basic info such as

DATE!

If I have overlooked anything, please remind me in the comments!



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## Writing for your audience

According to Netflix, the British/BBC series Gavin and Stacey garners four and a half stars. This is why I added it to my queue. But I watched the first season (all on one DVD) and I rated the thing two stars. (Quick plot explanation: Gavin, who lives in Essex, and Stacey, who lives in Wales, meet over the phone and decide to meet in person after six months. They fall in love. Meanwhile, they each have a best friend: Smithy for Gavin and Nessa for Stacey, who also get involved.)

I have no doubt that many people find Gavin and Stacey hilarious. In fact, some of the acting is very good, and some of the situations are painfully relevant. However, it is clear that the intended audience is British. For instance, the whole Wales is another country joke. In the United States, we would be hard pressed to find Wales on the map of the UK, and for the British, Wales is quite literally another country (just like Scotland). There is rivalry between them, and there is some kind of joke on how the Londoners can't understand what the Welsh are saying. OK, I get it, but I don't really get it in the way a British person would.

And then, there is the culture of a place. Apparently, smoking is still a normal thing to do in Britain. There is smoking indoors and out, by everyone. In the U.S., we have steered away from showing this much smoking, and I don't think I have



seen much on TV. In Britain, the culture is OK with smoking. To me, it is jarring (and adds nothing to the plot).

In short, I didn't find Gavin and Stacey quite as amusing as if I had been British. That is because the series is written by the British for the British. Yes, some things are universal (weird in-laws, weird friends, not wanting to reveal secrets), which is why we can watch programs from different countries and get it. Humor though, is harder to convey.

The bottom line is that you write for your audience. To do this, you must understand who your audience is and what makes them tick. We define audiences in all sorts of ways: demographically, geographically and so on. Case in point: you would not write an ad directed to a 65 plus demographic using teen slang. It just wouldn't make sense.

Understand your audience and tailor your word choice and message to their needs and sensibilities.

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# Marketing professional associations

There are hundreds of professional associations, representing every imaginable industry and career path. There is even an association for associations (or at least for association executives): ASAE. The ASAE has been advertising itself on TV lately, something I have never seen before. It is doing it mostly on Sunday morning talk shows, and the campaign is called the Power of A.

Associations, like other donor or member-based organizations, have to work to maintain the number of donors or members. A drop is serious, as it means a cut in income. At the same time, these associations or organizations have to work extra hard to entice people to join.

In the last few weeks, several associations I could be a member of because of my profession, have been having membership drives. They are offering one or more of the following:

- Reduced membership costs
- Gifts with membership
- Waived application fees

Do these enticements work? I think the one that works the best is reduced membership costs, **IF** there is sufficient benefit to joining. And therein lies the problem. Often, these associations have events that are open to the public. Non-members pay more than members. If you like what you see, and you want to go to more events, perhaps membership is worth it, in pure cash value. However, you can still go when you want even if you aren't a member. But what else does membership offer? What exclusive, member-only benefits does the association offer? What can you get nowhere else?

In some cases, people want the "cachet" of being a member. Or they want the opportunity to network, or raise their leadership profile by serving on committees and boards. All these are valid reasons to join. Being an association member shows that you are really interested in/committed to the field.

Another issue is that there may be several associations representing your field. Which do you choose? In my case, I could be in the American Marketing Association, Public Relations Society of America, International Association of Business Communicators, the Association for Women in

Communications, and so forth. For me, the problem is the cost of joining is not subsidized by an employer, since I work for myself. I have to choose carefully. And yes, the money incentive works. Making it more affordable to join is an incentive.

Bottom line is memberships have to do with cost and value. Providing sufficient value for members makes membership worthwhile.

What makes you join an association? Is it worth it?



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## Blogs, comments and marketing

OK, not quite as sexy as Sex, Lies and Videotape...

Lately, I have been reading/hearing a lot about comments on blogs. Most people seem to favor comments. One of the ways we know that people are responding or finding what we write interesting and worthwhile is when we get comments. It is also a way to know what our audience is thinking. Others are not so keen on allowing comments because there might be some negative or disparaging statements, and opening up you/your organization to what the public thinks.

Clearly, some organizations are more likely to want to know how the audience thinks and some are not so inclined. **I would counsel those who want to remain hermetic not to have a blog. A blog, almost by definition, is a forum (it can be internal, but nevertheless it is about exchange of ideas).**

Those who are OK with audience interaction should probably have guidelines to govern the comments. In fact, you don't

HAVE to publish each and every comment if you don't want. Right here on Caffeinated we've received some fairly self-serving comments along with some out of left field observations that we have decided to let live in the netherworld.

Courtland Milloy, a columnist at the *Washington Post*, has a piece in today's paper about nasty/ignorant/vicious comments. He wants readers to tone down the invective. I agree with him—I have followed some comment streams on opinion pieces and people give wind to the most disagreeable thoughts. And Milloy argues that even though these commenters are counted as visitors to the site, some advertisers may not want to be associated with them. Is this true? I am not sure that advertisers/marketers look at comments other than as a numbers game. We all know that there are some kooky people out there who are bored/irritated/deranged and take it out on comments boards. **What we endorse as marketers is the content on the site, not the comments.**

**As marcomm folks, what we need to worry about is our policy for comments.** I don't think you should discourage comments, but you should make clear that not everything is fair play and that not every utterance will see the light of the blogosphere. You may want to set this out in a terms and conditions somewhere on your blog.

David Griner, in his blog, The Social Path, has had a series of articles on comments. It is worthwhile to read this one, about whether you are LEGALLY liable for comments made on your blog. As I point out above, this type of concern should be part of the policies that govern your site, and something you must consider if you do have a blog.

Your thoughts? Comment, but please no racist, slanderous, sexist remarks!



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## Words are Key

Keywords. They are the mantra of the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) people. Some websites are written in a weird, keyword heavy format to make them seem like candy for the search engines. Websites also have metatags and alt-text and other areas for keywords. Search engines read text, which is why content is king on the Internet. Search engines do not read images, unless they are labeled or tagged.

Some companies set up blogs just to increase their likelihood of being found. And SEO people think you should have keywords there too.

If you ever doubted that keywords are important, then do a little experiment on Twitter. Use a keyword like marketing, writing, or golf (if that is your thing) and see how many people start following you. Yesterday, I re-tweeted a story about the Christian Science Monitor getting rid of its religion reporter (fairly ironic, and that is why I shared it). Guess what, no less than three people of a heavy Christian persuasion started following me. Even though none of my posts and my bio say anything about Christianity. These people were simply keyword surfing and leached on to the word Christian in Christian Science Monitor.

So, how do you create a list of keywords? Easy. Start with your industry and work from there. Say you are a civil engineer. You would have the following: engineering, civil engineering, building, and so on. The important thing is to think of variations and related words. If you are in

advertising, you would naturally choose marketing, and perhaps sales. You may also want to include location (city, state, country) and specialties. You may want to use the names of your principals. **Just ask yourself: what would people ask if they needed to find me or someone that does what I do?**

Final thought: a popular word on this blog has been Twitter. In fact, I am sure if I tagged this article with the word Twitter, I will get plenty of search engine hits.

