

One big marketing lesson from the MLK Day of Service

For several years now, there have been organized Days of Service on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day across the United States.

I love Days of Service. In 2013, I went to the big one organized around President Obama's second inauguration, where I joined thousands in putting together care packages for US troops. Yesterday, I went to the Montgomery County (where I live) Day of Service and learned to crochet squares, which will be joined together by other volunteers into blankets for needy people.



Crochet squares at
Montgomery County
MLK Day of Service

Yesterday, at the Montgomery County Conference Center, where the MLK Day of Service event was held, I saw hundreds of folks, representing various ethnicities and races, many of them children, all crammed together in a ballroom. All of them converging to volunteer in memory of Dr. King, to participate in a small project (crochet for one hour, like me) but

selfless.

How do you get thousands of folks to volunteer? Generally, there's not enough budget for physical incentives (t-shirts, food, etc.) for everyone. People will need to transport themselves to the location and give up a chunk of their time. So why do people do it, year after year?

All sorts of people will take the time and devote energy to volunteering because there is payoff. The payoff is a feeling of accomplishment. They feel like they are helping out and perhaps, even making a difference.

The one big marketing lesson here is simple. **People want to do things that make them feel good about themselves.**

A powerful motivation to get people to do what you want (buy a product, sign up for healthcare, etc.) is to focus on making people feel good about themselves.

Have you seen the TV commercials for Chantix (a medication to help people quit smoking)? The commercials tell the stories of individuals who decided to quit, generally because they want to live long lives for their families. They focus on how good people feel once they have stopped smoking, and what a great accomplishment it is.

We know good marketing understands and focuses on the intended target audience. Part of understanding a target audience is to know what will motivate action. Some marketers feel scare tactics work better (if you don't buy life insurance, you will be hit by catastrophic funeral costs you won't be able to afford). In my opinion, people prefer to feel good about their choices (if you buy life insurance, you will have peace of mind).

What are your thoughts? Do you respond better to positive or negative marketing?

