

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?

What my gym's #fail can teach you about marketing

At the gym this morning, we experienced a paper towel fail. There are two automated paper towel dispensers on the main floor, and both were out of paper. Since you are supposed to wipe your machine down after exercising (and some of us, knowing most people don't do that, wipe it down before), and people need the paper to do this, we could potentially be looking at many sweat and germ drenched machines.



Treadmills by Montage H0A
on Flickr

In any case, I got the last bit of paper out of one, and was able to wipe my machine and start exercising. After me, at least ten people walked up to the machines, waved at them fruitlessly and walked away. Most just left their machines without wiping them off. A couple of people walked over to the other room and got paper there. And then someone finally reported the missing paper to the front desk.

What is the marketing lesson here? There are three:

1. Most people will not speak up. It seems to be something about human psychology that most people will not rock the boat, even if something is wrong.

Marketers should never assume that because no one has said anything, everything is OK. That's why it's so important to measure and check!

2. Most people will not go out of their way, even if they know they should do something. It may be laziness or hurry or something else, but most people will not take extra steps or go out of their way.

Marketers (especially of causes) have to make things as easy as possible. Too many steps will just make people give up.

3. People are completely self-involved. Most people don't notice what is going around them. If so, all those people would have seen there was no paper instead of standing there doing what another person did five seconds before them.

Marketers have to break through both the clutter and the self-involvement.

Comments are always appreciated!

Need help with your marketing materials? If so, contact me to discuss how we can cut through the clutter and make change happen.

Finding a vendor

How do you find a vendor? It is important to know this because it can inform marketing. Depending on what I am looking for, I used Google, LinkedIn, listing services, reviews or Twitter. I am sure you use other tools (and would appreciate your insights in the comments).

For example, yesterday I was searching for a freelance editor. I used Google, and found (remarkably) few individuals had websites, whether I searched for “DC freelance editor” or “Maryland freelance editor.” I did find a couple, and one of them, had a very nice website and clearly defined rates. I searched for her on LinkedIn, and discovered that her background was very technical—no editorial. Made me think twice about her skill set. Another one had very strong writing credentials, but absolutely no social media (and she explained she is not into it). It made me question whether she gets it. I also Tweeted it out, and got a response from a colleague (good word of mouth). But, no freelance editors even picked up on it. Obviously, not using Twitter search to find business.

Tool: Google

Marketing lesson: Websites are important. Google profiles are helpful. If you are in an industry that is reviewed, having positive reviews is important since Google finds results from Yelp and others.

Tool: LinkedIn

Marketing lesson: If you aren’t on LinkedIn, you are at a disadvantage. The quality of your profile (both for individuals and companies) is important. For individuals,

testimonials, number of connections and your background do matter. Don't make stuff up, but bone up what is there.

Tool: Twitter (or other social media sites)

Marketing lesson: How you present yourself, and even if you are on social media, says a lot. What does your Twitter profile, stream, followers say about your business or you?

Tool: Printed materials (brochures, business cards, etc.)

Marketing lesson: How your marketing materials look (are they printed on quality stock, are they black/white or color, do they look professionally designed), can give an immediate impression. How your marketing materials read—what information you provide—can seal the deal.

Tool: Using the telephone

Marketing lesson: Are you reachable? How do you/your company answer the phone? Do you even answer the phone? Some people will want to talk to someone in real time.

Tool: Word of mouth

Marketing lesson: Each and every customer who has a positive interaction with you can be an ambassador, and each and every customer who has a negative impression can be a detractor. Watch your customer interactions. Improve your customer service.

The bottom line is that if you are marketing yourself/your company, you have to understand how people find you, and how they decide whether to contact you or not.

Your thoughts? What makes you decide on a vendor? How do you find a vendor?