

*Special Issue***MARKETING DURING A RECESSION****HOW TO GAIN MARKET SHARE**

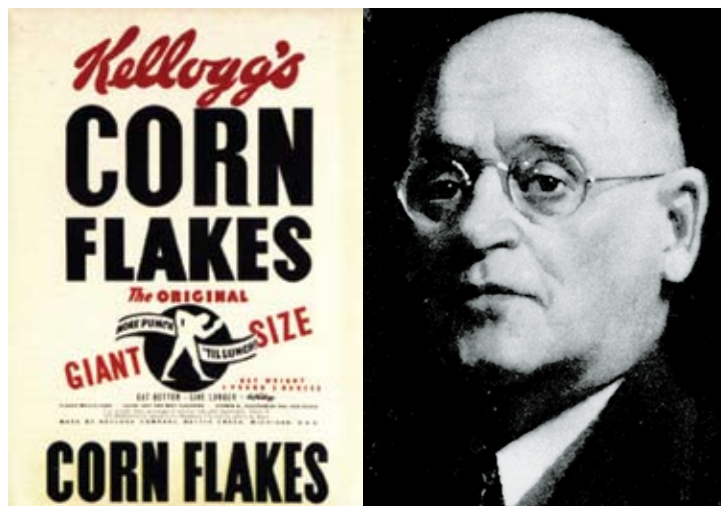
The simple answer is: maintain or increase your marketing budget during a recession. Because many of your competitors will reduce theirs.

So you will increase your share of voice. That leads to increases in market share...increases that are sustained well beyond the end of the recession.

An early anecdotal example is Kellogg's Corn Flakes. What really catapulted its success was founder W.K. Kellogg's decision – at the height of the Depression – to double his advertising expenditures.

Ever since, Kellogg's Corn Flakes has been the most popular cereal in the world. There's also ample statistical evidence to support marketing during a recession. For example...

A study of more than 1,000 companies identified a "clear and dramatic pattern: companies that increase their marketing activities during a recession are more successful than those that cut back."



W.K. Kellogg doubled his advertising budget during the Depression; and ever since, Kellogg's Corn Flakes has been the most popular cereal in the world.



Marley and Me has been a big hit in great part because - during uncertain times like these - people are looking for comfort and assurance and turning to the warmth and dependability of family and friends.

*Six Steps to Success*

- 1 Study your competitors.** How are they reacting to the recession? Finding your distinctive niche in the competitive set has never been more important. This is no time for "me too" products or services.
- 2 Research your customers.** Chances are their spending habits and buying decisions have changed. Find out how.
- 3 Communicate in ways that resonate today.** People want to feel confident, assured, and even comforted during these uncertain times.
- 4 Empower your customers.** People need now to feel they are in charge. Be sure you're having a dialogue with your customers, not a monologue.
- 5 Communicate value, but also communicate connectivity and authenticity.** Family and friends are more meaningful than ever.
- 6 Increase your commitment to the Internet.** Use social media more, too. People are turning to the web more than ever. Marketing there is efficient, measurable, and instantly alterable. With money tight, put it where you can measure its success.

**TIME FOR NEW BEGINNINGS**

Surprisingly enough, launching a new business or new product during a recession can be extremely advantageous. That's because the downturn is inevitably followed by a recovery that can carry your new business or product to great levels of success.

Classic examples of new businesses or products launched during recessions include Home Depot, MTV, CNN, IBM's personal computer, and the iPod.

Yes, these are challenging times. But the opportunities for smart marketers are extraordinary. Have courage and take advantage of them!



iPod is one of the many products and services that have been successfully launched during economic recessions.

# CHARLESTON REGIONAL BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Your customers are talking – are you listening?



by David L. Rawle

Brian Finkelstein came home and found a Comcast technician asleep on his couch. The technician had fallen asleep waiting for Comcast's customer support line to answer the phone.

Finkelstein videotaped the sleeping technician and posted it on YouTube. Within hours, the video was viewed by more than half a million people. Needless to say, the video dealt a real blow to Comcast.

The Finkelstein video is but one of many examples of what is now referred to as "consumer-generated media." Blogs, wikis, message boards, video-sharing sites and social networking pages are all part of the growing trend of consumer-generated media.

More than 112 million blogs are now in the blogosphere. More than 200 million videos are viewed daily on YouTube. And more than 14 million photos are uploaded daily on Facebook.

Vincent Ferrari encountered a combative service representative at AOL. He recorded the call and put the audio file on his blog and YouTube. He even ended up on NBC's Today show.

Consumers rule. Consumers control the dialogue. Consumers are talking about you. And there are tremendous benefits in listening.

Carefully listening to consumers does even more than protect your reputation and strengthen your sales. It can provide valuable market research information. It can help tell you where the weak spots are in your product and service. And it can reveal your personnel strengths and weaknesses.

Various methods exist for staying in touch with what consumers are saying about you. For example, Technorati blog search, Nielson BlogPulse and Google Blog Search each provide ways to monitor blogs. IceRocket searches across blogs as well as MySpace pages, news sources, images and videos. YouTube and Google Video Search, along with Flickr and other photo search sites, are valuable. And then, too, you can look at ratings sites like Epinions or Trip Advisor.

Beyond looking at these sites, analyze the comments that are out there — How many there are, where they come from, what issues they are addressing, what kinds of emotions they are expressing, what you can tell about the sources of the comments.

In short, there's a lot of slicing and dicing to do, if you really want to understand and respond effectively to what's being said.

We are all living under the critical microscopes of consumers. So, what's the best way to thrive in these conditions?

First, do a reality check on your product or service. Make certain that you are delivering on your promise.

What matters most to consumers is your credibility. They want to feel that they can trust you, that you're being open and straight with them. They want to feel that you're listening, and that you're responsive to their interests, issues and comments.

Second, make communicating with you really easy for your customers. Don't hide the opportunity in small type on your web site. Say it loud and clear. Encourage consumer participation.

Put all comments on your site, even if they're negative. Make your web site a listening platform that nurtures a sense of community. And make every interaction with your customers a positive experience.

Just look at the kinds of companies that are thriving in today's challenging economy. In the airline industry, Southwest stands apart from all others, in personality as well as profitability. They have successfully created a community with their customers.

So has Lands' End, where customer service reps are encouraged to chat with customers.

And what about Comcast? Well, they learned their lesson from Brian Finkelstein and others. They now have a full-time department dedicated to monitoring all consumer-generated media, listening carefully to it and responding responsibly to it with both words and actions. As Comcast now says, "When you're having a two-way conversation, you really get to clean the air."

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Left to right: Bruce Murdy, Bob Moquin, David Rawle.

## Bob Moquin Goes to the Wall

Bob Moquin, Senior Account Director, celebrated his fifth anniversary at Rawle Murdy in January. Bob has led much of our company's work in travel and tourism, most particularly the work we do with South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Bob's name is now on our Five Year Wall. Congratulations, Bob!

## A New Crop of Interns

Welcome to our newest group of interns for the Spring semester. Gillian Love and David Heiser, interning in our PR department, Markessee Craft in our media department and Molly Hippolitus in account services are all seniors at the College of Charleston majoring in Communications. Andrew Streib, helping out in our business development department is majoring in business administration at the College. We're also welcoming back two interns from last semester, Julie Scofield in our creative department and Genna Shelnut, returning as an account service intern.



Left to right: Markessee Craft, Gillian Love, David Heiser, Molly Hippolitus, Genna Shelnut, Andrew Streib, and Julie Scofield.