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## What marketers can learn from Toyota Australia's social media mishap

By Jimmy Maymann, Chairman of GoViral.

Toyota Australia's first foray into social media has ended badly. The advertisement for Toyota Yaris, called 'Clean Getaways' (watch it below), won the online 'Clever Film Competition' organised by Toyota in conjunction Saatchi & Saatchi.

Its content, however, showing a father and his daughter's boyfriend enjoying a conversation laden with crude double entendres, drew fierce criticism and has been taken down from Toyota's website.

Was the criticism justified? Well, I think there can be little doubt that the ad is in poor taste. But that doesn't mean the idea was a bad one.

Using your brand's fans to generate marketing material can deliver insightful and impactful campaigns but these need to be well planned.

### 1. Resources.

Getting an online community that loves your brand to generate an online ad through a competition sounds like a cheap way to create great content. But organising a competition requires lots of time and effort. You need to plan, produce and promote the activity.

Furthermore, content very rarely becomes popular just because it's good. Whether the campaign is generated by an agency or by an online community, achieving cut through needs paid media support. Resources to create the campaign is step one. A media and a pr budget to promote it both offline and online is step two.

A recent example of this is Stella Artois's Recyclage de Luxe campaign which we are distributing online. The content, created by Mother is brilliant, but it is the combination of planned off line and online media activity that has provided the foundations for the campaign to really take off.

### 2. Understanding social media.

It doesn't matter how often you say it, it still needs repeating. The internet is a huge interconnected universe which requires creativity, insight and in depth understanding to navigate.



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- ▶ [More women using social networks, preferring Facebook](#)
- ▶ [Social Media Training - Find out how to use social media in your marketing](#)

A brand's loyal supporters may well come up with a great piece of content that they and you love and understand. But, as the Toyota example demonstrates, the reaction may not be the same among other audiences in the social metropolis.

### **3. The message.**

Like all campaigns, the creative process needs to be guided by clear aims. When the process is in the hands of an online community, the guidance the brand provides is even more critical.

Most, if not all, of the people taking part will have no understanding or interest in your marketing strategy so it's critical that you are clear about the message you want to deliver and guide your community towards it.

A current example of this is the recent launch of giffgaff, the people powered mobile network which is encouraging users to create online videos to promote the brand in return for free mobile services.

Users are given the freedom to be creative but the process is managed in a way that helps put across the message giffgaff wants.

### **4. Targets.**

Some audiences are more receptive to edgy content than others. When running UCG competitions, the chances of generating controversial ideas increases. As I mentioned before, a brand's loyal supporters may well come up with a great piece of content that appeals to those closest to the brand.

But content can quickly spread to other communities who may interpret you ad differently, find it ad annoying or even offensive. Before starting out you need to be clear about whether this matters to you and how you will manage it.

### **5. Make the user happy.**

In the 'always on' online world, users want instant gratification. You've got very little time to grab and keep a user's attention. If you have understood your audience and the nature of social media then the content you create stands a good chance of being accepted. And once you have earned this acceptance, the potential reach of your campaign explodes.

### **6. Conclusion.**

Toyota has made a number of mistakes, the most important of which of course is the fact that they ran the campaign. But the lead up to this final error needs to be examined too. A lot of things worked well.

The campaign to get ideas seems to have been well resourced and effectively promoted. However, it now looks clear that the parameters for the competition were not defined tightly enough.

This had a huge impact on the final result and created an ad that did not deliver the experience the audience was looking for. Toyota, like other brands, has learned the lesson the hard way. Mistakes will always happen and to their credit they have taken ownership of the error and can now move on.

If you do want to run a social media campaign, especially if you are engaging online communities in the creative process, think about the resources you need, take the time to understand social media, be clear about what message you want to deliver and who you want to target.

Above all, do all you can to make the audience happy. Done well, the levels of engagement and the scale of earned media space you can achieve can be breathtaking.

See the Toyota Yaris 'Clean Getaways' advert below.

