

Marketing via mouth and mail

Grotesque or humoristic videos sent between friend's and colleague's mail boxes, SMS messages or opinion former's and trendsetter's statements concerning new products are gaining legitimacy as an alternative to the traditional marketing methods. This also goes for well established Danish companies. But how strong is the new phenomenon viral marketing really in the fight for consumer attention?

Think of the last time, you enjoyed an expensive restaurant dinner, went to the cinema or purchased a new cell phone. How many of these events were influenced by recommendations from your friends or people you trust? Probably at least one of them. Today, most people are being influenced far more of family, friends, famous trend setters or opinion formers than by advertisements, TV spots or e-mails sent directly from companies. These social relations can be used for marketing.

Viral marketing or buzz marketing, as the phenomenon is also known, have, in recent years, spread from the U.S. and England to Denmark, where the first campaigns were sent off into the information current by small new companies almost three years ago.

Only now, more established companies are jumping the buzz bandwagon. All this is explained by the director of GoViral, who was among the first to produce viral campaigns for companies in Denmark. Over the latest year, the company has experienced a boost in sales of viral campaigns, which, in the case of GoViral, concerns with humoristic videos being spread to strategic sites on the Internet. Here, the video often catches the attention of certain people, who then spread the video by forwarding the link to friends and acquaintances.

“There has been a change over the last year. We started doing campaigns for small companies, but today we are primarily running campaigns for large clients such as Lego, TDC, MTC, Oticon and Playstation”, Claus Moseholm states. He is experiencing, that marketing directors suddenly have placed viral marketing in the marketing strategy, yet often without really knowing what it is about.

Director of Development in media agency IUM, Henrik Busch, is also experiencing that marketing directors are beginning to realize the potential of the method. “They are incredibly open minded and want to know more. But even though they heard of viral marketing, they do not know very much about it yet. “, he states and continues that while IUM were planning viral campaigns for two clients last year, they are presently talking to 16 clients, who wish to spend a part of their marketing budget on viral campaigns in the following year.

The network exceeds distortion of information

According to Roy Langer, Professor in company communication, there are several explanations as to why companies are now starting to take interest in the method. Partly, society is drowning with information and partly, many of the traditional mass media channels are losing influence. TV commercials are increasingly competing for attention with computers, cooking and cleaning and people switching the channel, when being bored. Consumers have become resistant to the many influences and have become better to interpret messages, Roy Langer explains. He has been researching in network communication and predicts that, in the years to come, the usage of viral marketing will increase extensively.

“Ordinary spam mails offering medical products and porn are today erased right away, but if it a message from a valued friend, chances are that you will have a look at it. In this is the raised

awareness. If the friend also comments on the video and writes that it is funny, for instance, the sender very often gets through to the receiver”, he states.

When does viral marketing work?

Viral marketing should be a supplement in the marketing mix and not a replacement of other methods. In situations as stated below, it can be an advantage to make use of the effect of spreading rumours.

- When you want to get in contact with trendsetters and opinion formers, who can spread the message on.
- When you want to maintain visibility of your brand or product.
- When you wish to market products, campaigns can be kick started by viral campaigns.
- When your target group is large and/or is spread widely over a geographical region.
- When your target group has ordinary interest in your product category and web sites or communities, with this interest as the topic, exist.
- When you wish to differentiate messages for different target groups and use different media for this.
- When you are conducting E-business with a global target group and distribute via the Internet.
- Often, viral marketing effects both online and offline campaigns and is being regarded as an effective supplement to traditional banner advertising.
- When you wish to, particularly, reach age group of 25-34, since this is the most commercially attractive group on the Internet, followed by individuals below the age of 25.

Source: GoViral and IUM