

# VISIBILITY

**Client Case – 2008**

## **Renegade**

**www.Renegade.com**

.Select publicity generated from @issue process,  
which develops bylined column and interview  
opportunities.

Advertising Age – July 28<sup>th</sup>  
“Offer Consumers a Meaningful Service”

iMedia – July 7<sup>th</sup>  
“4 Tips for brand experiences that stick”

WiseMarketer – June 12<sup>th</sup>  
“Four Ideas for better brand experiences”

Chief Marketer – June 7<sup>th</sup>  
“Make Your Brand Experiences Interactive”

MediaPost – June  
“Unglued from the Tube”

Adrants – May 5<sup>th</sup>  
“Renegade Espouses Marketing as Service”

Philanthropy Journal – May 29<sup>th</sup>  
“Good Brands Don’s Hurt”

Philanthropy Journal – May 13<sup>th</sup>  
“Tweaking Brands Mid-Stream”

PRSA Journal – March  
“Reject recession, steps to ensure your company soars”

Chief Marketer – March 4<sup>th</sup>  
“Passionistas, the new empowered consumers”

iMedia – February 15<sup>th</sup>  
“Recession marketing” be brave of be gone”

Len Stein  
President

Tel 914 712 2610 fax 914 712 2613 cel 914 527.3708

# AdvertisingAge®

## Offer Consumers a Meaningful Service

### Understand What Your Target Needs, Deliver It and Stick With It

By Drew Neisser

*Published:* July 28, 2008



**Drew Neisser**

It's just common sense that if you give a little, you'll usually get a little in return. But to paraphrase President Harry S. Truman, that (inadvertent) font of marketing wisdom, "If common sense were so common, more [marketers] would have it." Marketing is nothing more or less than an exchange of value. The better the value the marketer provides, the more time and attention they'll usually get back from their target. If the value delivered by the marketer is exceptional, then the consumer will pay back the marketer with loyalty and brand evangelism in good times and bad.

Marketing as service is about transforming your communications from mere messaging into an exceptional value that consumers will seek out. [To quote Ad Age Editor Jonah Bloom](#), "Marketing as service is where brands actually give consumers something they want or need," as opposed to hitting them over the head with messaging they'd rather zap or ignore. While Ad Age and others have chronicled examples of this savvy approach, no one to my knowledge has put forth a how-to guide for marketing as service, so let's just say, the buck starts here.

Because of our relentless desire to cut through, we are an industry that always likes to focus on the latest and greatest. Ironically, much could be learned from the past. As President Truman put it, "There is nothing new in the world except the history [of marketing] you do not know." [Ad Age recently reported](#) on a "new path" being pursued by Crocs to help pedestrian explorers with online walking guides. And while Cities by Foot is indeed a fine example of marketing as service, it is by no means a true innovation.



Just let go: T-shirt company Threadless built a business by asking customers to submit designs and vote on the shirts it will print.

Perhaps you've heard of the Michelin Guide. Way back in 1900, André Michelin created a driver's guidebook to France to help drivers see the best restaurants of the country while keeping their cars in good shape. It included addresses of places such as gas stations, garages, tire repair shops, and public toilets. Set up 108 years before Cities by Foot, the Michelin Guide remains a quintessential example of marketing as service, educating customers, enhancing their lives and doing so in a highly relevant manner.

It's hard to create a meaningful service for your customers and prospects if you don't know all that much about them. And while some might choose to follow President Truman's advice to "Always be sincere, even if you don't mean it," it is essential to have a genuine insight when pursuing marketing as service. Find that insight somewhere within the passions and miseries, the days and nights, the aspirations and disappointments, and the loves and hates of your target universe. Genuine insight will uncover a service that matters, a service the target will truly appreciate.

### **Street cred**

Nike 6.0 spent years hangin' with skateboarders before it launched [a social network on Loop'd](#) to target them. After struggling for years to crack the code, Nike learned the hard way that this group is keenly sensitive to "posers" and will call out a false note faster than you can say "backside 360 ollie." Not until Nike hired skaters to help create their skate shoes and listened carefully did they gain the street cred required to engage this audience.

The notion of having a conversation with your customers has almost become a cliché in our industry. It's gotten so bad, I heard four speakers at one marketing conference lecture about the need for a dialogue. Taking inspiration again from that famous haberdasher from Independence, Mo., who said, "Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better," marketers need to strive for something deeper than a conversation, something that gets them truly in sync with their customers' needs and desires. Think in terms of a marketing tango -- a dance that is intimate, memorable and takes two.

These "tangos" can happen both offline and online. They can take place on your premises or at events ranging from street encounters to massive exhibitions. Offline, Apple lets its flock play with all its "toys" in their stores and employs teachers that they call concierges at the ready to educate and enlighten. Virtual tangos also come in a variety of shapes and sizes from websites to widgets, virtual worlds to social networks. Visa has created an application for Facebook called the [Visa Business Network](#), which includes tutorials on how small businesses can save money, budget wisely, organize

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Drew Neisser** is CEO of interactive shop Renegade. He believes the future of communication resides in the notion of marketing as service -- a concept he preaches about frequently on [The Drew Blog](#).

efficiently and, most important, dance with their customers via this ubiquitous social network.

Some marketers have expressed concern about losing control of their brand in this newfangled Web 2.0 world. I urge them to consider these prescient words from the first president to address the American people from the White House, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." My advice to marketers is to just let go, because you aren't in control anyway. Offer your customers a way to inspire subversive comic books, and reward their creativity with outrageous parties like Colt 45. "The Tales of Colt 45" program, now in its second year, celebrates "the most notable [customer] adventures involving the famed malt liquor" in a four-booklet series that also promote a five-market nightclub tour where new adventures will undoubtedly unfold. Or, like Jones Soda, maintain your cult following by letting your customers design your product labels.

Similarly, T-shirt company [Threadless](#) has built a reportedly multimillion-dollar business in eight years by encouraging its customers to submit designs and choose the shirts it will print. Best yet is [Etsy](#), an online marketplace for handmade goods. Etsy has over 1 million registered users that it supports creatively with online classes and resource locations and conversationally with forums, blogs and chat rooms. They have also created a request-based marketplace where buyers can post what they want and sellers can bid on the job. In a recommendation economy, all of these represent powerful ways to drive positive word of mouth and build brand loyalty.

Marketers have a tendency to get tired of their successes far sooner than most consumers. The reality is that when you hit upon a really good marketing as service program, you need to stick with it for a while. Maybe you can't foresee a 100-year-plus commitment such as Michelin, but how about more than a decade such as Camp Jeep? American Express has offered exclusives for gold- and platinum-card members for more than 20 years, and the BankCab has been driving customers to HSBC for more than six years. And lest we fall victim to the Truman proverb, "Being too good is apt to be uninteresting," keep things fresh with periodic upgrades, ensuring that your marketing buck never stops working for you.

Copyright © 1992-2008 [Crain Communications](#) | [Privacy Statement](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Published: July 07 2008

## 4 tips for brand experiences that stick

By Drew Neisser

Check out these simple ways to convert prospects into customers and then into card-carrying brand evangelists.

Brand experiences, whether physical or virtual, if done correctly can convert prospects into customers and then customers into card-carrying brand evangelists. These experiences are by definition interactive, encouraging dialogue and ideally an intimate and unforgettable dance between brand and consumer. Here are four thoughts on how to turn your brand experiences into dances of a lifetime.

When brands create experiences that provide a real service, magical things happen. Because "[marketing as service](#)" provides a real value, the brand pulls customers and prospects into it, rather than pushing a message at them. This natural engagement deepens relationships with existing customers, forms strong bonds with new ones and helps generate favorable word of mouth.

Charmin showed its get-up-and-go when it installed restrooms in Times Square, providing welcome relief for more than a half million holiday tourists. The service was unexpected, memorable, relevant and good clean fun.



Samsung has electrified road warriors by installing mobile device charging stations in five major U.S. airports. Given the annoying paucity of outlets in terminals, this service is pumping up Samsung's image as a friend indeed to the mobile world.



In order to cut through effectively, the experience must derive from a sound strategic insight relevant to the brand. While handing out fun premiums might drive

traffic, it rarely builds brand loyalty unless it extends the conversation and reinforces what the brand stands for. When my company's client, Panasonic, wanted to engage action sports enthusiasts, they needed an insight that gave them permission to "hang" with this otherwise skeptical crowd. The insight they found was that capturing and sharing tricks was an inherent part of the action sports lifestyle. Since Panasonic made the video and still cameras that captured the tricks, and the TVs to see them on, they had a legitimate reason to "Share the Air" with this community.

Panasonic's [Share the Air program](#) featured a camera loaner program at each of the five stops of the AST Dew Tour. With the swipe of a driver's license, attendees got their hands on a new video or digital still camera to record the cool tricks that they saw during the day's competition. And to make the experience memorable, participants could take a Panasonic-branded SD card home containing all of their pictures. The Share the Air microsite kept the experience alive, allowing attendees to blog with their favorite athletes on a daily basis, and deliver incentives to purchase Panasonic products at local dealers.



All of these elements combined to make Panasonic a brand of choice among action sports enthusiasts.

Ideally, an event will accomplish a variety of goals beyond informing and engaging an audience and generating buzz/PR. One essential function of an event is to drive prospects and customers to a complimentary online experience.

Not only will this help amortize the high cost-per-touch of an event, but also it will lead to a long-term customer relationship by extending the experience.

In a perfect world, a single agency should have the capabilities to execute these complimentary event and online experiences. This approach is the most cost effective and ensures consistency of look and tonality across all channels of communication.

The goal should always be to cut through the first time. To accomplish this, metrics for success must be established upfront. Marketers need to set benchmarks via pre-event research to compare with post-event data.

In addition to tracking event attendance; time with brand and perceptual changes and sell-in and sell-through, consider adding Net Promoter Score to your measurement arsenal. NPS is a simple and reliable way to measure the likelihood of someone recommending your brand to a friend (i.e., word of mouth). Since NPS can be measured online as well, it will also help you understand if your online experience is as strong as the offline one.

Additional online metrics, including unique visitors, time-on-site, pre/post NPS and online commerce data (if relevant), will help complete the tally, ensuring you know which elements should be cut and which cut through.

[Drew Neisser](#) is CEO of [Renegade](#).

## Four ideas for better brand experiences

Thursday June 12, 2008

*There are four key ways for marketers to gain the most advantage from customers' brand experiences, according to Drew Neisser, CEO for US-based brand marketing agency Renegade.*

Neisser's guidelines include strategies not only for improving marketing processes but also for using technology to create a competitive advantage through ongoing customer dialogue.

### Improving brand experiences

The four main brand experience improvement ideas put forward by Renegade are:

1. **Embrace 'marketing as service'**

Because "marketing as service" means providing real value, prospects more readily turn into customers, and customers more readily turn into brand evangelists. When HSBC wanted to bring its position as "The world's local bank" to life in New York City, Renegade developed the HSBC BankCab. The iconic Checker Cab, wrapped in HSBC's well known red and white colours, drives around the streets of New York five days a week offering free rides to existing customers. Research has shown that customers who have used the BankCab recommend HSBC to at least 5 of their friends and are twice as likely to stay loyal to HSBC for years to come.

2. **Execute a real strategy, not just tactics**

In order to reach consumers most effectively, brand experiences must come from relevant strategic insights. Since the goal is customer engagement, the marketer must understand the customer thorough. At the AST Dew Tour, Panasonic understood the target customer's desire to get closer to the athletes. As a result, the company set up a free "camera loaner" programme that let fans zoom in and record the cool tricks that they saw during each day's competition. At the end of the day, consumers could take home a Panasonic SD card containing all of their favourite moments and memories. An online photo contest was also set up so that consumers could also share their favourite moments and engage with other like-minded people.

3. **Seamless integration of events and online experiences**

One essential function of a 'brand event' is to start a dialogue that can be continued online long after the event. Not only does this defer the high cost-per-touch of the event but it also extends the brand experience, usually leading to a long-term customer relationship. For the most impact, the event and the online experiences should be planned at the same time, with each supporting, promoting, and complementing the other.

4. **Measure twice, cut once**

The ultimate goal of the brand experience must be to cut through to the customer the first time around. To do this, metrics for success must be established in advance, and marketers need to set benchmarks via pre-event research to compare with post-event data. In addition to tracking event attendance, time with brand, perceptual changes, sell-in, and sell-through, consider adding metrics such as the Net Promoter Score (NPS) to the marketing armoury, to help measure word of mouth and changes in attitudes. At the same time, offline metrics should also be tracked and compared with online data such as unique visitors, time on the web site, pre- and post-visit NPS scores, and any other relevant e-commerce data that's available.



SAVE THIS | EMAIL THIS | Close

## Make Your Brand Experiences Interactive

By Drew Neisser

The best physical or virtual brand experiences are always interactive. They encourage dialog and better yet, an intimate and unforgettable dance between brand and consumer. Here are four thoughts on how to maximize the brand experience success.

If done correctly, physical and virtual brand experiences can convert prospects into customers and customers into card-carrying brand evangelists. The best experiences are always interactive, encouraging dialog and better yet, an intimate and unforgettable dance between brand and consumer. Here are four thoughts on how to maximize the success of your brand experiences.

### Take it to the customer

When our client HSBC wanted to bring their position "The World's Local Bank" to life in New York City, we developed the HSBC BankCab. An iconic Checker Cab, wrapped in HSBC red and white, drove the streets of New York five days a week, offering free rides to existing customers. Research has shown that customers exposed to the BankCab recommend HSBC to at least five of their friends and are twice as likely to stay loyal to HSBC for years to come.

### Execute strategy, not tactics

Effective brand experiences must be borne of relevant strategic insights. Handing out free stuff might drive booth traffic but there's really no long term impact. At the AST Dew Tour, Panasonic understood the target's desire to get closer to the athletes. So, Panasonic set up a free camera loaner program that let fans zoom in and record the cool tricks that they saw during the day's competition. At days end, they got to take home a Panasonic SD card saving all their memories that they could then enter into a photo contest at the complementary online experience – [ShareTheAir.net](#).

### Seamlessly integrate event and online experiences

One essential function of an event is to start a conversation that can be continued online long after the day is done. Not only will this defer the high cost-per-touch of the event, but it will also extend the brand experience. For the most impact, the event and the online experiences should be planned at the same time supporting and complimenting each other. **Measure twice, cut once**

The goal must be to cut through the first time. To do this, metrics for success must be established upfront. Marketers need to set benchmarks via pre-event research to compare with post-event data. In addition to tracking event attendance, time with brand and perceptual changes, sell-in and sell-through, consider adding Net Promoter Score to your measurement arsenal. Offline line metrics should be compared and tracked to online data including unique visitors, time on site, pre/post NPS and, if relevant, online commerce data.

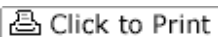
*Drew Neisser is president and CEO of New York-based marketing agency Renegade.*

## RSS Newsfeeds from Chief Marketer



### Find this article at:

[http://www.chiefmarketer.com/disciplines/branding/brand\\_experience\\_0610/index.html](http://www.chiefmarketer.com/disciplines/branding/brand_experience_0610/index.html)



SAVE THIS | EMAIL THIS | Close

 Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



[Home](#) > [Media Magazine](#) >Welcome [Sign-in](#) | [Register](#). Tue, Jun 3, 2008[EMAIL THIS ARTICLE](#) [PRINT](#) [REPLY](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#)

## Unglued From the Tube

by Liz Tascio, June 2008 issue



### As the screens keep multiplying, content roams free

**Dramatic changes in media overthrew the old models, and consumers took control: Nomadic media takes the evolution one giant step farther.**

He's broken free. Smart phones. Wireless connections. Thumb drives that hold a small library of information on a keychain. Internet cafés. With the adoption of smarter and smarter tools, consumers have leveraged their own liberation. The modern consumer is ever more mobile, untethered to media schedules, to heavy PCs, to offices, even to traveling itself. They are not physically tied to any one place: not the office, not the classroom, not the television. Consumers take pieces of increasingly fragmenting media and run with them - wherever they feel like it. They can work and play at will, whether they are world travelers or dedicated suburbanites.

To keep up, media itself had to adapt to this untethering, or risk irrelevance. The next step in media's evolution was to free itself from the definition of offline or online, from the limited roles of push and pull, and become something smarter and more flexible. Well-traveled and adaptable.

Media has become nomadic.

Video screens appear everywhere: elevators, cabs, gas station pumps. Brands send messages out along every path in a consumer's day, using creativity and smarter targeting to make connections with consumers. Video games, iTunes, screens at the grocery store, viral videos, street campaigns - even a simple jog in a park can strengthen a consumer's relationship with Nike if he's doing so as a member of a

#### Today's Most Read

1. Wal-Mart Gains On Grocery Store Competition
2. Goldstein At IAB: Marketers Can't Ignore Social Media
3. NBCU, Nielsen Fuse Metrics For Advertisers
4. GM Planworks Trims Staff, Reorganizes With Emphasis On Digital Tools
5. FedEx Changing Name From Kinko's To Office

Nike running club, one of the ever-proliferating elements of the Just Do It campaign.

As in any significant evolution, the complications that come from media's change to a nomadic state can both improve marketing and create new challenges for it. If media can be anywhere a consumer can be, increased competition and targeting will drive up the quality of successful messaging, which is good for the consumer and good for marketers. It also creates many more opportunities for consumers to have personal interactions with a brand, and to define that brand on their own terms.

But that ubiquity has a downside: When media can travel into every corner of a consumer's life, it risks becoming invisible, or worse, entirely unwanted. The evolution continues.

### God Save the Queen

Andrew Susman is CEO of Studio One Networks, a company that may have seen this shift coming. Since the late '90s, it's been syndicating content - sponsored by heavyweights like Honda, Nestlé and Procter & Gamble - that travels to meet interested consumers wherever they are. He believes that the success of this distribution model lies in the quality of the content.

"Every program that we produce has nationally known authorities attached to it," such as the American Academy of Pediatrics for the program Your Baby Today, Susman says. "The same piece of content is being served and distributed as a fixed position and updated daily, 24/7, across 243 separate distribution partners, including CBS, FOX, NBC and ABC sites."

Your Baby Today is also distributed to Babies R Us, parenting Web sites, "in radio and also in television via closed-circuit in 1,400 pediatric wards, reaching 65 percent of registered births. So it's online, in audio and on video," Susman says. "We have no commitment to any one channel. We're only about the content, and delivering quality content to high-value audiences."

"We've always had this notion, rightly so, that content is king. Yes, you go get distribution, but the stuff you put out there has got to have relevance," says Michael Bloxham, director of insight and research at Ball State University's Center for Media Design. "If content is king, then context is queen. You've actually got to say, what kind of content is best suited for the environment in which it is consumed? How is that content repurposed for this particular screen, which is viewed at a particular distance, at a particular time, in a particular mode?"

The broadcast model of branding - the traditional push - distilled a brand into its simplest form, while reaching the most consumers possible and offending the fewest, says David Weinberger, a fellow at Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet & Society and the co-author of the Web marketing book, *The Cluetrain Manifesto*.

It also required that marketers retain control over their brand, in any media format. A consumer's relationship with the brand was prescribed. The dramatic changes in media in the past few years overthrew that model, and consumers took control of their own interactions with media. Nomadic media takes the evolution one giant step farther.

Nomadic media puts a brand's message out there, traveling many different pathways, and dressed in many different costumes, all specifically tailored to certain groups of interested consumers. Crossing paths with the consumer now actually starts a relationship in which the consumer plays an active part. The consumer is not coming to the brand at the brand's beckoning. The brand is not forcing its company on the consumer (at least, not always, though elevator TVs come to mind). The brand's identity in the eyes of the consumer depends on a consumer's interaction with it.

The evolution of the consumer and of media has led to a nomadic lifestyle for each, and a more dependent relationship on each other. Nomadic media is out of the hands of the marketer, and is shaking hands with the consumer. And the result of these interactions has been, in the best cases, far more vibrant relationships with brands, and consumers who are true ambassadors for them.

### Road Show

An interesting place to watch this trend develop is the 2008 presidential campaign. A campaigning presidential candidate is by definition nomadic: traveling the country, available at all hours, making personal connections, delivering a message crafted for the audience of the moment - all while staying on brand.

But it wasn't until recently that candidates began making good use of the fact that media can behave the same way. It started in the 2004 race, says Harvard's David Weinberger, who was also a technology adviser to the Howard Dean campaign and for John Edwards during his recent bid.

"The Dean campaign figured out that they would benefit if they could enable supporters to connect with each other and talk about what supporters wanted," subverting the highly simplified broadcast model, Weinberger says. "The Obama campaign has been spectacular at doing that. ... It's far more interesting, and I think more liberating, to see videos springing up from all sorts of people, and not using the Web simply as a way to maintain control over their message."

In fact, they can't use the Web as a way to control their message, because consumers use the Web to undo brand messages - and to discuss them among friends.

Fred Stutzman is a Ph.D. student and a teaching and research fellow at the School of Information and Library Science at UNC-Chapel Hill, and the co-founder and developer of claimid.com, a tool to manage online identities. He studies social networks and has been following the candidates' campaigns there.

"What I've seen is lots and lots of people picking up their brand, their message, and sort of marketing it to one another," for example, by sending an invite to a rally or by joining a group, Stutzman says. It's a conversation that in 2008 extends far beyond an sms.

"The Web is no longer this abstract place where you interact with anonymous people and there aren't real-world ties," Stutzman says. "When one person is signaling or marketing something to their friends, they're effectively marketing it to their real-world friends, and that's something that you couldn't do on the Web five years ago because people didn't have online identities."

That small change in media unanchored social networks from the Web and linked them to real-world relationships, creating communities of influencers who are everywhere.

### Turn Offs

There are drawbacks to media's new nomadic lifestyle.

"I have rarely been in a cab with a video screen where I or my fellow passenger didn't switch it off as soon as we got in; moving video in a moving taxi makes just about everyone carsick," says Drew Neisser, CEO of Renegade, an interactive marketing agency in New York City that operates under the philosophy, "Marketing as service."

Indeed, with nomadic media free to roam throughout a consumer's day, it can occasionally seem intrusive, like a chatty stranger of dubious value as a travel

partner. The importance of content and context becomes even more obvious when one of them is off.

"LocaModa's digital billboard for CNN in Times Square, on the other hand, actually provides people with entertainment that engages them," Neisser says. "A scramble of letters, each with a point value, is posted on the billboard, along with a countdown clock. People in Times Square or on the Web site are invited to SMS words made up of the letters. The service? Entertainment, engagement, and two seconds of fame."

Montreal-based Pixman Nomadic Media - whose vice president of sales and marketing, Reneault Poliquin, did not object to *Media's* redefining of the term - likes to think of its wearable screens as performing a kind of service too. The screen creates something interesting for consumers to interact with, and it collects information from them to create what Poliquin calls "a consenting database" for marketers.

"You are trying to, of course, seduce the consumer, and the consumer has a choice of coming to us or not," Poliquin says.

The success of nomadic media lies in continued experimentation and adventuring. Web properties are reaching offline, establishing themselves as part of this shift. The tech blog Boing Boing, originally a print publication that's long since defunct, now sends a nomadic version of itself out to consumers in the form of Boing Boing TV, which can be found online, of course, but is also available as part of Virgin America's in-flight entertainment (right next to *The Simpsons*, points out Boing Boing TV contributor and tech journalist Xeni Jardin). Sponsors include BMW, IBM and Verizon.

"Individual brands, individual advertisers, are starting to think of campaigns as something that really are driven by that desire to permeate every possible zone of experience that somebody might have in the course of a day," Jardin says. "Online video is increasingly seen as a valid part of that spread."

Jardin and her Boing Boing TV cohorts recently began producing a show called "S.P.A.M. Theater," video dramatizations of real spam e-mails, word for word. While those pieces of media were almost certainly not meant to roam beyond an inbox, "S.P.A.M. Theater" is an extreme example of consumers creating their own definition of a brand message simply by interacting with it.

### End of the Road

These nomads should not roam aimlessly. Each piece of media needs a mission. Otherwise, it's lost.

"If you looked at this issue any time over about the last 20 years, people would be referring to the notion of the saturation point, and they would probably be saying that, well, saturation can't be far away," Bloxham says. "But it seems that media itself is relentless in the pursuit of opportunities for more and greater exposures, and that we have almost an inexhaustible capacity to manage exposure.

"We may continue to be exposed to media on a ever greater scale, but that doesn't actually mean we absorb it."

That will remain the challenge for creators of nomadic media: to make the interaction worthwhile, and to invite real relationships with consumers, while exploring even more ways to be noticed when paths cross.

### Recent Media Magazine Articles

[From Breaking to Broken](#) Apr 15, 5:18 PM

The act of the old world embracing the newest of new media isn't just about blogs...

# AdvertisingAge®

## Make Your Marketing Useful, Like Samsung and Charmin

**Take a Small Chunk Out of Those Billion-Dollar Budgets and Help Provide a Free, Helpful Service**

By [Jonah Bloom](#)

*Published: May 26, 2008*

After about half an hour of staring at the space where a plane should've been, we're granted the announcement we knew was coming: The 3:30 p.m. out of LAX is now the 4:50 p.m., which we all know means it's really the 6-something p.m. There's a brief period of eye-rolling before everyone goes back to their business, which in my case means huddling with a dozen other worshippers around the Samsung totem pole to which our BlackBerries and laptops are attached.

If you have the misfortune to run the gauntlet of America's airports with any regularity, you're all too familiar with this scene and may even know the totem I'm referring to. It's an eight-foot, electrical charging station with a little shelf about halfway up its length where devices rest and recharge. It was Samsung that came up with the idea to pay for and install these life savers, hence having its brand name emblazoned on the side.

There are now more than 50 of them in both LAX and New York's JFK and a bunch in Dallas-Fort Worth, too. Earlier this month Samsung announced plans to bring them to LaGuardia and Orlando, where they'll undoubtedly be the most functional thing about two airports that vie for the title "grimmiest travel hub" with Uzbekistan's Tashkent International Airport.

Do I think charging stations sell phones? Unlikely. But they're way more likely to leave me feeling affection for the brand than some mind-numbing airport billboard that has nothing to do with the frustration and boredom I'm experiencing. They're classic examples of marketing as service, a concept worthy of more attention and dollars than it's getting.

Marketing as service is where brands actually give consumers something they want or need. It's also been tagged "brand utility," while WPP's Bridge is giving it a slightly more altruistic, cause-centric slant and calling it "marketing with meaning."

One of my favorite examples came from Metro newspapers in the U.K., which spent some of its launch

marketing budget repairing and improving inner-city sports facilities. It was a good way to get the Metro name emblazoned into the very fabric of the cities in question and a clever way to give the brand a bit of "history" within the city.

There are other examples: the oft-quoted Nike Plus and, just as brilliant, the Charmin restrooms in Times Square. But they're too few and far between. Drew Neisser, CEO of interactive shop Renegade Marketing, collects them on [thedrewblog.com](http://thedrewblog.com) and is responsible for executing one such program, the HSBC BankCab, which ferries the bank's customers around New York free of charge. But he admits he hasn't been able to find that many and believes that's because "frankly, even if a few people talk about it, too few really get it."

My suggestions: AT&T, for example, how about you spare a few million from the billion you spend shoving your bars in my face, and help the MTA fix its Subway intercoms? Or Citi, how about you take some of the hundred million a year you spend telling us how friendly you are to construct a wireless network for New York? (Hell, I can even see an adaptation of the umbrella in your logo as a wireless signal.) BP, you really want to convince us you're green, how about putting together a borrow-a-bike system in a few U.S. cities, like the ones in Paris, Berlin and Munich?

Don't get me wrong. Consumer affection and interaction can be won through extremely entertaining advertising. But for brands who don't believe their mission in life is to entertain or have tried and repeatedly failed at that exercise, marketing-as-service offers an option that doesn't involve thrusting your mission statement in our faces every time we turn a corner.

Copyright © 1992-2008 [Crain Communications](#) | [Privacy Statement](#) | [Contact Us](#)



Send Tips, Gossip and News »

About AdGammer  
Contact Jobs  
Advertise

get email newsletter  
search adrants  
Subscribe to RSS

**AIU Online**

Earn an Associate's, Bachelor's or Master's Degree from AIU Online.  
www.AIUonline.edu/Marketing

**Marketing Communication**

Find Marketing Communication Compare Marketing Communications.  
www.delv.co.uk

**Designed to Death**

Beauty is the Killer App QUO VADIS Brand Communications  
quo-vadis.tv



We're covering the One Show all week in New York. Follow Angela on [Twitter](#)

**Renegade Espouses Marketing as a Service**



It would be easy to toss off this Renegade video which espouses its belief marketing should be a service to consumers rather than an intrusive method to get people to buy stuff. It's not new and it's been voiced by many an agency eager to illustrate they know marketing has to engage, enable conversation, provide benefit, offer participatory experiences and provide a service that goes beyond an excuse simply to sell product.

Yes, your eyes are rolling as you read this but what Renegade is saying nicely encapsulates the swirl of discussion the industry has engaged in regarding the socialization of media and what that means for marketers who, yes, still need to get stuff off the shelves and into people's hands. However, the "buy this because it's better/cheaper/faster" method just isn't working so well anymore.

Certainly the desire people might have to "have a conversation" with a brand is debatable but it's clear they do want to have a voice and they want that voice to be heard and acted upon. And, for it to be much more than just lip service. It would seem that's what Renegade is striving for in the work it does for its clients.

So, feel free to toss it of as yet another display of agency blather or give it a watch and then think. Have you truly changed the way you are marketing? Have you adjusted to the recent sea change in media usage patterns? Have you come to terms with the fact the way you've done business in the past is simply not going to work any longer no matter how much you want to profit from the creation of what you think will assuredly be a Cannes winning :30?

Seriously. We can do better. We have to.

by Steve Hall May- 5-08 [Comments \(1\)](#) File: Agencies, Good, Social, Trends and Culture, Video



**The Bravo Affluencers**



now with the BRAVO AFFLUENCER EFFECT

Engaging Content + Cable's Best Audience = POWERFUL ROI

[Read more...](#)

# The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University

## THE FUND RAISING SCHOOL



Resources section sponsored by [Wachovia Trust Nonprofit and Philanthropic Services](#)

## Good brands don't hurt

Drew Neisser | May 6, 2008



*This is the first of two columns on nonprofit branding.*

The first brands were burned into the hides of cows. This was painful for the cow but good for the rancher who wanted to keep track of his herd.

Later on, certain brands began to be known for the quality of the beef and this helped that rancher get more money per pound than his lesser-known competitors. Other brands become known for always being on time to market, while still others found a position as the low-cost, high volume offering.

In the nonprofit world, brands play an equally important role, helping donors and constituents determine which herd to join and which to steer away from.

### Start off on the right hoof

Choose your name wisely since you'll be living with the implications for years to come. Brand names that have a specific meaning are helpful at the beginning by providing some context for your various constituents.

"Make a Wish" is such a name as it clearly defines the end benefit of the organization. "Children for Children" is another such name identifying the operational "playground" of that charity. "Doctors without Borders" is another example of a name that encapsulates the mission quite succinctly.

All that said, because of the specific nature of these names, at some point in their growth cycles they may find it difficult to evolve past their original tactically-focused mission.

Names like Red Cross and United Way, while less specific, have the advantage of being easy to remember and general enough to encompass many forms of charitable activities.

### Careful grooming pays off

With a carefully crafted name in hand, take some time to get your logo right.

Run a contest at a local design school or online to collect some options to review with your board of directors/advisors.

A great logo will set the tone for the brand and all subsequent communications. A boring logo will be lost in the sea of sameness.

One example of a great logo is [Children for Children's](#). It is sophisticated yet simple, appealing to both kids and adults, a move that is essential for this particular charity. The Children for Children logo has inspired the graphic look and feel of its website, and all other communications.

The logo even plays a prominent role in the invitation to their annual benefit, which has an art theme and features variations of the logo inspired by famous artists like Van Gogh and Chagall.



Getting the right name and logo are essential in the early stages of brand development. These will force you to define your mission, values and target audience since without these prerequisites, you'll just have a cow.

**Drew Neisser is founder and CEO of Renegade, a New York City-based interactive brand-experience agency. He can be reached at [dneisser@renegade.com](mailto:dneisser@renegade.com).**

[Email this page](#)

- Professional Area: [Marketing/communications](#)

Marketing/Communications page sponsored by [Shoestring Creative Group](#)

[Click here](#) for FREE white papers and upcoming planned giving web seminars.



Before **overpriced software** & **support** drain funds away from your mission...

Let a trusted partner teach you



### Our Partners



©2008 Philanthropy Journal. A publication of the A.J. Fletcher Foundation  
Website designed and developed by [DesignHammer Media Group, LLC](#)  
[Contact/Staff](#) | [Sitemap](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Copyright](#)



Resources section sponsored by [Wachovia Trust Nonprofit and Philanthropic Services](#)

## Tweaking brands mid-stream

Drew Neisser | May 13, 2008



*This is the second of two columns on nonprofit branding.*

Branding began with cows, as a way to keep ranchers' herds distinct. But in the nonprofit world, brands play an equally important role in helping donors and constituents determine which herd to join and which to steer away from.

### **Changing cows mid-stream**

A lot of non-profits start out with a core group of supporters that are well attuned to the group's initial mission.

These special friends have contributed the blood, sweat and cash that has sustained and nurtured the organization. They often live and breathe your brand and have a proprietary feeling about the cause.

And this is all goodness until the organization starts to grow and the services offered expand, often beyond the original mission and interests of the early supporters.

This is the point at which you will wish you had a name that wasn't so restrictive, and there may be a temptation among some to change the name to address this expanded purview.

My advice-don't do it. Don't change cows mid stream.

It is far more dangerous than you think and could set the organization back for years. Awareness takes time and money to build, time and money that you can put to better purposes.

### **Blazing new trails**

Just because I suggested you shouldn't change your name doesn't mean you can't expand your mission.

The trick is to do this and not completely alienate your early supporters.

Part of the trick is not trying to do everything at once. Pick your new trails carefully and don't overreach. Invite the core group of supporters into the process and ask them both to trouble-shoot and lead one of the new expeditions.

At the same time, start to mix in a fresh group of supporters that are truly enthusiastic about the new path forward. Their enthusiasm will be infectious and many of the old guard will see the light.

For those that don't, it might be time to create an "emeritus board of advisors" that focuses on the old mission and provides a place for them to remain comfortable with the organization.

### **Divide the herd**

If you are truly concerned about losing the financial support of your early supporters, you may need to think about dividing your communications into two segments, one for the old guard and one for the new.

This assumes you have a database of your constituents and can segment your email and mailing lists. If you don't know how to do this, reach out to any number of organizations like [Charity Focus](#) that can help you set up the required technical infrastructure.

Once you have the lists divided, you can send customized communications and solicitations that promote the interests of that particular segment. It's a little more work but it will pay off very quickly since you won't have to replace your old fans with a bunch of new ones.

Don't panic if your new course frightens the herd. While there are unknown dangers in uncharted courses, going backwards is rarely a good alternative.

You must be brave, holding the reins of your brand with steadfast determination.

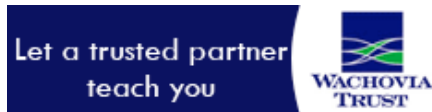
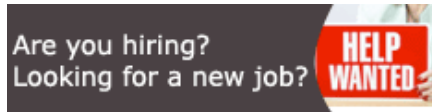
See [Part 1](#) of [Drew Neisser's](#) column on nonprofit branding for advice on choosing a brand and logo.

**Drew Neisser is founder and CEO of [Renegade](#), a New York City-based interactive brand-experience agency. He can be reached at [dneisser@renegade.com](mailto:dneisser@renegade.com).**

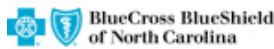
[Email this page](#)

- Professional Area: [Marketing/communications](#)

Marketing/Communications page sponsored by [Shoestring Creative Group](#)



**Our Partners**



- [About Us](#)
  - [Official Statement](#)
  - [Mission](#)
  - [State of the Society](#)
  - [Strategic Planning](#)
  - [Bylaws](#)
  - [Ethics](#)
  - [Financials](#)
  - [PRSA Foundation](#)
  - [Staff Directory](#)
  - [FAQ](#)
- [Advocacy](#)
  - [Advocacy Media Room](#)
  - [Background History](#)
  - [Chapter Advocacy Officers](#)
  - [Chapter/Section District Resources](#)
  - [Logo Art and Visuals](#)
  - [Mission Statement](#)
  - [National Advocacy Advisory Board](#)
  - [Position Statement](#)
  - [Resources](#)
- [Awards](#)
  - [Silver Anvil](#)
  - [Bronze Anvil](#)
  - [PR Pro of the Year](#)
  - [Outstanding Educator](#)
  - [Individual Awards](#)
- [Conferences](#)
  - [International Conference](#)
  - [Counselors Academy](#)
  - [Counselors to Higher Education Section](#)
  - [Health Academy](#)
  - [Travel and Tourism Section](#)
- [Diversity](#)
  - [Overview](#)
  - [Mission](#)
  - [Resources](#)
  - [Mentoring](#)
  - [Media Room](#)
- [Job Center](#)
- [Leadership](#)
  - [Board of Directors](#)
  - [Past Presidents](#)
  - [Committees](#)
  - [Chapter/District Council](#)
  - [Chapter Presidents](#)
  - [Section Council](#)
  - [Nomination Process](#)
  - [College of Fellows](#)
  - [Foundation Board](#)
- [Marketplace](#)
  - [Advertising](#)
  - [Sponsorship](#)
  - [Partnership](#)
  - [RFP Exchange](#)
  - [Industry Products and Services](#)

- [Membership](#)
  - [Join PRSA](#)
  - [Membership Directory](#)
  - [Member Benefits](#)
  - [Code of Ethics](#)
  - [Member Resources](#)
  - [Volunteer Opportunities](#)
  - [Networking](#)
- [Membership Directory](#)
- [Professional Interest Sections](#)

- [Association/Nonprofit](#)
- [Corporate](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [Counselors Academy](#)
- [Counselors to Higher Education](#)
- [Educators Academy](#)
- [Employee Communications](#)
- [Entertainment and Sports](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Financial Communications](#)
- [Food and Beverage](#)
- [Health Academy](#)
- [Independent Practitioners Alliance](#)
- [International](#)
- [Multicultural Communications](#)
- [Public Affairs and Government](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Travel and Tourism](#)
- [PRSSA \(Student Society\)](#)
- [College of Fellows](#)
- [Chapters](#)
- [Districts](#)
- [Affinity Groups](#)
- [Corporate Partnerships](#)
- [Global Alliance](#)
- [Power of Two](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Seminars](#)
- [Teleseminars](#)
- [On Demand](#)
- [Calendar of Events](#)
- [Accreditation \(APR\)](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Strategist](#)
- [Tactics](#)
- [PR Journal](#)
- [Tactics and the Strategist Online](#)
- [E-News](#)
- [PRC Search](#)
- [Media Room](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [PRC \(e-Library\)](#)
- [Search Case Studies, Articles & Surveys](#)
- [Search Current Silver Anvil Case Studies](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [PRSA Store](#)
- [Amazon Store](#)
- [International Desk](#)
- [Industry Resources](#)

[MemberNet Login](#) [Site Map](#) |

[Home](#)

 [Printer-Friendly](#)  
[Email this Item](#)

[Add/View Comments on this Article \(0\)](#)

## PR Tactics and The Strategist Online

### Bonus Tactics article: Reject recession — steps to ensure your company soars as the economy dives

Mar.27, 2008

Copyright © 2008 PRSA. All rights reserved.

By Erik Battenberg

Editor's note: PRSA gratefully acknowledges the support of [Thomson Financial](#) in providing the Society with the webcast technology for the following offering.

Whether the U.S. economy is officially in a recession or just depressed, communicators need to make the most of marketing activities despite budget restraints said [Drew Neisser](#), CEO of [Renegade](#), in a free [Webinar](#) titled



- ▶ [About Tactics Online](#)
- ▶ [Subscribe to PR Tactics](#)
- ▶ [Subscribe to PR Strategist](#)

Search Articles

Keyword or phrase

"What Recession?" offered March 14 by PRSA.

*Drew Neisser, CEO of  
Renegade*

Neisser, who co-founded his interactive brand experience agency with funding from [Dentsu](#) in 1996, outlined nine ways communicators can improve their success regardless of the economy or the size of their business.

### 1. Stand for something

If you create a brand that stands for something, you'll do a better job of attracting customers, Neisser said, citing [General Electric's](#) "[Ecomagination](#)" pledge to create products and solutions to benefit the environment as an example.

"They put a stake in the ground and have publicly committed themselves to a greener course of action," Neisser said. "It's a lot more than advertising puffery. It's profound; it's inspiring."

### 2. Fix your product or service

If you are promoting a product or service that is flawed, you're fighting an uphill battle, Neisser said.

"There's nothing like a great communication program to kill a bad product," he said, but fixing a product or service, and letting people know you're doing it, can help a company succeed.

Recently, [Starbucks](#) CEO [Howard Schultz](#) decided that service levels had fallen at the company's 7,000-plus U.S. coffee shops. He addressed the problem by [closing](#) all of the locations for three hours to retrain 135,000 employees.

"In closing the stores, he made an enormous statement both internally and externally," Neisser said.

### 3. Dance with your customers

Everyone says you need to engage in a dialog with your customers, but "Why not strive for something more intimate, more emotional, more dynamic," Neisser said. "Dance with them."

One way to dance with your customers is to make them your business partner, he said.

When singer [Jill Sobule](#) found herself without a record deal, she decided to ask her fans to help her finance her next album. She set up a Web site where fans could make donations in exchange for everything from a free download to a performance by Sobule. In less than two months, Sobule reached her goal of raising \$75,000, Neisser said.

### 4. Focus on heavy users

Neisser said he's a fan of the 80/20 rule, which says companies get 80 percent of their business from 20 percent of their customers. Focus on that top 20 percent, which are less likely to abandon a category during a downturn but might swap brands.

[Apple](#) recently said it wants to persuade large business customers to switch from [BlackBerry](#) devices, which information technology departments tend to prefer, to [iPhones](#).

"The iPhone has a tough row to hoe given BlackBerry's entrenched base," Neisser said. "But if they can overcome the IT department's resistance, they'll end up having a lot of users lined up to swap their 'CrackBerry' for an 'iCrackBerry.'"

### 5. New stuff for the old gang

Another way to succeed with heavy users as well as attract new customers, Neisser said, is to keep your messaging fresh with new products.

[Pepsi](#) is staying fresh by testing new soft drinks such as [Diet Pepsi Max](#) and Pepsi Raw, Neisser said.

"These products may help Pepsi bring in new users, but are just as likely to keep existing users in the franchise," he said. "The news that they create helps the overall brand stay top-of-mind."

### 6. Marketing as service

You will be more successful if shape your programs and communication around the needs of your target audience, Neisser said.

Nike, for example, launched a program designed to help runners improve. The program lets consumers participate in training runs with trainers from Nike and track their progress online. Foot specialists also will analyze participants' running style to help them get the right shoe.

"Nike has made great hay with this," Neisser said.

### 7. Keep it light

"There is a tendency among marketers to shy away from humor when the economy goes south," Neisser said, which is a mistake, even if your business markets a serious product.

"Don't let the somber economic mood change the tone of your brand," Neisser said. "Humor can have a dramatic impact on the likability of your brand, particularly in otherwise unfunny times."

### 8. Find a partner

Partnering with a nonprofit organization can stretch your dollars and enhance your brand, Neisser said, but

2008

[Jan.](#) [Feb.](#) [Mar.](#) [Apr.](#)

2007

[Jan.](#) [Feb.](#) [Mar.](#) [Apr.](#) [May.](#) [Jun.](#)  
[Jul.](#) [Aug.](#) [Sep.](#) [Oct.](#) [Nov.](#) [Dec.](#)

2006

[Jan.](#) [Feb.](#) [Mar.](#) [Apr.](#) [May.](#) [Jun.](#)  
[Jul.](#) [Aug.](#) [Sep.](#) [Oct.](#) [Nov.](#) [Dec.](#)

make sure you choose an organization that is a good fit for your company's products and its beliefs.

"The consumer is now really scrutinizing these commitments and is aware of what is sincere and what isn't," Neisser said. "Mobilize your employees and your customers behind a nonprofit you truly believe in, and you will be amazed at the goodwill and good business you will get as a result."

### 9. Measure what matters

While measuring sales is important, it's also valuable to measure the milestones along the consumer's journey toward making a purchase, Neisser said. One of his favorite metrics is the Net Promoter Score, which measures how likely people are to recommend something to a friend.

"People only recommend things to a friend that they really like," he said.

Net Promoter Scores can be particularly effective if you can measure them before and after people experience one of your marketing initiatives, Neisser said.

"You can measure it at any point of contact, whether it's on your Web site, at an event or in any of your surveys," he said.

*Erik Battenberg is a freelance writer based in San Diego. He is a frequent contributor to PR Tactics.*

The "What Recession?" [Webinar](#) will be archived until May 17. You may access it [here](#).

Previously from *Tactics and The Strategist Online*:

[Dollars and sense](#): Agency pros prepared for rocky economic times

## POST A COMMENT

**Editor's Note:** Please limit your comments to the specific post. We reserve the right to omit any response not related to the post or that may be considered objectionable.

Name

Email

The Public Relations Society of America, 33 Maiden Lane, 11th Fl., New York, NY 10038-5150

- [About Us](#)
- [Advocacy](#)
- [Awards](#)
- [Conferences](#)
- [Diversity](#)
- [Job Center](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Marketplace](#)

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

- [Membership](#)
- [Networking](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Media Room](#)
- [Resources](#)

[Site Map](#) | [Privacy Statement](#) | [Contact Us](#)

## Passionistas: The New Empowered Consumers

By Carla Ranno and Shana Lory

The era of Web 2.0 has brought to life a culture of passionate online users—the Netflix enthusiast, the fantasy football participant, the avid Flickr fan, the bakery connoisseur, the RSS/news aficionado. They share an active spirit of participation and the desire to make their niche interests a part of the collective conversation online. They create the dialogue, they direct others to content and they can make branded messaging prolific. All you need do is listen.

Web 2.0 is the practical manifestation of the philosophy of collective intelligence and knowledge. Driven by people's desire to express ideas and beliefs that are important to them, Web 2.0 has enabled a culture of passionate users who utilize online applications as a means of expression and facilitating dialogue between all users online.

In today's proactive culture, people do not want to be spoon-fed content, forced to watch commercials, be restricted by paid programming or bombarded by points-of-view they don't agree with. What they do want is an a la carte menu—the ability to pick and choose the content they consume the way they pick and choose what to eat, drive, and wear.

Blogs, wikis, podcasts, RSS, tagging, AdSense and Adwords have allowed applications like Facebook, MySpace, flickr, del.icio.us, Gmail, and Google Maps to cater to this desire. This has created a participatory user experience that leverages the collective wisdom of everyone who is actively engaged on the web.

The most powerful group of users who deeply engage, create and respond to content online is a segment Yahoo has been defined as passionistas. Motivated by their need to actively share their ideas, opinions and thoughts, they rally attention around particular categories, stories, sites and brands, directing other users to interesting content they have found or created.

Leveraged correctly, relationships with passionistas can shape consumer opinion in your brand's favor and get people talking. The digital realm is a source of conversation that can be tracked, measured and managed; all you have to do is listen to those who are talking.

"It is not about the consumer's trust in the brand, but rather it is about building the brand out of the consumer's innate needs," said Edwind Wong, director of consumer insights at Yahoo at the "Passionistas, The New Empowered Consumer" conference in September.

Wong's group at Yahoo conducted ethnographies with 20 passionate users, grouped according to their passion. For example, the Netflix enthusiast who reviews and blogs about every movie she rents; the fantasy football participant who can recite every score and statistic; the photographer and avid Flickr member who tracks photos taken with the same model camera as his own.

Wong concluded that an effective Web site doesn't just cater to a mass community, but speaks to people who specialize in a particular category. Yahoo, in collaboration with MediaVest and Conifer Research, found that 43% of passionistas spend over 12 hours per week visiting sites related to their obsession. Couple that with the revealing statistics that 70% of engagement through conversation leads to purchase, and more than 50% of consumers would try a new brand if it were associated with their passion, and you start to see a formula for brand success online.

The passionistas make the wheels churn, they spread the word and they can work on your behalf if you let them.

The increasing popularity of the long tail business model reflects the wisdom of playing to niche audiences, that low volume sellers can be a stronger and more effective market than the bestsellers. Amazon, for instance, sells many bestsellers, but they also sell many obscure books. If you add up the total number of obscure books sold, that number would exceed the total number of bestsellers sold.

The Netflix business model is rooted in long tail thinking as well. Subscribers rent large volumes of obscure DVDs and



Published: February 13 2008

## Recession marketing: be brave or be gone

By Drew Neisser

Here's a list of strategies marketers can employ to mine the golden opportunities economic downturns offer.

In a memorable moment in "[Monty Python and the Holy Grail](#)," a galloping minstrel sings of Brave Sir Robin and how "he ran away, he ran away" when faced with adversity. With a downturn (dare I say recession) looming, my advice is simple: Don't be Brave Sir Robin.

As the old saying goes, with each challenge comes opportunity and opportunities abound even in downturns. Here's a list of tips to help you mine those opportunities:

### 1. Don't kill your budget (yet)

The first thing we marketers must do is save the budget. I have no doubt your CFO is already calling for reductions in head count and spending. Now is the time to be brave.

Since all your competitors won't have the chutzpah to say no to their CFO, you must make the case that this is your chance to gain true competitive advantage with a share of voice you've been dreaming about all these years. Remind your CFO that top-of-mind awareness is an asset of the company that will devalue faster than he can say ROI. In truth, awareness can decline as fast as 50 percent a month when you go silent, and the cost of buying back that awareness will be horrendous.

Story continues below

advertisement



Check out iMedia's  
new and improved  
Job Connection

Start now!

### 2. Cut wisely

Given that my first point is probably a pipedream and that you will no more be able to avoid cuts than a deer can turn away from oncoming headlights, let's consider where to cut. Traditional advertising has always been the first to go, and depending on your media mix, that may make sense now.

The one advertising channel that will be harder to cut is online since a steady stream of metrics provides the ROI data that is so often missing in other areas. Promotional dollars are harder to cut because your channel partners may very well depend (like the addicts they are) on the sales boosts coupons and other discounts provide. Events and trade shows should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, saving those that can demonstrate ROI and tossing the ones that have been of questionable worth all along.

### 3. Stay focused

Now that you have less money to work with, it is all the more important that you concentrate spending where it can have the greatest impact. This is not the time to consider new targets or new channels if that means losing focus on your core constituents.

But staying focused doesn't mean doing the same old, same old. Get out there and talk to your customers and find out how the downturn is affecting their lives and their product choices. Just the mere process of talking to your customers will make them feel special and cement the bond you'll really need to weather the economic storm.

### 4. New stuff for the old gang

What you hear from your current customers may really surprise you and push your product or service offerings in new directions. With austerity looming like a black cloud on the horizon, some consumers may turn to affordable luxuries even more than usual. While more "value packs" seems like an obvious direction, it is also possible consumers will turn to smaller sizes just to keep their monthly spend down.

On the other end, luxury customers may temporarily discard their "if you've got it, flaunt it" attitude, choosing to spend their dollars more discretely. For example, furriers might want to think about putting the fur on the inside of the coat, offering the same warmth without the showy statement (animal rights activists would encourage you to put fake fur on the inside!)

On the services side, tighter economic times could create all sorts of new opportunities. Those with two jobs might need more help at home, keeping things organized, walking the dogs and/or shopping for groceries (online services like Fresh Direct could indeed thrive in a downturn).



Engage Consumers  
with High Impact  
point roll Rich Media Ads  
on Premium Websites

Click here to learn more!

UNDERTONE  
NETWORKS™

[Next page >>](#)

#### **5. Keep it light**

Just because the economy is sadly wanting doesn't mean consumers want to be reminded of their uneasiness in every communication. A little humor, particularly of the self-deprecating variety, will be most appreciated by your otherwise stressed-out target. If there is humor to be found in your DNA, now is the time to unleash the smiles.

Entertainment companies, for example, will be wise to break out the comedies after finding a happy ending to the writers' strike. I'm reminded of the depression era-based movie [Sullivan's Travels](#) in which the protagonist (a movie director played by [Joel McCrae](#)) searches for a serious theme for his next feature. What he learns is that laughter is the ultimate tonic during tough times.

#### **6. Avoid the middle**

A waning tide may lower all boats but some will surely ride this out better than others. My money is on strong brands with high net promoter scores who are consistently delivering genuine and perceived value. Weaker brands with little customer loyalty will find themselves stuck in the middle, neither cheap enough to overcome their shortcomings or expensive enough to attract the ever-spending affluent crowd.

This is a bad time to be Sears and a better time to be Best Buy or Bergdorf's. Sears is stuck in the middle without competitive advantage on price, value or service. Best Buy offers both value and service (via Geek Squad) and Bergdorf's regulars are unlikely to cut back drastically. Mass consumer brands with a wide range of products would be smart to emphasize their high-end and entry-level models, again with the goal of avoiding the middle.

#### **7. Partner with non-profits**

Non-profits will undoubtedly feel the pinch as their supports cut back on donations. This happens in every downturn and is really painful for the non-profits who continue to perform an incredible range of socially beneficial services. Mobilize your employees and your customers behind the non-profits you truly believe in and you will be amazed at the good will and good business you will do as a result. The non-profits will be so grateful for your support that they will bend over backwards to ensure you achieve your business goals not just now but for many years to come.

It may seem counterintuitive to increase your corporate social responsibility now BUT that is exactly why it is worth considering. Your employees undoubtedly will respond with increased loyalty that will also translate into higher productivity.

#### **8. Hedge your bets**

Market volatility is not a new concept yet many companies are remarkably vulnerable to changes in the economy. Savvy marketers are turning to sophisticated forecasters who can not only anticipate changes but also offer hedging solutions. With some progressive thinking, marketers can find some means of protecting against the key variables that impact their particular industry.

In the field of weather, for example, a new company called [Storm](#) is helping a variety of companies from makers of outerwear to power companies determine the business cost of variable weather conditions and then helping them hedge against abnormal conditions.

#### **9. Keep your ear to the ground**

If you don't have a full-time "social media director" on staff, get one quick. This individual needs to be on the internet every day, monitoring the chatter about your brand. Since bad news spreads faster than a blaze in the Malibu hills, active blog monitoring is the first line of defense, offering a firewall between your brand and an image-burning disaster. Your clearly identified ([no pseudonyms please Mr. Mackey](#)) representative can set the record straight, respond to performance complaints and keep you informed when problems aren't being addressed in the field. She may even turn a customer into an advocate simply by acknowledging the person's comments.

Given how few companies bother to engage their customers, those that do are frequently met with "wow, I didn't know you cared that much" and vows of eternal loyalty -- loyalty that will float your boat long after your competitors succumb to the economic down currents.

[<< Previous page](#)

*Drew Neisser is CEO of [Renegade](#). [Read full bio](#).*