



## In The Hands Of The Preachers



By dissecting the most powerful marketing tool known one discovers that the process is far more involved than you might think. It is not a science that is easily implemented nor can it be forced on you without your involvement and willing consent. When poorly managed it can backfire and ruin an otherwise viable product or service. It's hinged on a number of carefully managed actions and later relies on circuits and network or preachers to spread the gospel to the masses. It is further ignited by media attention and a real or imagined need in the marketplace. Let's take a closer look at the process and discover some secrets of a successful word-of-mouth campaign.

Why would someone would even want our product or service. As marketing guru Phillip Kotler states; "find an unmet need and fill it." From the consumer's point of view, "what's in it for me?" Some products are easier than others to identify and create the need or desire. Once you figure out why someone would want your product or service, then you need to decide who to tap to preach the buzz; Early-ins, mass majority or the late adopters. Studies shows that the process starts with the early-ins and slowly creeps toward the mass majority.

In the buying process, the vendor will need to figure out what the prospect needs to make them decide on making the purchase. The buying process has a number of stages and it will need to be determined where in that process word-of-mouth will be most effective. When the prospect slips into the buying mode they'll reach sticking points that will need to be tipped by a favourable word-of-mouth campaign. By running a powerful advertising campaign that foresees and addresses the sticking points with unsolicited testimonials and non-commercial quotes the buying process moshies along to the point where the hordes will take over and build the momentum of the buzz.

The campaign may include live radio or TV interviews, webinars, networking events, websites or Blogs or perhaps trade show exposure. The point is, these types of choreographed performances actually help the prospects with the buying decision process.

Above all else, just as urban myth takes on a life through a well constructed story so does word-of-mouth through the telling of documented testimonials and quotes from the raving fans with enthusiastic stories about the product or service. Just as a well conceived advertisement moves the message through the use of interesting, exciting and innovative curiosity building headlines and copy, so too does the word-or-mouth message need to work. By using a simple story we transmit from individual to individual the captivating reasons to want to buy the "must have" product or service. When an interested party hears a story they are more likely to lower the barriers to commercial messages and turn their receptors to high. If the story comes from a trusted source or friend it is less relevant to the listener that the facts are absolute and more likely on the perception of the listener (based on who or what they wish to believe).

It is all part of the process of perception, expectations and experience with a product or service. In the case of marketing, the story must be truthful and engaging for the word-of-mouth to be eventually successful. So brothers and sisters, if you don't turn users into evangelists and motivate them to spread the word it just won't work. It is important to get your product or service into the hands of as many "preachers" that will spread the word to the congregation or masses as possible, and then be sure to manage the results to success.