



Oprah - Blabber Power ?

In an earlier article I talked about the most powerful force in the marketplace. Most would agree that “word-of-mouth” is the best kind of positive marketing, but many businesses have no idea how to make it work for them.

Remember, WOM travels through invisible circuits or networks like conversations, one-way testimonials, telephone calls, emails, newsgroups, blogs and even company websites. Companies and entrepreneurs need to realize they are not selling to individuals, but rather to circuits or networks of individuals.

To further understand how this works you need to look closely at these networks. Individuals that are considered influencers, those who like to influence others, enjoy the role. They like to talk to each other and are part of what Emanuel Rosen calls a “hub”. Call them the “network hubs” – (Emanuel Rosen – Anatomy of Buzz). They talk to more people than the average person does. They are often referred to in industry as “lead users”, “power users” or “opinion leaders”. (power blabbers)

These “network or circuit hubs” thrive in every imaginable corner of consumerism. They are the first to own a DVD writer or X-Box. They’re the ones who spread the word to their entire circuit of friends and acquaintances, either positive or negative. Surprisingly they prefer to be the one spreading the “good news” to everyone in the network and with 6 billion potential connections out there these circuits are lit up like Christmas trees with activity.

There are different levels of “network hubs”. The casual hubs, just unremarkable folks who have a circle of acquaintances possibly as many as a few dozen (likely 150 according to Robin Dunbar – Dunbar’s law). They may be early adapters as the marketing industry identifies them. Then you have the “high power hubs” like Oprah Winfrey, Dr. Phil or even George Strombolopolous whose fans listen to every word shared about a product, book or experience. The difference is the millions of viewers that are plugged into their circuit. That kind of power makes them “power hubs”. Consumer publications such as Vogue, Golf Digest or Guitar Player magazines have that kind of influence. They reach millions of readers who look to them for answers on style, technique or fashion. And since our favorite magazines are like old friends you bring home for a visit, you trust what they have to say. (Perhaps that is why you collect them and never throw them out; you wouldn’t pitch an old trusted friend in the trash.) My Mothers favorite “power hub” was McCalls magazine although it could have been Ladies Home Journal or Readers Digest.

BLOGS or web logs are the latest form of “group, network, and circuit hubs”. These are folks that post their opinions on their web logs where anyone can visit for an update. In many cases they have little expertise but are considered by their faithful followers as experts or at least curious. More on BLOGS and why they cannot be ignored later. It’s safe to surmise that you will be a network or circuit hub if you talk about certain products or experiences more than the average somebody.

There is a difference between the “casual hub” and the “master hub”. The “casual hub” is someone who is central in a group and may be socially active, charming or trusted by their social circle. They may recommend movies, books or restaurants; the master is listened to because they have established considerable knowledge and are deemed authority figures on the subject such as technology.

How these different kinds of hubs in combination with product marketers become relevant is the subject of the next article, “Circuits And Master-blabbers”.