

Is your marketing and PR "Contagious?"

August 06, 2015 - Front Section

Did you attend the recent World Congress on Infectious Diseases meeting in London. I skipped it, too. At that conference, it might not have been safe to be around "infectious" laughter. How many extra hand sanitizing dispensers did organizers ask the hotel to install? I doubt conference planners thought much about using a 'catchy' slogan to promote the event.

The word "contagious" has many connotations - usually negative. But a book by that name by Jonah Berger caught my attention because it neatly explains six principles that can help create "buzz" for your company, product or service. The author's principles and real-world examples are good, but the all-important missing piece is the creativity factor - something provided by a creative Marketing / PR pro.

In order for your product or service to be talked about via word of mouth, social media, etc., one should try to meet as many of these six principles as possible:

Social currency: People like to feel like insiders, being 'in the know' about a new product, great offer. They become your best salesperson and ambassador.

Triggers: the right triggers lead to your product being 'top of mind' and to people (prospective customers) taking the actions you want (buy your product!)

Emotion: Kindle a fire - "When people care, they share."

Public: Make it so others see what you're doing/selling and want to imitate and pass it on.

Practical value: Highlight the deal or value; how your product can save them time, money, provide better health.

Stories: Make it so people want to tell your story; Build your own Trojan horses.

My philosophy has always been that the owner and top managers of any business should devote their time to running the business - and trust a creative and experienced professional to follow the principles outlined above: conceive promotional ideas, create necessary materials and budgets, then implement and manage the Marketing program. After all, they don't handle their own accounting or legal needs. Author Milan Kundera once said, "Business has only two functions - marketing and innovation." And if you don't have the time or creative spark, I know a great PR / Marketing professional.

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