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# Daredevils Not Required For Stunt Marketing

LORI TURNER

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We could all learn a marketing lesson from the Miss America pageant, which debuted back in 1921 as a stunt to draw tourists to Atlantic City after the high season.

It's proof that no daredevil is required for stunt marketing, which is anything unusual or spectacular done to gain publicity or generate buzz.

In Sydney, Australia, the Aussie Coffee Festival created a 20-by-13 foot replica of the [Mona Lisa](#) out of coffee. The obscure coffee festival created a whirlwind of international buzz by using good old-fashioned ingenuity with little financial investment.

Why was it so effective? The stunt aligned with what festival organizers understood about prospective participants – upscale with an appreciation for fine art.

It's easier to create an effective stunt if awareness is the only goal. With a complex message, more skill and creativity are required.

Writer, director and Tennessee native Quentin Tarantino is known for his edgy films. So movie promoters used equally controversial guerrilla marketing techniques to generate buzz around Tarantino's "Death Proof."

Passersby on a busy street corner in the Netherlands were startled to see a severed arm lying on the sidewalk. On closer scrutiny, they noticed the gory movie prop was holding a copy of the "Death Proof" DVD. The buzz was global.

Either one of these stunts could just as easily have been executed by a small business here in Memphis. That's the beauty of guerrilla marketing. It allows small businesses to compete with the big dogs because it relies more on creativity than cash.

The danger with stunt marketing is failure can be very public and costly.

Adult Swim, an adult-oriented cable TV network featuring animated shows, learned that lesson in 2007.

To promote "Aqua Teen Hunger Force," the network placed 40 lighted electronic boards across the city of Boston, projecting images of the show's lead characters.

For its targeted consumer niche, it clearly resonated. For the rest of the city, in a post-9/11 environment, mysterious electronic gadgets placed near bridges and high-traffic areas caused alarm. Bomb squads were called and major traffic arteries were shut down.

The cost to the city, and ultimately to the network, was huge.

In hindsight, Adult Swim should have gotten feedback from a variety of stakeholders before launching such a stunt. They might also have considered testing their ad somewhere low-profile before launching it on a larger scale.

While we should learn from Adult Swim's mistakes, don't let such stories deter you from using stunt marketing as a way to stretch a limited marketing budget.

[Lori Turner](#) is managing partner at RedRover Sales & Marketing, [www.redrovercompany.com](http://www.redrovercompany.com).



Lori Turner

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BANKRUPTCIES	61	283	7,175
BUSINESS LICENSES	14	75	2,231
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	69	717	9,575
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