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VOL. 126 | NO. 111 | Wednesday, June 08, 2011

Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Influence to Strong Sales

LORI TURNER-WILSON

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Editor's Note: This is the second in a two-part series.

Influencer marketing, a form of guerrilla marketing, focuses your marketing efforts on shaping the opinions of a select few who have a disproportionate share of influence over your prospective buyers.

These "influentials" spread word-of-mouth buzz about your brand across their networks.

Influencers can be celebrities, members of the media, bloggers, those with a strong social media following, or trendsetters in your market. What matters most is that they have persuasive power over a significant number of your prospective buyers.

Big box retailer Kmart understands the power of influencer marketing. While you may not see Kmart as a progressive marketing machine, they delivered a superbly executed influencer marketing campaign in 2008. The goal was lofty – to improve brand perception, raise awareness within the social media space, and drive shoppers to their website.

Kmart identified six influential bloggers with strong social media followings. Kmart sent them each two \$500 Kmart gift cards. The bloggers were required to spend one \$500 gift card and post a blog about their experience. The bloggers were also required to host a separate fan contest on their blog for the additional gift card.

Bloggers instructed their followers to visit [Kmart.com](#) to take a virtual shopping spree. They then had to post on the blog what they'd purchase if they won the gift card. Participants could enter a second time by tweeting a specific message about the contest on Twitter.

To boost traffic, Kmart purchased ads on SocialSpark featuring the campaign's six bloggers and driving visitors directly to the bloggers' posts about the contest.

This inexpensive and short-lived influencer campaign generated 3,500 blog comments and 3,200 tweets. Most importantly, however, Kmart increased its social media index, as reported by tracking tool Virtue, by 59 percent, easily overtaking competitor [J.C. Penney Co.](#)

Why did it work? It utilized multiple channels. Kmart selected well-respected bloggers, each of whom had a strong but slightly different group of followers. The campaign featured an engaging story – "See what these bloggers bought at Kmart!" Moreover, the prizes were significant; the call to action was simple; and measurement tools tracked their success.

To promote its new high-tech electric car, the Volt, Chevrolet deployed a simple yet effective strategy, enlisting key influencers in the technology sector rather than the auto industry. Chevy invited tech influencers to test drive the Volt before it was available for sale – an exclusive opportunity. All Chevy requested in exchange was on-camera feedback, good or bad, and permission to distribute the content.



Lori Turner-Wilson

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RECORD TOTALS	DAY	WEEK	YEAR
PROPERTY SALES	66	335	10,905
MORTGAGES	74	512	15,886
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	2	122	7,372
BUILDING PERMITS	0	699	28,123
BANKRUPTCIES	67	426	13,041
BUSINESS LICENSES	24	114	4,270
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	131	536	19,643
MARRIAGE LICENSES	23	121	4,101

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Influencers had complete freedom to take video and photos of the cars, which armed these tech-savvy influencers with what they needed to create massive buzz.

What's great about influencer marketing is it's scalable for even the smallest businesses. For your influencer campaign, identify influencers and invest the time to get to know them. Next, create the proper motivation to get them engaged and give them the needed tools. Finally, measure results and refine your plan.

Lori Turner-Wilson is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Facebook and Twitter.



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