

Horton Hears An Opportunity - Listening For Pop Culture And Media Cues In A Busy Jungle

Microscopic dust or multi-million dollar niche? Do you promote with a squeak or a roar? Learning to make the right decisions can do a whole lot more than help you survive - make the right choices, and you may just find yourself being crowned King of the Jungle.

It truly is a jungle out there - and it can be difficult to raise your voice above all the noise around you. If you don't have size on your side, you need to rely to your other assets.

What to do? Why not borrow a page from Dr. Seuss' playbook; specifically, his beloved children's book, Horton Hears a Who!

Indulge me for just a moment, and you'll quickly discover that Horton is much more than a beloved bedtime story - it is also a source for some sage marketing advice for small businesses.

Dr. Seuss' 1954 book details the story of Horton the Elephant. Horton hears a small speck of dust talking to him. It turns out the speck of dust is actually a tiny planet - and home to a city called "Who-ville," inhabited by microscopic folks known as Whos. Eventually, the other animals in the jungle hear their desperate cries, but initially only Horton is able to hear them.

What Can We Learn from Horton?

One of the most common challenges that small business owners face is the lack of funds to properly promote themselves. One way to stretch those promotional dollars is to focus on leveraging creative marketing opportunities.

But that is only one part of the equation. Developing a keen marketing ear is equally important - without it, you run the risk of missing out on potential opportunities to serve niche markets that your competitors don't see.

Developing a Keen Marketing Ear

Training your ear to listen for marketing opportunities may be a bit difficult at first; but once you master it, you will find an almost never-ending source of original ideas for tie-ins and promotional hooks. It takes practice, patience, and most of all, the ability to think outside the box. Creativity is one of the most powerful weapons in your marketing arsenal - don't be afraid to use it!

Using the internet allows you the unique opportunity to gain a pop culture snapshot at any given time.

- * For all of your movie and television news needs, check out the Internet Movie Database.
- * Can't keep up with the recent crop of reality shows? Never fear! The Fox network's Reality Remix website can provide a rundown of the highlights.
- * Visit individual talk show websites for information on the topics and guests that they are featuring.
- * Tabloid websites provide up-to-the-minute gossip - while they aren't exactly the pinnacle of journalism, they can certainly provide a bit of inspiration in the way of what is "in" and what is "out."
- * All of the network television news sites are fertile ground for sprouting creative and newsworthy promotional ideas.
- * Major book sites like Amazon, Borders, and Barnes & Noble can help you keep a pulse on the bestseller list.
- * Don't forget to check on what the top searches are at Alexa, Google and Yahoo.

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but it does provide you a place to start. The important thing to remember is that you are looking for things that are the buzz around the water cooler - your goal is to identify items that will have immediate name recognition, or familiarity with those who are in your target market.

Don't Waste Any Time!

Once you've done that, find a clever way to capitalize on it, and make sure you do it before the moment is gone. You will need to take action while you still have something newsworthy to leverage.

Alright, Already! Give Us Some Examples

Aside from the obvious example of this article, here are a few examples to help illustrate the concept:

* Sending a certain pop songstress some samples from your new underwear line after she is spotted (repeatedly) without any. Perhaps you would then build a campaign around the slogan, "We've got you covered!"

* A female astronaut is apprehended in the midst of an alleged kidnapping plot to remove her romantic rival from the equation. If you are the author of a book like, "He's Just Not That into You," this is your lucky day.

* Political Campaigns can be lead-generating cash cows. Keep an eye out for the latest sound byte, rinse and repeat.

Developing a keen marketing ear will help you stretch your marketing budget, and, with any luck, position your company and brand as the dominant and creative choice. As you continue to hone this skill, you may inadvertently stumble upon niche markets you never knew existed - what a bonus!

An opportunity is an opportunity, no matter how small - and the savvy business owner will leverage them all.

About the Author

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