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LORNA JANE CLARKSON

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For Willem, buzz marketing – which encompasses anything from viral marketing to buzz-creating events (just think how Apple manages to have the whole town talking about every new product without making an obvious marketing effort!) – can be utilised by companies of every dimension.

The simple reason: in each case it is highly efficient. “Word of mouth zooms in on the oldest form of marketing – the ‘advertising’ done by your customers,” he says. “The reason word of mouth is so effective is that it is highly credible, the message is customised and is delivered at a better moment and via a more optimal channel than other forms of marketing.”

Being a naturally-occurring phenomenon is word of mouth’s biggest advantage but also part of the challenge it poses. Meeting this challenge – that is, “turning it into an instrument without losing its natural impact” – is what Sodderland and his team have been working on since 2005.

“We basically take the base of word of mouth (opinions flowing from product experiences) and provide very large groups of selected consumers [known as Buzzers] with a product so they can try it out,” he explains. To boost the impact of word of mouth even further, Buzzer developed so-called ‘BuzzTools’ that are integrated into campaigns. They can be defined as creative instruments to help people to share buzz with others.

Willem’s advice to those wanting to break through the clutter in the marketplace is clear: “First, look at the positive things people are already saying about your product. The key to marketing success is to blow these up. Align everything to make these buzz-able aspects of your product more defined [and] visible. Second, make word of mouth or buzz-ability a focal point in every aspect of your business. When creating a product, build buzz into it. If people won’t talk about a feature, seriously consider skipping or redesigning it so that people will talk about it. See word of mouth as the single greatest, most valuable source of market research.”

Finally, Willem cites passion as central to this innovator, be it in business philosophy or tips for creating new businesses: “Stay close to your own feeling. Dig for something you would personally really like to see changed rather than trying to find the ‘largest’ opportunity in the market. This ensures you will be passionate enough to overcome all the obstacles.” Are you ready to get buzzing? ■

mc *A unique word of mouth campaign: TED invited 50 taxi drivers to a TEDx conference in Buenos Aires and then let them do what they do best – talk. With 50 taxis and 20 passengers per day, through word of mouth, the drivers reached 7,000 listeners in one week (seven times the number of people in attendance at the conference!)*

BUILDING THE BUZZ

There’s nothing more valuable than WORD OF MOUTH marketing for a new product, business or event. Meet WILLEM SODDERLAND, the entrepreneur who has harnessed this concept, founding Europe’s first word of mouth marketing agency 13 years ago.