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Market With Meaning

Don't offer your customers products--offer them solutions, connections and satisfaction.

By Rosalind Resnick | November 06, 2009

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When Rob Kaufelt bought Murray's Cheese in 1991, the Greenwich Village cheese shop was a mom-and-pop hole-in-the wall known mostly to the locals.

Today, Murray's Cheese is a thriving emporium that not only sells gourmet cheeses and meats but offers everything from hands-on classes and online tutorials to catering, a cheese cave and freshly made grilled cheese sandwiches. With eye-popping sales of \$2,500 per square foot, Murray's has grown by 15 percent to 20 percent a year at its Bleecker Street store, added two locations in New York's bustling Grand Central Terminal and just inked a deal with a national chain to open mini stores in supermarkets across the country.

Murray's has also become a well-known tourist destination where visitors from around the world can come to get a taste of what New York City is all about. The store was named New York's Best Cheese Shop by The Village Voice and has been featured on MSN Money and Today, as well as in The New York Times and Martha Stewart Living.

So just how much did it cost Kaufelt to turn his mom-and-pop cheese shop into a national brand? "Our advertising budget has been zero point zero zero since the day I bought the company," says Kaufelt, who grew up in his family's supermarket business in New Jersey. "It's like my grandfather always said, 'Here, taste!'"

Adding Value

Like Murray's Cheese, companies of all kinds--from retailers to restaurants--are discovering that it's no longer enough to blast out marketing pitches touting the virtues of your company's products and services. You need to create a marketing campaign that entertains, educates and adds value to your customers' lives.

Whether that means doling out mouthwatering samples from behind the counter, creating interactive games to play on the web or offering online courses that teach people how to make their own pasta, today's marketers need to deliver more than slick sales pitches and rock-bottom prices--or risk getting left in the dust.

"Do you know what makes people say 'wow'?" asks marketing guru Seth Godin, author of [Purple Cow](#), the best-selling book about how companies can transform themselves by becoming remarkable. "Connection, meaning, humanity, things that change them in some way. No one is impressed by your features or even your price. What we talk about is art, generosity, and products and services that make a difference."

Sounds like a pretty tall order--especially for a startup or small business. Funny videos and interactive games may be great marketing tools for Fortune 1000 companies with seven-figure advertising budgets, but how can SMB owners create the same kind of impact as Nike and Burger King?

"Actually, one of the greatest viral videos of all time was created by a small business," says Bob Gilbreath, author of *The Next Evolution in Marketing: Connect with Your Customers by Marketing With Meaning* and Chief Marketing Strategist at [Bridge Worldwide](#), one of the nation's largest digital advertising agencies and part of WPP.

According to Gilbreath, Blendtec was a little-known, 186-employee player in the high-end home blender category until its new marketing director, George Wright, walked past the company lab and saw piles of sawdust on the floor. Once Wright discovered that the R&D manager regularly tested blenders with lumber, he decided to share his discovery with the world.

The first of what would become a series of videos called Will it Blend? was shot and posted on YouTube for \$50. "That first video received 6 million views in its first week," Gilbreath says, "and Blendtec went on to see sales rise 43 percent over the next year."

How can your business achieve similar results? In his book, Gilbreath proposes a Hierarchy of Meaningful Marketing that consists of the following three levels (loosely based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs):