

Positively Outrageous Marketing

By T. Scott Gross

Positively Outrageous Service...that's our name for an exciting approach to loving customers that has allowed a handful of "contrarian operators" to defy the laws of recession and prosper in tough economic times.

Positively Outrageous Service is described as random, unexpected, out-of-proportion service that invites the customer to play and creates positive, compelling word of mouth.

But that's not the whole story!

Positively Outrageous Service has a cousin...POS Marketing.

POS Marketing may have been named by us but it was surely invented by that first creative entrepreneur to discover that 'sizzle sells better than steak'.

We just dusted off an old idea, some would call it showmanship, and decided that you don't need to be named Barnum to make your customers say, "Wow!"

Just as Positively Outrageous Service invites the customer to play, POS Marketing gets customers involved in their own marketing.

POS Marketing Principles

The principles are simple:

- * Have fun.
- * Draw your customers to your location.
- * Involve the customer and product.
- * Do something good for others.

The closer you get to following all four principles, the closer you are to POS Marketing. Ready for an example? How about the Great Lipton Dip.....

The Great Lipton Dip

The Great Lipton Dip was one of our own creations. We needed a clever way to introduce refillable tea mugs newly available at our small restaurant. We also wanted to follow the principles of POS Marketing as closely as possible. Here's what we did:

We set up a 12-foot above-ground swimming pool on our parking lot and filled it with 800-gallons of iced Lipton tea. Since it was Halloween, we substituted a large pumpkin for a lemon and invited local "celebrity dippers" to treat the crowd with their best rendition of the "Lipton Dip".

Each celebrity dipper was then given a canvas bag containing 2,000 nickels to spread along the bottom of the pool. When we had 20,000 nickels - a full \$1,000 cash - three teams of six high school girls (18 total) were invited to go "diving for dollars in the great splash for cash" and dip out as much coin as possible in ten freezing minutes. The cash retrieved would benefit their cheerleader, dance or drill teams.

Out of the pool came \$993.70, nickel by nickel dropping over the edge from one of our refillable tea mugs.

Definitely fun.

Definitely a draw to our location.

Definitely got people involved with...in this case "in" the product...and best of all....

Definitely did something good for others.

Excuse me, I said "best of all" too soon. Very best of all is that we were on the front page of the local newspaper two days in a row, the event was covered by two radio stations and - here's the very-best-of-all part....we didn't spend a dime on the whole darn event!

The pool, the tea, the media—even the 20,000 nickels were all donated!

Ping Pong Promo

To introduce our new delivery vans, we decided to drop several thousand ping pong balls from a helicopter onto our parking lot. Each ball was good for a prize ranging from a color TV to a \$500 shopping spree, all donated, and every ball was good for a free drink, Monday through Friday, at our restaurant.

The crowd was enormous. Traffic stopped. Businesses emptied. The crowd went wild.

Sales for the month were up an exact ninety percent above the same month of the previous year!

Fun, a draw to the location, involved the product and did something good for others. That's POS Marketing!

Did all of our ideas fly? Well, not exactly. The

Christmas we attempted to make snow on our parking lot certainly illustrated why you don't see many ski resorts in central Texas. And our rubber duck race to benefit the local emergency service volunteers wasn't all it was quacked up to be!

Still, the fact that we were always up to something borderline bizarre kept us top of mind with our customers.

Every now and then we did something, just because.

Like our Wing and a Prayer Celebration.

Every Christmas, we fired up the fryers and enjoyed the company of customers, off duty employees, family (natural and extended) plus dozens of volunteers as we cooked hundreds of meals for our friends. Local church groups gave of their special day to deliver meals to those who hungered—spiritually, physically or socially—we didn't care which.

The Wing and a Prayer Celebration was the exception that proved the point. Sometimes you need to do something not because it makes economic sense but just because it needs doing.

Here's the Payoff!

The lady was waiting for her order when I walked in. I noticed her and introduced myself.

"Oh, I know you," she said. "And I want you to know how glad I am that you serve good food."

"I'm pretty happy about that myself," I smiled. "But why are you so excited?"

"Because of the nice things you do for the community. I'd have to eat here even if you didn't."

Maybe I could share a better example of P.O.S. Marketing but for some reason, that's my favorite!

T. Scott Gross is the author of *OUTRAGEOUS: Unforgettable Service, Guilt-free Selling* (AMACOM, 1998.) Visit his website at tscottgross.com