



THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBTLETY IN MARKETING

A lot of marketing is blatantly obvious, but often the best marketing is that which is done subtly. By definition, marketing is any type of communication – any part of your business that communicates with the outside world is marketing. From email signatures to business cards, fee structures or a website; all of these elements of your business communicate some type of message.

I was on a Qantas flight this week and while waiting for the 747 to back away from the terminal, I noticed a faint tune over the cabin sound system. Qantas was playing their latest theme song, *Atlas*, composed specifically for Qantas by Silverchair frontman Daniel Johns. Johns has said that he wanted the song to be big, something special... and not just a jingle. Getting comfortable in my seat before take-off, I felt like I was being serenaded by Qantas, hypnotised by the music. This is very clever of Qantas, creating an affiliation with the brand.

Another campaign that got me thinking about subtlety in marketing is the Where will I meet you? Coffee Club campaign. The waiters in the stores all wear apparel that says wherewillimeetyou.com.au and if you visit the site it actually redirects you to the Coffee Club website. The apparel is very effective for a marketing campaign because it grabs consumers' attention and plants the seed of curiosity. So if you are sitting in the Coffee Club with a mobile you most probably will do a quick internet search of this or search it at home when an ad sparks your memory.

Even the Commonwealth Bank ad that just had 'Can't' was effective, as it sparked curiosity in a very subtle way as the Commonwealth Bank logo or slogan was not present. It may have been a little confusing in terms of branding, but it got people talking before – and even after – knowing who the ad was coming from.

Subtlety Vs unique

Richards & Richards is a men's suit and shirt store in Brisbane that has created a very unique marketing opportunity – an R & R Café Bar that is open even when the store itself is closed. This is unique because it is not common to see a café or bar within an apparel store. In terms of subtlety, they have great opportunities to incorporate their men's suit and shirt side of the store in creative and subtle ways. Through promotion, quirky meal ideas and

much more, Richards & Richards can bring both aspects of the store together.

If a message can be converted in the way a business, product or service wants without it being misinterpreted or misconstrued, subtlety is exactly what you want. People don't like the idea of being bombarded with messages from various businesses trying to promote a product or service, therefore creating the thought that marketing efforts should be a little less obvious in the way they communicate them.

On the flip side, something to consider is people admire honesty and upfront communication. Australia's campaign to eat more lamb or pork campaigns were both as straight as they get. They had humour but there was no hidden message – just straight to the point that Australians should eat more lamb/pork.

The art of mastering subtlety is creating powerful messages in a cool yet confident way. If your marketing communication isn't pushy or needy, consumers are more likely to respond positively to your message. Strong brands now create relationships with their clients by creating stories within their campaigns. Many perfume and cosmetic brands do this to entice their target market into a fantasy, as opposed to simply trying to persuade them into buying their product. This is a very subtle way because people aren't fixed on the product but the development of the story. Obviously the last second or two promotes the product, but consumers need to sit through the first 30 seconds of a story.

Take bloggers, for example. They have an audience but need to entice them to continuously keep them coming back. Titles of blogs, the content and even images is what draws them back, so the more interesting and less sales driven the blogs are, the more receptive to what you are selling they will be.

Overall, subtlety in marketing is key. The more subtle your communication efforts are, the more powerful they can be. Consumers don't want to be told what they should buy, but they still like to buy. So the key is to entice them to want to buy your product or service. As any part of a business that communicates with the outside world is marketing, it is vital to take control of your content going out and make it work for you and your business. **mb**

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Michael Kava is Director of Little Marketing.