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Word of mouth marketing ideas

Want to know the world’s most trustworthy marketing strategy? No, it’s not PPC ads, product placements, Super Bowl commercials, or celebrity endorsements. The most trustworthy marketing strategy comes straight from other people—perhaps people you don’t even know. It’s called word of mouth marketing. A Nielsen study found 83% of respondents trust recommendations from friends and families, and a similar study years prior saw 92% of individuals trust recommendations from people in general, even if they’re a complete stranger. Shocking, right? That’s a lot of trust in other people, especially when you consider only 42% of consumers trust banners ads, 46% trust social media ads, and 56% trust billboards and other outdoor advertising. Trust impacts more than just perceptions and reputation—studies found that 31% of US adults say brand trust has a great deal of influence on purchase decisions, and 37% agreed it had a lot of influence. With word of mouth being such a key influencer in your consumers’ purchasing decisions, it’s a no-brainer to make it a marketing priority in 2020. Don’t worry—word of mouth marketing isn’t an elusive “go viral” tactic. It’s much more concrete than that. You’ll see why below. What Is Word of Mouth Marketing? Word of mouth marketing (WOMM, WOM, WOM marketing, or word of mouth advertising) is the spreading of brand information, products, or opinions from one person to another via conversations. Word of mouth marketing isn’t a collective marketing campaign. It’s a small component of a marketing campaign that packs a big punch. As you’ll see in the strategies and examples in this article, word of mouth marketing plays a critical part in any cohesive marketing strategy—whether that’s a product launch, email marketing campaign, or social media growth strategy. Word of mouth marketing happens both organically and through amplification. For an organic example, look at Tesla. Tesla doesn’t advertise, but everyone knows about their latest product releases and company news because people are fanatical about the brand. They love to write, tweet, and chat about it—no marketing necessary. For an amplified example, look at Spotify’s latest year-in-review 2019 Wrapped campaign. When it released, everyone was talking about their results, sharing on social media, and texting their friends and family. This was all organic, but Spotify added some extra amplification to the campaign by promoting it with TV commercials, billboards, and digital ads. If you have a gigantic cult following like Nike, Disney, or Trader Joe’s, word of mouth advertising comes easy (or at least easier). You simply say the word, and the masses spread the news in an uncontrollable chain reaction. However, if you’re a smaller business, you’re going to need to get clever with your word of mouth marketing strategies. Top 6 Word of Mouth Marketing Strategies If you don’t have a massive brand following already, word of mouth marketing isn’t going to happen on its own. If you build it, there’s no guarantee they will come. Even if your company does something amazingly philanthropic or mind-blowingly innovative, nobody is going to talk about it if they don’t know about it. You’re going to need to light some sparks to get the wildfire going—that’s where these strategies come in. The following strategies aren’t entire campaigns—they are simply the sparks to ignite your word of mouth advertising fire. 1. Experience Marketing One of the best ways to capitalize on word of mouth is to create experiences that get people talking. With the rise of social media, this has never been more relevant. People love to share their experiences, whether that’s through Snapchat, Instagram Stories, Twitter, Facebook, or any of the other popular mediums. Create a shareable experience, and you’ll inherently spark word of mouth marketing. Experience marketing can be as big as Burning Man and Coachella or as small as a virtual reality headset and augmented Pokémon in your backyard. Think of the hibachi grill experience—sure, the food is good, but people go for the hilarious chefs, flying shrimp, and exploding flames. EKR’s Slash Bash 2015 from EKR on Vimeo. A great example of a small business executing experience marketing to perfection is EKR, a marketing agency in Provo, Utah. They drive word of mouth marketing in the Utah community without a crazy budget. EKR holds an annual post-Halloween Slash Bash, where they gather employees, clients, and the community for good food, good times, and good pumpkin smashing. Nothing will spark word of mouth advertising quite like pumpkin catapults, pumpkin-drop cranes, and a pumpkin-filled obstacle course. If you want to get people talking, create experiences for them to talk about. 2. Social Media Everyone’s on social media, and there are ways to engage them on those channels to spark word of mouth marketing. And, no, it doesn’t require you spending six-figure sums on annual social media marketing ad spend or creating a viral blue or white dress debate. Take Wendy’s, for example. Wendy’s has amassed over 3.4 million Twitter followers thanks to their wit and downright savage Tweets—no marketing spend or follower-growth strategies required. Just one, or perhaps many, talented writers were needed. @McDonalds So you’ll still use frozen beef in MOST of your burgers in ALL of your restaurants? Asking for a friend. — Wendy’s (@Wendys) March 30, 2017 Trending hashtags are another way to amplify your word of mouth marketing. By intentionally creating a hashtag for a product, event, or campaign, you give your audience a straightforward, cohesive way to chat about it. Employee advocacy programs are a great way to spark word of mouth advertising on social media channels. In a nutshell, you get your employees to share information on their personal accounts with their followings. These posts have the potential to reach broader audiences and start new conversations. 3. Customer Reviews Reviews matter. Research shows that 95% of people read consumer reviews before making a purchase, and 88% of people trust reviews just as much as personal recommendations. Customer reviews are word of mouth marketing at its purest—it’s literally customers marketing your product (for better or worse) with their mouth. Encourage your happy customers to leave reviews of your business and products on Facebook, Google, Amazon, Yelp!, G2 Crowd, or other niche-specific sites that your target audience visits. Some people love to leave reviews—no encouragement necessary. Others need a gentle push or a little incentive (maybe a 10% discount?). 4. Influencer Marketing Don’t confuse influencer marketing with celebrity endorsements. Celebrities are usually recognizable, yet unapproachable, icons. Society has come to expect their endorsements, so we tend to trust them less—one study showed that only 3% of consumers trust celebrity endorsements. Influencers, however, are generally people who are trusted in certain circles. They tend to be more relatable and approachable, but just happen to have large, more niche, followings. According to Edelman’s Trust Barometer, 58% of participants admitted to purchasing a product because of an influencer recommendation in the prior 6 months. Take the Ginger Runner, for example. The Ginger Runner is a non-brand-affiliated ultrarunner who posts shoe and product reviews on his YouTube channel. If you’re not in the ultra scene, you’ve probably never heard of him, but if you’re part of the community, you likely value and respect his recommendations. Brands send him free shoes all the time in the hopes that he’ll try and review their products. I’ve come across several great shoes I’d never even heard of thanks to his suggestions. Of course, this can backfire if he has a less-than-pleasant experience with a shoe. The best way to harness the power of influencer marketing is to find influential individuals in your industry who are (or could become) an advocate for your brand. Their influence and reach can spark conversations and interest in your product or brand that’s equal to thousands of dollars in equivalent ad spend. 5. User-Generated Content Encouraging and using user-generated content (UGC) is a double-whammy—actually, it may just be a triple-whammy. Here’s how it works. First, you influence your users to share their content with an incentive. That could be through free products, entries to giveaways, or just a chance to be featured on your blog or social media channels. Users share their unique content on their social channels with their followings. You repurpose that great content and use it on your own channels (after getting permission, of course). The original user gets excited that your brand shared their content, and they likely again share your post. Plus, if they’re fanatical about your brand, they’ll probably tell their spouse, mom, dog, and anybody else who will listen. Bam—triple-whammy! 6. Free Product When July 11th rolls around, do you know where everyone is headed? 7-Eleven! Every year, 7-Eleven, America’s largest convenience store chain, gives away an estimated 9 million small Slurpee drinks for the sweet price of free-ninety-nine. Why? To get people raving about the sugar-loaded icy treats. And also, once they’re in the store, customers might as well buy a donut, and a Monster energy drink, and a pack of gum for the road. Obviously, it’s not always feasible to hand out free products in exchange for word of mouth marketing, but the right item with the right market can really take off. On average, it costs less than 18 cents to make a Slurpee—would you be willing to pay 18 cents to get a customer in your store Tweeting about your product to their hundreds or thousands of followers? I think, yes. Iconic Examples of Word of Mouth Marketing Campaigns When you get word of mouth marketing right, everybody knows about it. That’s why you’ll recognize all of these word of mouth marketing examples below: 1. ALS Ice Bucket Challenge – Word of Mouth Marketing Example Remember that blazing hot summer you spent watching everyone on Facebook dump buckets of ice water on people’s heads? The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge is a fantastic example of word of mouth marketing. Participants filmed themselves getting a bucket of ice water dumped on their heads, and they then nominated others to do the same in less than 24 hours or forfeit by giving a financial donation to the research of the disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease). The phenomenon spread quickly across the Internet, with everyone from professional athletes to your grandparents jumping in on the action. In the end, the ALS Association raised \$115 million from the campaign to fund further research and increase access to care for people with ALS. 2. TOMS Buy One, Give One Model – Word of Mouth Marketing Example When you buy a pair of TOMS, TOMS gives a free pair of shoes to a child in need. One for One. The product and the mission do the marketing for itself. When the shoe and model first released, everyone was talking about this new footwear for many reasons. If you saw someone wearing a pair, you were bound to ask, “What are those?” They would then give you the whole spiel, and you’d feel inspired to buy your own pair. Plus, it’s a fun looking pair of shoes that makes you feel good for buying and wearing them—what’s not to like? This model spread the TOMS magic until just about everyone had a pair on their feet or buried in their closet. Many other brands have gone on to adopt the buy one, give one model, but none have seen quite the same success as TOMS. 3. Dropbox Offers Free Storage – Word of Mouth Marketing Example Okay, so it’s not a revolutionary idea today, but it was a fresh new marketing tactic at the time. When cloud storage was on the rise and everyone was wondering what this storing files “in the cloud” business was, Dropbox offered 500 MB of storage space to new customers and their referrers. This free product, combined with a referral program, helped Dropbox take off and acquire loyal customers early in the game. When someone was curious about getting started with cloud storage, practically everyone would tell them to sign up for Dropbox. For a moment, Dropbox was on the verge of becoming the cloud storage verb! Like, how you Uber home or Venmo your friend some cash. Execute Your Word of Mouth Marketing Campaign Word of mouth marketing is less about coming up with super witty viral content and more about offering incredible value that people can’t resist sharing with others. If your brand is small and relatively unknown, you can’t rely on entirely organic word of mouth marketing to catch and spread—you’re going to need to add a bit of fuel to the fire. Give these strategies a try to spark the flame to your next campaign. The next time you plan a product launch, social media growth strategy, or email campaign, think about how you’ll incorporate word of mouth into your campaign. Will the campaign organically spread, or will you need to add a little bit of amplification? Would a free product giveaway give the campaign traction, or would an influencer do a better job at getting the word around? If you need help adding word of mouth marketing to your email campaigns, take a look at our 2020 Email Planning Calendar. Check out each month’s “Email Sending Ideas” section to find creative ways to mix word of mouth marketing into your larger email marketing strategy. Many businesses rely on word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing to bring in new customers. In fact, 92% of consumers rely on referrals from people they know above all else. While this method is incredibly powerful, referrals eventually stagnate, leaving business owners searching for fresh ways to draw in clients. Luckily, it’s easy to extend your potential customer base through online word-of-mouth marketing. Below, we explain what this means, show how online word-of-mouth marketing can grow your business faster than traditional methods, and share eight tactics you can start using today. The Difference Between Traditional & Online Word-of-Mouth Marketing Talking to a neighbor about the wonderful car repair service you’ve just had is traditional word-of-mouth marketing. You’re using a product or service to share your positive (or negative) experience with others. This customer referral sparks a chain reaction and hopefully brings new clients to your business. With online word-of-mouth marketing, the idea is the same although the “talking” aspect differs. Instead of sharing a great product or service experience with a friend, the customer writes an online review about it. Instantly, potential customers who search for your business can anticipate what to expect. Although it’s unlikely these people will personally know the reviewer, 72% say reading a positive customer review increases their trust in the business. Those are stand-out stats for boosting customer confidence. To see how effective online word-of-mouth marketing is—and to bring in as many online word-of-mouth referrals as you can—look through our infographic below and share any strategies you’ve tried. The 8 Word-Of-Mouth Marketing Ideas Even with powerful paid social media ads, word-of-mouth marketing is still one of the most effective and well-known ways to grow your business. Thanks to the internet, sharing and learning valuable information is easier than ever. By combining go-to WOM techniques with today’s technology, your business can grow exponentially without losing quality customers. 77% of consumers are more likely to buy a new product when learning about it from friends or family. WOM generates 2x more sales than paid ads Consumers rely on word-of-mouth 2x to 10x more than paid media, 74% of consumers identify word-of-mouth as a key influencer in their purchasing decision. Luckily, you can transfer traditional word-of-mouth marketing into online efforts. Here’s how: 1. Share Customer Testimonials & Reviews Encourage customers to write a review by creating a simple email request after the work is complete. Then, you can help others learn about your business by sharing the testimonials on social media and your website. 7 out of 10 consumers will leave a review if asked to. 90% of consumers read less than 10 reviews before forming an opinion about a business. 82% of U.S. adults say they at least sometimes read online customer ratings or reviews before purchasing items for the first time. After you’ve received customer reviews, use them in your marketing strategy. Share on social media as an interesting graphic. Use in paid ad copy to boost social proof. Post on your website’s homepage & landing pages. 2. Update Your Website with WOM-Related Statistics Recently, we’ve been seeing an awesome feature pop up on service industry websites that point to word-of-mouth marketing in a discreet but powerful way. It is an active counter that shows the number of customers served and the number of customer reviews. Imagine these numbers racking up after you land on a website. 140 Happy Customers 82 Customer Testimonials 74% of consumers say that positive reviews make them trust a local business more. If your business isn’t generating more than a handful of reviews, register your company on these popular review platforms: 3. Give an Incentive for Sharing No matter the size of the prize, people are more likely to do something if they receive something in return. Offering customers a perk for sharing your company’s products or services can quickly escalate your word-of-mouth marketing efforts. Consider giving a gift or discount to customers who share referrals and watch the WOM sales roll in. People are 4x more likely to buy when referred by a friend. Incentive Ideas for Valuable Customer Referrals Give 10% off the customer’s next service. Share company SWAG such as t-shirts, hats, or water bottles. Offer a complimentary service (just make sure it’s the right price point for your business). 4. Post Service/Product Ratings on Your Website Looping back to customer testimonials, this word-of-mouth marketing idea is a good way to hit a specific niche within your business. If you offer water damage services and mold remediation, let website visitors know which reviews are for which services. When looking at a service or product page, a customer’s confidence in your item or expertise will influence the final purchase decision. Brands That Do Ratings Well 5. Stay Active on Social Media Although social media can seem overwhelming at times, it’s one of the most effective ways to encourage online word-of-mouth marketing. How to Spread the Word on Social Create a LinkedIn profile and network with friends, family, coworkers, and even customers if you’re in the service industry. Respond to reviews, questions, and complaints on your accounts. Share photos of your team to help customers connect with the company. 6. Join Groups and Add to Conversations Speaking of social media, there is a great opportunity for businesses to participate in industry specific groups online. There, you can share knowledge, establish your expertise, and connect with possible customers. 77% of brand conversations on social media are people looking for advice, information, or help. 55% of consumers share their purchases socially on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and other social sites. 85% of fans of brands on Facebook recommend brands to others. Start by searching for groups on Facebook and LinkedIn where your customers and competition are active. Use words specific to your industry. Look for local business or chamber of commerce groups. Join a community page where your company is located. 7. Connect with Industry Influencers While you’re joining conversations and contributing to the groups mentioned above, you’ll likely meet people in your industry from influential companies. Use this to your advantage by networking with them, getting to know their stories, and sharing your own. You never know, a powerful person may be willing to promote your business or share your story one day. Brands that leverage social influencers are seeing up to a 10X increase in conversion rates. 8. Host Contests That Encourage Sharing Another common strategy companies use to promote online word-of-mouth marketing is a social media contest that involves sharing with friends. By asking your social fans to tag others as part of entering the contest, you’re extending the reach of the contest—and your company. The Best Channels for Contests A huge bonus of these contests? Building brand awareness and gaining new fans. Start using these word-of-mouth marketing tactics to build your business and bring in referrals. If you want to share these strategies with your team, download the infographic to put in the office or share on your business social channels. 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