



JOLT!

**20 CREATIVE MARKETING TACTICS YOU
CAN TRY TODAY**

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1

Twitter Electrocutation

I was giving a talk on product marketing when someone in the audience asked me:

"What's the best marketing stunt you've seen?"

Instantly I thought of the team that electrocuted themselves on halloween.

Back in 2013, an agency in England was thinking about ideas for a hackathon. The company, Si Digital, had just procured two tiny Rasberry Pi computers. The team members were sitting around thinking about how they could use them.

Oli Northam blurted out a crazy idea: "Why don't we let people shock us with dog collars on over the internet?"

Everyone laughed. Then, they thought about it. It was a crazy, but it would allow them to play with a new technology and do something fun. Maybe they could even get some exposure for their agency!

Their first step was to procure shock lighters; normally used for pranks. They hooked these up to the Rasberry Pi and were able to signal the shock lighter to deliver an electric charge.

Next, they built a small robot arm that could initiate the shock for each lighter. Each employee sat at their desk with tinfoil around their fingers. This tinfoil was connected to wires, which ran to the lighters.

After that, they wrote web software that would search Twitter for the hashtag [#shocksi](#). Whenever someone tweeted the hashtag, a random team member would receive a shock.

All that was left to do was set up a web cam, and launch the website: sidigital.co/halloween.

The team had no idea how many people would discover the project. Would anyone watch the live stream or deliver shocks via Twitter? They put out one tweet announcing the project, and went to bed.

The electric shocks started as soon as they got to the office the next day. People were talking. The bizarre halloween experiment went viral, almost immediately. Someone submitted their site to [Hacker News](#) and Reddit. Soon, they were receiving shocks nearly every second.

Demand was so great, they had to add another web server on the fly just to keep up with requests.

After 8 hours, they ended the project. The team had received 1,135 electric shocks throughout their workday. Their website got 16,388 visitors, and people sent 1,306 tweets about the project.

And the most surprising thing? They did all of this without a dedicated marketing team. They explained the response on [their blog](#):

Some said ‘Props to the marketing team’. This made everyone in the office chuckle. There is no marketing team at Si digital. In a company of six, everyone’s opinion counts

and anyone can have an idea about anything that they feel would be beneficial.

Individual makers (and teams) would do well to emulate this attitude!

In just one day, this small team had significantly elevated their profile. They'd created a story that people talked about (and are still talking about to this day).

The rise of internet stunts

Red Bull, the energy drink company, puts millions of dollars into sponsoring events.

And lately, they've been investing more money into live events. The most famous was Felix Baumgartner's 24 mile space jump.

Red Bull turned the event into a livestreaming internet stunt. They had cameras everywhere: in the mission control room, on the helium balloon, inside the capsule, and on Baumgartner himself. Viewers watched each step of launch. This culminated with Felix standing on the edge of the capsule, ready to jump from 120,000 feet. It was here that he dramatically stated:

"I know the whole world is watching now. I wish you could see what I can see. Sometimes you have to get up really high to understand how small you are... I'm going home now."

He preceded to fall off the platform. As the world held it's breath, he free-fell for 4 minutes and 20 seconds, breaking the sound barrier. They gasped when he went into a near fatal

uncontrolled spin, and cheered when he was able to regain control.

Nearly 8 million people watched live as Baumgartner touched down safely in eastern New Mexico. YouTube confirmed that it was the most concurrently watched video stream in history.

The mission was dubbed as a "jump from the edge of space." While not technically accurate, the slogan sums up how people felt about the event.

This wasn't a sporting event; this was a pop culture event. Steve Martin, of M&C Saatchi Sport and Entertainment, later commented:¹

"World records in stunts are old hat but this was so extreme and the storytelling so perfect that it will be very hard to beat. They will be talking about it in boardrooms and at marketing conferences for many a year."

A good story doesn't need dollars

It's estimated that the Red Bull space jump cost \$10-\$50 million dollars.

But Si Digital's halloween shock prank likely cost less than \$500 to implement.

It's not the cost of the event that matters; it's about the story that you spin.

¹ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/felix-baumgartners-plunge-from-stratosphere-breaks-broadcast-records/story-fnb64oi6-1226496913671>

Your turn

The brilliance of Si Digital's event is that it naturally lead to their core service offering. They build unique digital campaigns, and their stunt proves they're good at it.

If you're going to use stunts as a marketing channel, make sure that the event has a natural link to your product.

Author Jonah Berger says products, like animals, have natural habitats where they thrive.² These environments create triggers that cause consumers to think about them. For example, if I say "beer" what comes to mind? You might think of drinking around a campfire, sporting events, or eating pretzels.

Likewise, your stunt should have a connection to the product you offer.

Brainstorm

Your first step is to think of ideas. Rather than doing this in a single session, I use a notepad to record ideas as I think of them. This "passive brainstorming" is often more effective than locking yourself in an office. Don't try to come up with ideas all at once!

Remember, you're looking for a **good story**. The narrative has to be interesting enough that people will talk about it.

One way to evaluate how viral your ideas are is to write them as headlines. For example:

"I used my app to livestream my partner's eating and sleeping habits. Here's what happened."

² Jonah Berger, Contagious. Why Things Catch On, 1451686579 (Simon & Schuster, 2013), 83.

"We created a drone army that dances to heavy metal music."

Stunt checklist

A good marketing stunt has these characteristics:

- Recorded and streamed live
- Interactive
- Gives the audience an artifact to share (like a tweet, an image, etc...)
- Evokes emotion
- Can be re-told as a compelling story

Launch checklist

You can ensure that you get the initial traction you need by following these steps.

Before the launch

- **Prepare your network for the launch:** ask your friends to schedule social media posts announcing the project at a specific time.
- **Alert your audience:** do you have your own mailing list, Twitter following, or Facebook fans? The day before you launch, build anticipation by sending your audience a teaser.
- **Reach out to media outlets in advance:** reporters love getting hot tips in advance. Drop them a line explaining the project, and when it will launch.
- **Think about the primary goal:** what's the main objective

for the project? Do you want more leads? More brand awareness? Identify your goal, and make sure your web page has the appropriate buttons or forms.

- **Test:** make sure that all of your systems are working. If you get a lot of traffic, everything will be tested (server load, API limits, etc...)

During the launch

- **Interact:** as people engage with your project, make sure you acknowledge them.
- **Submit to bigger networks:** community sites like Reddit can really boost your campaign. They love stories that are new and novel. Just make sure you're submitting your project to the appropriate place.

After the event

- **Write a post-mortem:** what were the results? Share your experience in a blog post, video or podcast.
- **Connect with media contacts:** some reporters may want to write a story about it.
- **Follow-up with leads:** if you got new leads from the event, get in touch right away. Ask them if there's anything you can start helping them with.

Coming soon!

Hi, my name is Justin Jackson, [@mijustin](#) on Twitter. I've done product marketing for startups like Sprintly, as well as consulting clients around the globe.

I love marketing, and I love making things. I've married those two passions, with projects like [MegaMaker](#), [F*cking Webmaster](#), [Text Me Slacker](#), [Nerd Mullet Propaganda](#) and the [Secret Makers Society](#).

The initial launch of this book is slated for July, 2016.

Find out more at justinjackson.ca/jolt