

# **Viral Marketing**

## **Meaning**

Viral Marketing is that which is able to generate interest and the potential sale of a brand or product through messages that spread like a virus, in other words, quickly, and from person to person. The idea is for it to be the users themselves that choose to share the content.

Due to their speed and ease to share, social networks are the natural habitat of this kind of marketing. The most widespread example in recent times is the creation of emotional, surprising, funny or unique videos on YouTube, which are then shared on Facebook, Twitter and other channels.

However virality can be a double-edged sword. It's important to remember that in this type of campaign, a large part of the control falls into the hands of the users, and there is a risk that the message can be misinterpreted or parodied. On the other hand, a successful viral campaign can work miracles for your brand's results.

## **How a viral campaign works**

In theory, a viral marketing campaign is very simple to carry out: create a video or another type of content which is attractive to your target, put it on the internet and promote it. From there on, all you can do is wait for the fuse to light and for users to start sharing like crazy.

In some cases, virality happens by accident. For example, when a video is uploaded by a private user that all of a sudden becomes popular and begins to circulate all around the Internet.

As for the dispersion strategy for brand videos, there are two types: the shown or the concealed. In the former, the user is aware from the first moment that they are viewing advertising or branded content, while in the latter the participation of the brand is hidden and is only revealed later.

If you apply concealed marketing techniques, it is important to be very careful so the user does not feel tricked, cheated or deceived, as the viral campaign could then turn against you.

No matter what strategy we choose, remember to never ever become "spammy", or go overboard while sharing the content. Instead of repeating message over and over again, the best strategy is to find the perfect place and time and let the "viral fuse" light itself.

## **Types of Viral Marketing**

The types of viral marketing are stated below:

### **1. Pass-along**

It is the most common and crudest type of viral marketing, because it encourages users to pass message to others. Basically, this strategy tries to form a chain by placing a message at the bottom of the email which prompts the readers to forward this message to others.

Many religious communities and commercial organizations use this strategy. They promise some miracle in your life if you pass the email to 10 others. The success of this technique relies on how interesting, exciting or believable the message is. Emails bearing short, funny clips of video, or pictures are spontaneously passed to others.

### **2. Incentivized viral**

This type of viral marketing is used by most organizations in which they offer a gift or a reward for either passing a message along or providing someone else's address. In short, it calls the user to take action in order to be awarded. A customer base grows like this. This method can greatly increase referrals, and becomes most effective when the offer requires another person to take action.

### **3. Edgy Gossip/Buzz marketing**

This type of viral marketing helps business get the attention of the public. This strategy involves ads or messages that create controversies that lead to gossip or a topic of discussion. For example: an actor leaking controversial or private information just before a new movie is released.

Gossip spreads like wildfire; incredibly fast from one person to another and often to another corner of the globe, too. Build a strategy that can create some controversy to become hot gossip, and spread it from one corner of the country to the other.

#### **4. Undercover marketing**

Undercover marketing includes a viral message that just appears to be a cool or unusual page, activity or piece of news, without any provocation to link or forward it to others. This is something that doesn't seem like anything is being marketed. That is the way the message gets passed – innocently to other people in a quiet way.

#### **5. User-Managed Database**

This organized form of viral marketing involves having users invite others to join their communities. In this method, users create and manage their own list of contacts through a database given by an online service provider. By doing this, they create a viral, self-propagating chain of contacts that grows naturally and encourages others to sign up, as well.

### **Pros of Viral Marketing**

#### **1. You get to market your business in a new way.**

Viral marketing allows you to reach out to potential customers that may not otherwise hear your brand message. This allows you to potentially enter new markets or target new demographics, expanding the total number of available prospects. It's a marketing chain that eventually leads to the potential of higher revenues.

#### **2. It adds creativity to your marketing efforts.**

Just because you put your work out online doesn't mean it will go viral. You must be creative and focus on the key points of your brand at the same time in order to stand out. This allows you to find new ways to market your message, especially if you've been stuck in a rut. Even if your marketing doesn't go viral, you'll still likely benefit from increased customer activity.

#### **3. It takes pressure off of your product or service.**

With viral marketing, you can create a buzz about a new product or service without needing to produce a certain “wow” factor with what is being offered. You’re able to create a buzz through your communication efforts instead, which takes the pressure off of your items to deliver.

#### **4. Viral marketing causes a different type of interruptive marketing.**

Viral marketing uses a type of word-of-mouth marketing to deliver results in most instances. This creates more of an endorsement than it does a traditional marketing outreach. Even if a product is not necessarily liked, the fact that it is being recommended by a family member or a friend means that it is having a positive impact.

#### **5. You’re able to build an enhanced marketing list.**

Even if a viral outreach effort doesn’t result in a sale, there is a good chance that it will help you to build an enhanced marketing list. You may have more people sign up for your email marketing. There will likely be more people liking your Facebook page or following your Twitter or Instagram accounts. This allows you to create more future marketing opportunities in addition to the increased likelihood of better revenues.

#### **6. You can achieve a lot of growth.**

Viral marketing allows you to get a huge surge of traffic in a short amount of time. When it is done right, you can maintain those traffic levels and build up the reputation of your brand more quickly than traditional marketing efforts would typically allow.

#### **7. Viral marketing can offer instant credibility.**

Since viral marketing often relies on the concept of a word-of-mouth endorsement, you’re able to gain more credibility on an individualized level for a greater period of time. This credibility then leads to a greater level of visibility, which then creates more opportunities to convert prospects into paying customers.

#### **8. You can take viral marketing offline.**

Because viral marketing is essentially a more complex method of word-of-mouth marketing, it becomes possible to go viral offline too. All you need to do is get your key message points

consistent and have materials available to support certain claims within your message. This allows you to target even more consumers with the one-on-one message that can be very effective in attracting new prospects to your brand.

## **9. Viral marketing can build relationships.**

Times may be changing, but people still prefer to do business with brands and companies that they feel connected to in some way. A Facebook like might be the equivalent of a handshake. By building relationships, you're able to build consumer loyalty, and that gives you the opportunity for repeat business. There may still be vagueness in the message, but sometimes that is what is required for a bond to begin forming.

## **Cons of Viral Marketing**

### **1. Not every interested individual will share your message.**

Viral marketing requires you to target the right people in your demographics. There are plenty of people who may be interested in what you have to say, but they won't share what you have to say with other people. If you don't have contacts that are willing to start sharing, the chances of your marketing efforts going viral are going to be quite low.

### **2. It can be a waste of time.**

If your viral marketing efforts do not reach the intended audience, then you'll have wasted your time – and your money. Sometimes the best solution is to ignore viral marketing for a more traditional outreach effort. You may find that your costs per interaction may be a lot higher when making a viral marketing surge instead of a more traditional campaign because of the uncertainties that are involved.

### **3. You must keep influencing your marketing message.**

Many marketing efforts just require you to setup your initial message and then you can broadcast. Because viral marketing is more engaging on an individualized level, you must stay plugged into the message on a daily basis to limit the negative content that can sometimes be generated.

#### **4. Once viral marketing is unleashed, there is less overall control.**

This means you do not control how people get to interact with your message. If there are issues with the marketing campaign or it happens to go viral in a negative way, then this can cause an immediate and sometimes irreparable event to your branding.

#### **5. People can associate your marketing efforts with irritation.**

Ever have a telemarketer call you when you're trying to have dinner? Isn't interruptive marketing a bit irritating? That's what viral marketing is. It becomes a nuisance because people become exposed to your brand message around every corner. Even campaigns that are initially attractive can become irritating after constant exposure. This means there is an equal chance that your marketing message will be ignored or deleted.

#### **6. Some potential customers may be turned off by viral marketing.**

Viral marketing can happen two ways: organically or artificially. Organic viral marketing creates an invitation. Artificial viral marketing feels a lot like spam to many people. If your efforts are more of the latter, then you're running the risk of some potential customers turning away from your brand because they don't like to do business with a company that uses this type of marketing.

#### **7. Market nuances can change your results in unpredictable ways.**

The world may be more global than ever before, but there are still cultural and societal norms that are different for many. What may be a positive experience for some may be a negative experience for others based solely on their environment. Nuances in socioeconomic messages can change the results of viral marketing in unpredictable ways, sometimes long after the message has been introduced.

The pros and cons of viral marketing show that it can be a positive, low-cost solution when it is done right. It will always be a hit-or-miss proposition, but with meaningful metrics put into place before beginning the campaign, you'll be able to know if this is an investment that makes sense for your brand.