

# The Secrets Of Word-of-mouth Marketing: How To Trigger Exponential Sales Through Runaway Word Of Mouth By: George Silverman

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Spread the word about your hot new product or company! Word-of-mouth marketing is the most powerful and persuasive weapon you can use, and it won't cost you anything! Based on George Silverman's years of consulting with successful word-of-mouth campaigns of his own clients, here is one of the first resources on how to harness the often underestimated power of word-of-mouth, and be heard above the media noise.

1. Word-of-mouth is actually the center of the marketing universe.
2. Just as it is untrue that the sun revolves around the earth, marketing does not really revolve around advertising, selling, and promotions. Much of marketing actually centers around illusion-creation.
3. Word-of-mouth offers an authenticity to it because the source is normally independent of the company, he or she is offering his or her own candid opinion and therefore, the marketing appears credible.
4. Advertising is the renting of a medium to send out a carefully crafted message to a specific audience. Everything is paid for, whereas word-of-mouth is a more effective tool; and best of all, it is absolutely free.
5. Word-of-mouth can take on a life of its own. There are no limits to how far-reaching it can be. Just study how fast a good joke on the e-mail circulates.
6. Studies have shown that a satisfied customer will tell an average of three people about a product or service she likes, and eleven people about a product or service with which she had a negative experience.
7. Because this is the age of the Internet, e-mail, websites, chat rooms, and video teleconferencing, word-of-mouth is even more important to businesses today than ever before.
8. The most important way by which sales can increase is by increasing the speed with which decisions are made. Decision speed is the time it takes for your customer to go from initial awareness to enthusiastic use and recommendation of your product or service. Simplicity, ease, and fun govern the decision process.
9. Marketing success is determined more by the time it takes for your customer to decide on your product than by any other single factor. Decision speed is more powerful than positioning, image, value, customer satisfaction, guarantees, or even product superiority.
10. Shortening the customer's decision cycle means your product's benefits, claims, and promises must be obvious and compelling;

information must be clear, balanced, and credible; comparisons must reveal meaningful differences, your trials should be free and easy, your evaluations, clear and simple. Guarantees should be ironclad and generous. Testimonials and other word-of-mouth marketing must be relevant and believable. Delivery, training, and support offered must be superior. 11. A good way to spread the word on your company is to circulate true, positive stories about it. FedEx is famous for its legendary employee who hired a chopper just to deliver a package forgotten on the tarmac. People love a good story, and that is the essence of word of mouth. 12. There are 9 levels of word-of-mouth. They range from the public scandal of minus 4, the product boycott of minus 3, to the raving customers/advocates who tell you how great your product or service is (plus 3) to the talk of the town level (plus 4). 13. Examples of those who have reached plus 4 level of word-of-mouth marketing are: 14. Lexus Automobiles, Saturn Car Company, Harley-Davidson, Netscape Navigator, Celestial seasonings herbal tea, The Internet, and Apple Computer 15. Some ways of harnessing word of mouth are by using experts like customers, suppliers, salespeople, experts roundtable discussions and selling groups. Take advantage of seminars, workshops, and speaking engagements, dinner meetings, teleconferenced panel discussions, and trade shows. Canned Word of Mouth consists of putting out videotapes, audiotapes, using a well-designed website, or distributing CDs. There are also ways such as referral selling programs, testimonials, and networking methods, hotlines (1-800 numbers) and e-mail. 16. Using traditional media for Word of Mouth means using customer service as a word-of-mouth engine, public relations, placements, unusual events, promotions, word of mouth in ads, sales brochures, or direct mail, salesperson programs, sales stars, peer training, or using salespeople as word-of-mouth generators, word-of-mouth incentive programs (Tell-a-friend programs), useful gifts to customers (articles, how-to manuals) that they can give their friends. 17. Employees should be actively spreading word of mouth about your products. Spread stories around about examples of superior customer service. Give people a common mission and make rewards dependent on the accomplishment of that mission. 18. Word of mouth accelerates the process of customer decision-making, from deciding to decide, asking for information, weighing options, evaluating a free trial, and then finally becoming a customer and advocate. 19. With customer-oriented service, your company can increase sales via word of mouth. Specific steps in creating a word of mouth campaign: 1. Find some way to get the product into the hands of key influencers. 2. Provide a channel for the influencers to talk and get all fired up about your product. 3. Gather testimonials and endorsements, like actual letters of

praise. 4. Form an ongoing group that meets once a year in a resort but once a month by teleconference or daily by list group 5. Create fun events to bring users together and invite non-users. Saturn, Harley-Davidson, and Lexus have been successful with this approach. 6. Produce cassettes, videotapes, and clips on your Web site featuring enthusiastic customers talking with other enthusiastic customers. Custom-create some CDs for each potential customer. 7. Conduct seminars and workshops 8. Create a club with membership benefits 9. Pass out flyers. Tell friends. Offer special incentives and discounts for friends who tell their friends. 10. Use the Internet! 11. Do at least one outrageous thing to generate word of mouth. 12. Empower employees to go the extra mile. 13. Network and brainstorm for ideas 14. Run special sales 15. Script! Tell people exactly what to say in their word of mouth communication. ABOUT THE AUTHOR George Silverman (Orangeburg, NY) is founder and president of Market Navigation, Inc., a marketing consulting firm, and an acknowledged expert on word-of-mouth marketing.

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