

Triggering Buzz

Buzz is the transfer of information from one person to another person. It can happen in person via word of mouth or electronically via word of mouse. Buzz marketing is getting people (including the media) to talk about your product or event in such a way that is fun and contagious.

So how do you trigger that conversational buzz? As Bonnie Raitt would say, “Let’s give them something to talk about.”

The trick is to come up with creative subjects that interest and intrigue people in your target audience to such a point that they want to spread it onto others. In his book, Buzzmarketing, Mark Hughes lists 6 Buttons of Buzz to get conversations flowing.

- The **taboo** – This includes such things as sex, lies and bathroom humor. Think of Charmin’s Mr. Whipple or Herbal Essences organic/orgasmic yes, yes, yes. Perhaps you can have a workshop title that’s a play on words.
- The **unusual** – Letterman’s Top Ten & Stupid Human Tricks is in this category, as is the Pepsi Challenge and the website Overweightdate.com. The merging of two previously competitive shows would certainly provide an element of the usual to talk about.
- The **outrageous** – Halfway, Oregon agreed to change its name to become Half.com as part of that website’s promotional efforts. Outrageous campaigns will always work but they work ten times better if there’s a connection that can be made between the product/event and the outrageous stunt you are pulling. For a meeting, it would be considered by many to announce that room sets will include no banquet chairs but be an ‘Open space’ set with bean bag chairs and small rugs.
- The **hilarious** – This is one of the harder buttons as humor is a personal and potentially volatile issue. I’ve seen it successfully done with crazy costume characters or impersonators. How about putting some sponsorship recognition into fortune cookies for a hilarious element.
- The **remarkable** – I certainly consider football players as reality show dance stars to be remarkable. And your attendees might consider free transfers to and from the airport and the hotel to be wonderfully remarkable.
- **Secrets** (both kept & revealed) – Google’s campaign to launch Gmail utilized this button. People had to be invited to join Gmail by someone who was already using it. Is there something that you can “leak” like the entertainment or keynote or other anxiously anticipated morsel?

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