

Punk Marketing

Get Off Your Ass And Join The Revolution

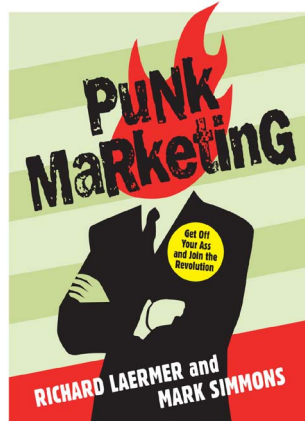
About the Authors



Richard Laermer is an authority in marketing and media and a former magazine and newspaper reporter. The author of Full Frontal PR and Trendspotting and host of Unspun Radio, he is CEO of RLM PR.



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■ The Big Idea

Punk Marketing is the long-awaited and breathless uprising that businesses want, deserve and desperately need. In this radical guide, Richard Laermer and Mark Simmons take an irreverent, penetrating look at the seismic change in the relationship between the people who sell stuff – products, services, entertainment – and those who purchase it. They demonstrate that to survive in business, a revolutionary approach is needed – one they have branded “Punk Marketing” – and it’s one we all need to understand, for the traditional divisions among commerce, content, and consumers are continuing to blur ever rapidly.

Never dull, sometimes controversial, but always a lot of fun, Punk Marketing presents a manifesto for any business person needing to engage consumers – or any consumer seeking to understand and employ their newfound power. And here’s the good news: It’s based on principles that have existed forever.

In an age of digital video recorders, “branded” entertainment, cell phones, TV, multiplayer online games, and never-ending social networking, a coherent approach to marketing has never been more vital.

Why You Need This Book

This book has all the built-in plans to equip you with the tools to make all this change work out just fine.

ENTER PUNK MARKETING

In the late seventies, punk was a shot heard around the radio as a beyond-refreshing change from the tired old formulaic music of the time. It was a call to action, a demand for revolt delivered in our own language. The punk rock that burst rudely onto the scene with bands like the Stooges, the New York Dolls, the Sex Pistols and the Clash was replete with energy and vitality and shook the complacent music industry to its core and scared the crap out of disco-infused freaks that were running/ruining the whorish record business.

The new scene gave voice to scores of teens on both sides of the Atlantic too. The records were raw and unstructured and had the unmistakable feel of something created with glee by the people for the people.

Likewise, marketing has reached the point at which a groundswell from the consumer up is engulfing the established industry thinking. Punk Marketing is not founded upon a single idea or technique. It is a defined approach to doing things differently based upon a clear set of principles for how marketers – whether in large corporations, agencies, or small businesses – can use the shift in power to the consumer to their advantage.

THE ARTICLES OF THE REVOLUTION

Article One: Avoid Risk and Die

In times of change the greatest risk is to take none at all.

Article Two: Why Not Ask “Why Not?”

Assumptions are just that. They are in no way true. Anything you assume is usually a half-truth or a generalization that once served a useful purpose but now hinders truly creative solutions.

Article Three: Take a Strong Stand

Trying to be all things to everyone inevitably results in meaning little to anybody.

Article Four: Don’t Pander

Customers are important but they are not necessarily right.

Article Five: Give Up Control

Consumers now control brands – end of debate. Smart marketers recognize this and embrace it rather than fight the powerful truth.

Article Six: Expose Yourself

A relationship of trust between brand and consumer, like that between two people, is built upon honesty.

Article Seven: Make Enemies

All brands need to position themselves against an alternative. It may seem counterintuitive but having an enemy is a good thing for a brand.

Article Eight: Leave Them Wanting More

Avoid the temptation to reveal all of your assets at once. Or the masters have said, you don’t teach them everything you know. You teach them everything they know.

Article Nine: Outthink the Competition

Think smarter than the other dude. Do not be led into temptation by the fast buck and don't outspend them. That is the definition of fool's gold.

Article Ten: Don't Be Seduced By Technology

The media is not the message anymore. The message is the message is the message.

Article Eleven: Know Who You Are

If you don't understand what it is that you are good at, you might be tempted to try to be something you are plainly not.

Article Twelve: No More Marketing Bullshit

Get to the point. Express it clearly and simply. Einstein said – we believe he meant marketers – “Things should be made as simple as possible, but not any simpler.”

Article Thirteen: Don't Let Others Set Your Standards

Sorry to tell you this, but good no longer means anything, while mediocre does more harm than doing nothing. We'll repeat that: mediocre does more harm than doing nothing.

Article Fourteen: Use The Tools of The Revolution

Go write your own manifesto. Remind yourself of its articles whenever you lack resolve.

Article Fifteen: The Question Mark, Oh Participant

This is where you help. The point of this revolution is to make it about interaction and not dictation; so you decide what the last article should be.

KILL THE MIDDLEMEN

With the easy availability of all sorts of whiz-bang technology, consumers are finding they can create their own content and marketing that competes with the content created by professionals. We marketers can encourage consumers to jump in and be actively involved in shaping brands, since the days when they can be thought of as passive recipients of marketing messages are over.

Finally, what you learned most of all: cut the middleperson out and save your ass. They are not as viable as the need to get your customers to love the new flexible you.

BRAND NOT BLAND

Breaking away from the clutter of too many products and too much marketing does not mean you have to use dated stealth-marketing tactics to catch consumers in places where they were least expecting you. What this clearly demand is finding ways to make the brand stand out.

Excellent design will add an emotional appeal and, when combined with fantastic functionality can make a product in even the most boring market desirable.

Marketers must take risks and make a few damning errors when attempting to create something distinctive to chuck into the marketplace. Bombing is only a true failure if we don't gain from it.

Clothing industries have used the tactic of creating scarcity to drive up demand for such products as a T-shirt or pair of ultimately disposable sneakers. Giving something that could have been mass-produced an element of uniqueness can

have the same effect, whether it's a can of soda, a diner, or a chain of flower shops. Marketers can add individual flavor to what they are selling to make consumers want it with abandon.

THE SELL PHONE

The cell or mobile phone is something consumers rely on not just for communication but as a means of staying connected with the rest of the world, thus meeting deep psychological needs unfulfilled since the crib. It offers a world of possibilities for marketers, and more than any other medium represents a massive risk: consumers rejecting unwelcome marketing, and the brands they are associated with, forever more.

Campaigns that use texting to engage consumers and reward them with prizes or offers are effective only if strictly permission-based. Give the participants something relevant to them attaches them to the brand completely. The people have to recall it was you who gave it up.

With nonstop further advances in cell technology and quality content and user experiences, features such as live TV on cell phones and cool mini commercials are sure to follow. But just as with commercials on regular TV, marketers have got to take a deep breath and start with step one: if these ads are not both fun and totally "something that matters to me," consumers will avoid them – and subsequently wonder why you are bugging them, again. Then they will end up despising you and all the products associated with you.

Before long cell phones with RFID reading abilities will enable consumers to find out a ton of new information about the products by scanning codes or print ads and downloading short videos onto their phones, giving new opportunities to engage consumers through compelling content. Can you see us now?

CAPTIVE CONSUMER

Industries that rely on contracts to tie customers in have not learned from the woes of the airline industry, which has seen competitors that offer a better experience rake it in.

Marketing that overpromises combined with a product that oversucks forgoes customer loyalty for an easy and fast profit. This is the view of economics where St. Peter clucks when you enter the Pearly Gates. Marketers have a duty to be honest about products so consumers don't ever feel conned.

A smart marketer takes advantage of a complacent industry's assumption that consumers are stuck by using fresh thinking and outlandish positioning against the main players in the industry.

The mobile networks have charged unnecessary, immoral rates riding a ludicrous excuse that they must cover the cost of customer acquisition. But other businesses aren't penalizing paying clients who use competing products or services. Those who market need to make the people who buy their stuff want to buy from them. There is always a bright, shiny object to zigzag our attention away from you. Do we have your attention now?

NOW, IT'S STORY TIME

A story doesn't have to demo a product front and center so long as its meaning and its principles are conveyed to the target audience.

Narratives with many layers create buzz with those first-at-bat and leverage money spent on paid media with gobs of earned free media.

ARB, or alternative-reality branding, is a mouthful that succeeds in using online and real-life components to tell a story whereby consumers become part of the action. This can be incredibly effective especially for young-adult consumers who are used to being challenged by marketers – and expect it.

Take liberally from other industries – film or music or porn – to set different goals for how you market. Use their techniques to create impact-filled marketing campaigns that make you feel good about the job you do daily.

When consumers are asked to participate in The Story, a marketer needs to accept you will lose some control in order for it to be wholly interactive.

Then as a coda, remember not to tell a narrative when you do not have the goods. Only do stories you believe in. It's what every successful novelist advises aspiring writers: Create what you know. Nothing but.

INTRODUCING THE POWER CHARTER

Marketers, simplify a consumer's life! The Punk Marketing Consumer Power Charter must be posted on the fridge. Preferably the one in the office...

Punk Marketers of the World:

1. Consumers are looking to us to help simplify their lives so we will do our utmost to help them get simple.
2. Consumers have a right to expect a clear education about products being offered to enable them to make informed choices. That is our duty. Labeling should make it easy for consumers to quickly grasp what the product does and what it contains.
3. We are responsible for keeping the number of choices to a minimum: less is most definitely it.

4. Each product variant, line extension, or subbrand should be distinctive from any other we offer and meet a real consumer need.
5. Me-too products that copy competitor items without trying to offer a distinct point of differentiation represent lazy thinking.
6. We need to use our marketing prowess responsibly and only when we have something meaningful to say.
7. Marketing foisting itself upon consumers is offensive. It will create antagonism to the brand in particular and marketing ways.
8. There are no-go places marketing professionals need to respect at all times. That's right, Coke, at all times. Leave the potty alone.
9. We need to do more listening and learning from signals we get from consumers about their feelings toward marketing.
10. As marketers we will take the high ground and be a champion for consumers – never their enemies.

IT'S MORE THAN JUST US

There are some new wave agencies dedicated to being media agnostic by not assuming that TV spots and other traditional media formats are the end-all solution to marketing problems. Thinking the alternative is no simple matter. It requires changes to how media is planned and willingness to execute on something “impossible” to bring to life (good things). Results make it worthwhile. Damn, do they ever.

The biggest challenge to creating something that is a heretofore untold marketing solution is in creating an environment at work in which big ideas develop. Collaboration among all the relevant parties is contrary to how it's usually done, but evidence from agencies doing it already and from studies suggests this is the only real way to create something of lasting value.

Creativity in advertising, in marketing, and in business as a whole has been allowed to flounder and, is always relegated to the end of process by which a product is brought to market. It needs to play a bigger role earlier on. Marketers need to embrace creativity in every single aspect of business and get the help of smart outside advisers not afraid to push boundaries and thinking.

Trite is sometimes acceptable. A happy work environment where employees feel valued and respected is conducive to creativity; the more people use a creative muscle, the more strongly developed it becomes. Be happy for real!

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