

Word of Mouth Marketing

You've heard of it, you've thought about using it, some of your clients may even be utilizing it without your knowledge –but do you *really* know how to leverage the opportunity?

It's a scary thought to imagine your precious clients may be talking about you. If only you could be a fly on the wall listening to what they have to say. Who are they telling, what do they really think of your product or service and are they impressed enough to personally forward your company name on to someone else who trusts them?

Word of mouth (WOM) marketing. Everyone has heard of it – hardly anyone knows how to harness its immense power. And, I'm not just being a marketer here by using the superlative 'immense'. The power of WOM marketing really is colossal.

Take me for example. I took my car to a mechanic a few years ago for it's Warrant. He promptly told me that my brakes needed replacing (being a blonde female he must have seen me coming!). What he didn't know though was that I had previously (only two months prior) had my brakes replaced – they were squeaky you see.

So, I am sure you can imagine how many people I have told over the past two years about my experience – at least 30. And how many people do you think they have told? Scary thought.

So whether your clients are speaking nicely of you or not, it is your responsibility to ensure your WOM marketing is being utilized for the better.

Now, many marketers believe that good customer service is the only way forward in terms of tackling what is essentially a difficult marketing medium. Yes, of course as with the mechanic, good customer service in fact, great customer service is an essential element for WOM marketing. However, this must remain your building block for an ongoing WOM drive.

As we have already discussed, bad WOM can be one of the most detrimental things for a small business. And, as most of you will already know, when people are impressed they tell a few people about their experience. When they are unimpressed, they will tell ten-times as many!

So, how do you harness the power of WOM Marketing and when will you see the benefits?

There are several key elements that will help you on your way to a successful WOM campaign. Here are some of the most important below:

- 1. Develop your WOM contacts.** Developing relationships is an important element of any business and with WOM Marketing it's imperative. Your contacts don't have to be the CEO of some great company. Mr. Coffee Man can also be an important WOM generator.
- 2. Give people something to talk about.** I like to call it Guerilla WOM Marketing. Do something a little wacky and you'll have plenty of people not only talking about it but also wanting to get involved. And, by getting involved, you have begun the WOM Marketing phenomenon. Think Richard Branson and you know what I'm talking about!

3. **Ensure your message is easy to communicate.** A long winded, difficult to understand message is very rarely communicated. Ensure your message is simple, pointed and providing a benefit to your potential client. Us marketers love to mention the word FREE – if you are able to use it, do so. Viral marketing is also worth your while if managed and executed in a clever fashion.
4. **Create interesting lines of communication.** Important if you want to find out what appeals to your current clients. Clever application of viral marketing tools (internet based WOM marketing) can be really beneficial in this instance. Also, if you think “out of the box” when creating an important WOM message you will have a higher impact ratio.
5. **Utilise those people who love what you do!** That’s right! If you have a client or two who just think you’re fantastic then use them to sing your praises.

So, in summary...

Ensure you are giving clients (and potential clients) something to talk about. Weather it be great customer service, friendly staff, excellent discounts or that crazy stunt on the sidewalk, people *need* a reason to talk about your business. Get your networks running smoothly. Everyone is important in WOM marketing. Ensure your message is clear, concise and easy to relay. Get clever with your lines of communication and ensure you are making use of people who really like what you do!

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