

Creative Thinking is Required

Some years ago, an Australian takeout pizza place used an untraditional channel in an attempt to boost sales. Traffic was slow. Hardly anyone visited the site. The need for an increase in traffic was urgent.

If traditional media planning had been used, print ads or direct mail would have been purchased and the phone number added to the shop's phone-book entry. It might even have invested in some online ads.

The pizza place went a different route. Instead of spreading money between off- and online ads, it spent the entire budget on radio. The spots were simple but extremely effective. So effective, the restaurant's increased business caused most of the local competition to shut down.

How'd it do it?

Instead of offering discounts or merely promoting its phone number, the pizza place's radio ads asked listeners to tear out all the pizza-restaurant pages from their yellow pages and bring them in. In return for the pages, customers received a free pizza of their choice and a sticker with the restaurant's phone number to put next to their phone – or on top of the Yellow Pages.

Very clever!

Because the contact information for all the other pizza joints in town disappeared from customers' primary reference source, only one set of contact details was left in households that complied: the phone number and URL for the restaurant that dreamed up the promotion. That single outlet is now a major franchise across Australia.

The alternative is, well, alternative. Alternative thinking, alternative ideas

and alternative channels. An Australian entrepreneur, and a good friend of mine, recently demonstrated the power of alternative thinking necessitated by small budget marketing when introducing a juice brand, Nudie. The product is fresh juice, without additives. It tastes fantastic, but so what? The product's success is hinged on much more than its ingredients. It lies in alternative thinking and a personal approach.

The Web site introduces the brand's owner as "Tall Tim," who generates dialogue with individuals. Tall Tim invites people to show up at his home at a certain time for breakfast and juice, a freebie you qualify for as long as you show up at the exact, and I mean exact, time. The gesture couples the person behind the brand with the brand itself. That, in turn, promotes interaction between the humanized brand and the consumer. The site urges visitors to get into the act of pushing Nudie's distribution by offering a standard letter that interested parties can download, sign, and forward to their local stores. It's a simple strategy that works for the brand because individual customers have cachet and credibility in their neighbourhood store. The owners know their customers, and they listen to them.

The letter reads:

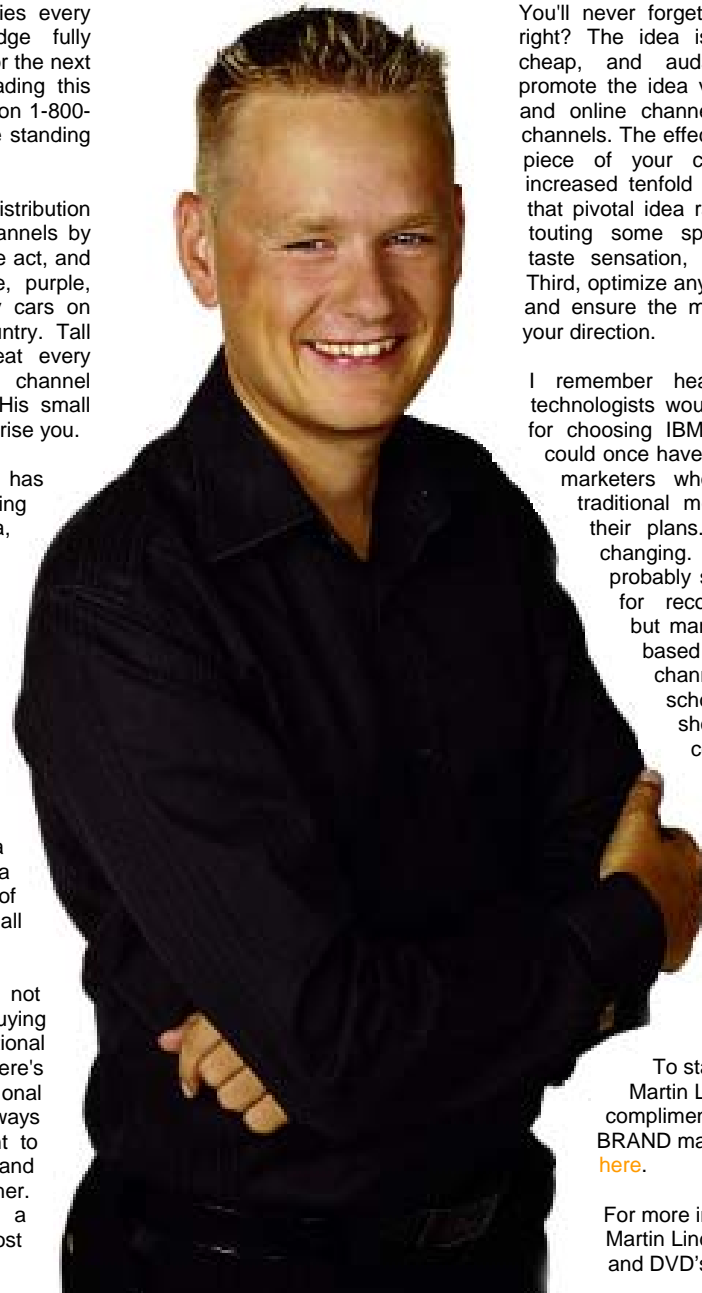
Dear (insert name of favourite store) I've recently had the pleasure of tasting a Nudie (www.nudie.com.au) - a new kind of juice with absolutely nothing added. (Yeah, I know, you've heard that line before about nothing added, but the people at Nudie really mean it!) Anyway, the point of this letter is to see if you'd be kind enough to consider stocking Nudie. If you do stock Nudie, I would be eternally grateful and I would buy at

least (insert number) Nudies every week! To get your fridge fully stocked with Nudie today (or the next business day if you're reading this letter after hours) call now on 1-800-GO-NUDIE. Call takers are standing by...

Tall Tim turned his distribution channels into branding channels by getting consumers in on the act, and by putting a fleet of cute, purple, distinctively Nudie delivery cars on the road all over the country. Tall Tim has managed to treat every imaginable communication channel in an alternative fashion. His small budget would probably surprise you.

Within five months, Nudie has become the fastest-growing juice brand in Australia, ever. Tall Tim achieved this without any TV, radio, print or direct mail advertising. He tackled the project on a personal level. He used human communication channels creatively and directly. Nudie is not the only brand out there proving branding can be successful without spending millions of dollars on traditional media campaigns. But it offers a great working example of what can be done on a small budget.

Creating traffic is not necessarily a matter of buying ads or taking a traditional approach. Of course, there's always room for traditional thinking. It works and always will. But if you really want to build effective traffic and branding, go one step further. That is, unless you're a Microsoft with an almost unlimited marketing budget.



You'll never forget the pizza story, right? The idea is simple, clever, cheap, and audacious. Second, promote the idea via traditional off- and online channels and via new channels. The effectiveness of every piece of your communication is increased tenfold if each promotes that pivotal idea rather than simply touting some special offer, new taste sensation, or new product. Third, optimize any channel you use and ensure the message points in your direction.

I remember hearing information technologists would never be fired for choosing IBM. I suppose you could once have said the same of marketers who combined the traditional media channels in their plans. But things are changing. The IT guys probably still won't be fired for recommending IBM, but marketers with plans based on traditional channels and old school thinking shouldn't get too comfortable.

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