

Turn Customers Into Marketers

P2P marketing is hardly a new phenomenon, however it is a phenomena that is about to be leveraged to unprecedented heights using our next generation of kids. During my "BRANDchild" research, one of the brands that impressed me most was U.S.-based Jones Soda. The product itself is hardly different from any other soda. What distinguishes it from the pack is it's created a persona that draws kids to it like a magnet.

Jones Soda identified an alternative distribution strategy. Instead of going the supermarket-drugstore route, it placed the product in clothing stores, primarily in skate and surf shops. These are not usually associated with drink sales. The unique move gained the attention and respect of a young audience.

But Jones Soda went a step further, introducing personalized labels. By logging onto its Web site, tweens could design their own labels and potentially see them on bottles. Thousands of labels have been produced, all gloriously created by the user group.

Where's the P2P element? It became clear when personalized labels were introduced. Unique talent emerged from individual surfers, skaters, cyclists, and wake boarders. Jones Soda began to sponsor these emerging riders. Not stopping there, it began producing a merchandising line around the individuals, turning its own customers into brands and brand advocates simultaneously.

I met a skater on a beach outside Sydney, Australia, who proudly told me, "I have my own sponsor and marketing plan. I know exactly who to target." The kid had just turned 9 years old!

Companies such as Jones Soda succeed with a P2P strategy because they clearly identify and engage their own audiences, turning them into true advocates. Their customers help them develop their marketing plans and build in the flexibility to instantly change the plan as trends dictate. During my research, I realized companies increasingly employ tweens to promote their brands in chat rooms. These tweens

are paid to chat up brands or position them in their daily conversations, ensuring the right attention is put on certain brands.

However we view this, its clear P2P marketing involves much more than relying on word of mouth. It's now a subtle, sophisticated technique involving tweens across many facets. It often places them in charge of building in the requisite flexibility in campaign planning.

P2P strategies work well for an audience that's ever demanding and flexible and expect instant gratification. The commitment works both ways. When done properly, it creates a solid loyal following in a fickle marketplace.

About Martin Lindstrom

Martin Lindstrom is recognized as one of the world's primary branding gurus by The Chartered Institute of Marketing. Lindstrom is the author



several best-selling branding books including BRAND sense, BRANDchild with Patricia B. Seybold, Clicks, Bricks & Brands with Don Peppers & Martha Rogers and Brand Building on the Internet. He's an advisor to Fortune 100 brands including Microsoft, Reuters, Pepsi, Yellow Pages, Nokia, Disney and Mars.

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