

# Viral marketing with indie developers flashcard



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Viral marketing has evolved extremely fast over the past decade or so and is definitely ever evolving, coming from a simple static online set of video campaigns to including a mass of several new tactics within the viral marketing age from, the usual, video marketing, focused marketing and/or hard pressed funding websites, and even mass public marketing that result in creating the desire to search databases like the internet for more information.

There are several different types of viral marketing that are used which include, but are not limited to, the simple Word-of-Mouth, or sometimes shortened as WOMB', to complicated and risky Stealth Marketing strategies. Some of these concepts can also include the utilization of social sites. Viral marketing in its essence is the ability to create internet-based content that attracts a targeted and specific audience that makes them intrigued enough to want to know more about the product they just saw by using means that are less direct or as blunt as other means, like street sign holders, TV commercials, etc.

By accomplishing this it can also generate a lot of needed revenue for the project as a whole to either fund the project right from the start or help sustain it along the way. Viral marketing is also very important to studios, more so in the crowded marketing world today, due to the fact that the internet is so widely accessible and used by nearly 280 million Americans today and even hundreds of millions more around the world. This is an easy way to gain some massive, widespread coverage as well as notoriety at an extremely fast pace without shoving your product down the customers throats or becoming too Over Exposed'.

According to Gooding, (1999) “ There is no more room for all these all the advertisements put out there in the world by very traditional means such as magazine ads, billboards, and etc. Thus when creating a campaign that is successful, studios have the power to change the tide of how successful the launch dates of their games or products are. Indies studios can benefit from this compared to AAA titles using a similar tactic, mainly due to the low cost and freely available tools for creating this content.

There are tough and specific problems that studios are dealing with as o how to utilize viral marketing; this affects both large and Indies studios. With the addition of a relatively new viral marketing strategy known as “ Crowd Funding” the viral marketing scene is becoming more versatile and easily accessed by everyone. Throughout this paper each term will be explained in depth to make is as easy as possible to understand, plan, and execute a marketing plan to help today’s developers spread the word about their projects while utilizing their resources to the full extent possible.

**Problem Statement** There are several issues revolving around viral marketing and various video game audios today. These issues can be a wide range of items from support, funding, and just the pure lack of knowledge, even the refusal to use and implement strategies of viral marketing. The lack of support for viral marketing is of concern, even in today’s digital native market. Some studios, and even large portions of the video game community, still do not support the use of viral marketing as an effective strategy.

This lack of support is a direct result of how little the strategy is utilized, often seen to fail with an alarming higher rate compared to the successes that have come from the SE of this strategy. The sight of failures can also be said to cloud over the successes, because when a marketing campaign fails, it is usually because of a very critical mistake or error that catches all the media attention and gets the most coverage, sometimes condemning viral marketing strategies. Take this event for example, when the AAA title developer THIS pulled a publicity stunt for their game "Hometown".

This occurred when they released a couple hundred balloons near the San Francisco bay not expecting anything to go wrong, but when the balloons started to enter the water itself, the citizens being environmentally friendly took a stand against THIS as well as local gaming retailer Gamester. This slight action of publicity went completely wrong and probably cost THIS a pretty penny (Determined, 2011) Budgeting for this type of strategy, guerilla marketing in this case, is another issue all on its own.

Some studios, mostly Indies studios, simply just lack the budget to consider adopting a viral marketing strategy to its' full extent. With high risk of a failure or even proper marketing, some studios avoid this arena entirely, because this strategy is a "gamble tit company funds". If a studio were to mess up a viral marketing plan, most, if not all, the budget and time put into this would be a complete waste, and some studios require all the budget and time to justify not using it to continue with the production of their 'P.

Even when a studio has all the necessary money and support to be able to create or continue a viral marketing campaign, they do not always have the

knowledge, or the “ know-how’, of viral marketing strategies. With all of these factors in hand, some studios simply refuse to use it based on their own personal studio and Tyler. Exactly what needs to be done about this laundry list of issues needs to be prioritize: first the standard knowledge and widespread awareness of the viral can start to focus on the realistic limitations they will have like budgeting and product support for starting their marketing campaigns.

Some studios, fueled by fanhood or star power can create smaller marketing campaigns to create some sort of buzz about their products. Knowledge will always start with the basics; these are the basics of viral marketing, and getting to know the different types of viral marketing themselves. This paper will give knowledge to those who need it most in creating takeaways on how to create the most inexpensive, yet effective marketing. This should lead to solving the problem of having a lack of knowledge or directional plan when considering doing marketing for future projects and products.

Background Viral Marketing can take many shapes and forms, but are all directly inside specific groups, from Word-of-Mouth (WOMB), Stealth, Guerilla, and now Crowd Funding. Word of mouth marketing influences everything involved in the viral marketing world. This type of marketing can occur either on purpose or accidentally. Meaning that studios can either hire customers and actors or directly influence them to spread the word and information about a game to their friends and peers through in-person contact or other means of contact such as social sites, video hosting sites, or even blogs.

Incidental word-of-mouth marketing is the preferred type of the two because this means that targeted customers have taken it upon themselves with no other influence than what they have seen themselves. This gives studios the idea that people actually like the product or service enough to want to share information about it and they are excited to do so. Though word of mouth is a type of viral marketing that is very easily a function that can decay without any way to control how fast or slow this occurrence can happen. Seth Gooding states that “ Word of mouth is a decaying function.

A marketer does something and a consumer tells five or ten friends. And that’s it. It amplifies the marketing action and then fades, usually quickly. ” (2007) The next variance of viral marketing is called stealth marketing; this is the most difficult of all the types to pull off correctly. Stealth marketing is a strategy used when the studio or company wants to market their product or service without directly showing what the product is. A great example of this is when marketers for the movie “ The Last Exorcism” used chat roulette to promote without showing what the movie was at all until the very final seconds where a website was revealed.

They used this by showing a girl, apparently possessed, acting normal then at some point she started to turn her head to the point of where her neck broke and she let out very horrible noises. This instilled the idea of possession because of what was happening on screen, this video scared the viewers as well. This is viewed as stealth marketing because it never actually showed the viewer the product directly. By doing this, it generated massive buzz around the internet and interest in the product by making them want to visit the site and view it for further information about the product.

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The movie was a huge success making a worldwide box office gain of \$41 Million. (Rotten Tomatoes, 2013) A marketing style that is becoming popular today is the mixture of Guerilla and Internet marketing, or Guerilla Viral Combination. This marketing is used by first acting on a guerilla level, by taking a direct and hard approach to advertising to the streets with either direct ads or by making clever inferences to a very specific website. Then after this stage is completed, a studio or to focus on the internet side after a certain amount of time.

This has been done extremely well by Capo in promoting their upcoming game Resident Evil 6. They started with real world promotions by spray painting specific symbols around cities with tastiness and websites together. This stunt led to people taking pictures and posting them around the internet, then linking them to a website Capo had set up, hush leading to an eventual discovery and announcement of Resident Evil 6. When getting down to Crowd Funding we can assume this method has been added to the Viral Marketing category based on its use on the internet and its success as well.

Crowd Funding has started to become more popular over the last few years, bringing new games and products onto the market every day with the power of bringing a community together to donate money towards a cause or a product they all believe in as a group. This has become a new type of viral marketing on its own based on the popularity and usefulness it has brought to the Indies development community. The purpose of this paper is to further help Indies studios understand more about what Viral Marketing is and how to effectively handle and utilize the different types to their advantage.

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More studios, specifically Indies studios today, need to realize how to effectively plan for and utilize Viral Marketing with the lowest possible chance of failures and negative feedback. It is far too often today that game studios are struggling with funding either on an entirety level or just a marketing level, this affects both AAA studios and Indies studios alike, but usually an Indies studio has a lot more struggles. When speaking about funding we look at funding in two different aspects.

One aspect would be funding for the development of a product or project. The second aspect is how much the company has to spend on solely marketing the upcoming product or project. When studying viral marketing it seems to be a simple and straight-forward set of ideas, but when trying to implement this into already functioning companies it can also become a hassle as well. Funding, planning, and marketing strategies are always subject to change when bringing forward a new plan of action, especially on a company level.

There has to be a set of steps or even a sort of history log of successes and failures that game studios use towards making an effort at successful viral marketing, if they plan on utilizing this effectively. This paper recommends several steps to implement, so as to make utilizing viral marketing ideas easily recreated. Not only does viral marketing save time, but it also saves studios and companies large budgets that could be used in other places that need it, like the pre-production and development stages of planning.

Spreading this knowledge can have many significant results, both positive and even quite possibly negative. Significant beneficial effects



from the utilization of viral marketing are cited in higher frequency over the past decade, especially for those in the Indies development world. The most important positive effects such as widespread notification, close to free advertising, and time saving methods have taken a lead in reasons why viral marketing has become so important today.

Widespread notification emphasizes how much coverage the products or services using viral tools have gotten. An example of little to no advertising other than word-of-mouth by its player base. Its developer created a simple game with a great idea; this alone started attracting small groups of people, who in return spread word about it. Over a matter of months, it became one of the most popular Indies games in the world, even when it was still in a developmental and beta stage. This also shows how much viral marketing can save or spare a company.

Mooring spent close to nothing advertising the game, which then allowed them to purposeful use of all funds towards the development of the game. All of this in detail shows the significance of viral marketing, and the extreme power it can have over games, or even the studios, fate. There are several other examples that can show the highly beneficial impressions viral marketing can have on the gaming industry. Methodology Viral marketing as a method has effects as stated before, which are not limited to, but contain, saving money, saving time, and possible widespread quick notification.

When using this method all of these can occur at once or even the same time on multiple levels. The research in this paper about viral marketing is clearly about how Indies studios should take full advantage of these tools.

When this approach is taken and used to its fullest potential and used properly, the advantages can be profitable and beneficial to the studio. Why would studios or companies ignore this useful, close to almost free and fast method? It is because they are not knowledgeable about the subject matter to some extent.

They are game developers, not marketing experts; this has to be changed. Taking this approach and making sure everyone on the team is aware and completely on track of what benefits viral marketing can bring, this in return can possibly create a snowball effect as to where companies will eventually be heading to make viral marketing a standard and a must. Indies studios today have perhaps the greatest of innovative and upcoming minds in the industry. With this focus on Indies companies it will make sure that the most influential of studios or companies today are made aware as fast as possible.

When doing research on this subject I am going to be conducting several case studies to provide more background and information about the subject. By doing this, this paper will look at several different cases in which the strategy of viral marketing has either failed, succeeded or had little or no effect. By using the information gathered, a carefully put together study can be used as a sort of example set, on what to do and what not to do when taking on a viral marketing strategy. As well as looking at statistical information gathered from the leading crowd funding websites, such as Streakier and Indigo.

Now that the method behind Viral Marketing itself has been explained in-depth, the methodology behind this paper can be assessed for reference and

possible future use. This research is being conducted through the use of referencing and gathering specific information gathered from sources such as websites and there literary information otherwise noted in the paper itself. The information and statistical data presented was gathered through a strict process of limiting all the used projects that have something to with information in the video game nice or even industry.

The type of method specifically used for this paper is the descriptive method of research. The descriptive method of research is defined by Crewel, (1994) by stating that “ the descriptive method of research is to gather information describe the situation at hand, at the time of the study to try and explain and make ensue of what statistical information that has been gained. The party conducting the research will collect data by hand from various sources, as aforementioned, then try and formulate the appropriate conclusions for the study.

Another type of methodology that will be used for the study would also be what is known as qualitative research. This is stated by Key (1997) as being “ investigative methodologies described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field, or participant observer research. It emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. The section below states Just a start of a “ guide” for those who are working in an Indies development field.

Literature Review The following literature review was conducted over a selection of fifteen articles discussing viral marketing as a whole idea and a plan. This article review covers everything from basic standards,

expectations, and effects. This Literature review section focuses on main aspect of Social Networking Sites, Guerilla, Word of Mouth, and Stealth marketing. The in-depth explanation and consideration of the crowd funding method will be explained in detail below the first three aspects of viral arresting, as this aspect is just now becoming accepted as a newly formed idea of viral marketing.

The main aspects of Viral Marketing Social Networking Sites According to Trusts, Baptist, ; Buckling. (2010) " social networking sites today are used by billions of people from all around the world" (p. 643-658). These websites enable people to communicate on a level that traditional means have never allowed before. According to Danish, Tomtit, Stupors, ; Stannic. (2010) " social sites such as Faceable or Namespace allow people to communicate not only through messaging, but through social games as well" (p. 78-282).

Social sites are well known for advertising other products based on what the user has used or looked at recently. This captures the actions of the user from what games the user has played, what videos they have watched, even to what advertisements they have clicked on. The advertisements that are picked for each user are always displayed somewhere on every page of the site. Social networking opens doors for studios to set up fan pages, mint-games, or even discussion boards. Most, if not all, of this is completely free to utilize and customize the way the studio pleases.

As well as having the ease of advertising social networking sites gives studio exposure to every user on the site, in which most cases can be upwards of up to billions of people. One example of this is from author Dave Kern, he

states in one of his books that he had been waiting for quite some time for check-in at a hotel on Las Vegas, when he tweeted about this bad experience a competitor's hotel tweeted back apologizing and wishing him a better vacation. This one tweet apologizing to Dave got them another customer next time he visited Las Vegas. As stated by Kern. (2011) "The hotel used social media to listen and to be responsive, showing a little empathy to the right person at the right time [earning them another customer]" (p. 1). Using this tool properly can have the chance of literally making the game or studio itself famous over a very short period of time. Word of Mouth difference in the world. According to Gooding. (2000) "The future belongs to marketers who establish a foundation and process where interested people can market to each other." (p. 6). This is probably one of the strongest methods, mainly because this is associated with every type of viral marketing.

No matter what, word-of-mouth always appears somewhere within a marketing campaign. This method is a way for consumers to easily pass on information to friends, family members, and peers. According to Rosen. (2002) "Most of today's marketing still focuses on how to use advertising and other tools to influence each customer individually, ignoring the fact that purchasing is part of a social process" (p. 6). Word of mouth is a great way of spreading information about a product or service because when people hear about something from someone they know they are more likely to try it out.

This is due to the fact that their peer has had firsthand experience with the item and has recommended it verbally. Word-of-mouth is a very strong marketing tool for your consumers to use, mainly based on the trust and

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need to try factors entailed with face to face recommendations from a peer. According to Yang & Chou. (2011) “ by utilizing word-of-mouth a company would normally start by exposing a small group of people to a new product or service and let the marketing take its course” (p. 85-98).

This also relies on whether or not the marketer stops and gives total control to nonusers, any interference from the marketers and it could be seen as a bad thing. Once a product or service has been spread by word-of-mouth the introduction of a big company can sometimes kill the buzz and kill the wonderment of the entire campaign. An example of this would be when Five Gum started its Mission Chiefly campaign, it lasted a very long time and generated a lot of buzz around the net, yet once consumers found out that five gum was behind it, the buzz died down, and very quickly, resulting in negative effects (Evans 2011).

This just proves that as fast as word-of-mouth can spread, it can also die off. This marketing technique is the most common way to spread information about a studio's game, especially if consumers are excited for the release of the product. This occurs with every technique or marketing strategy today, whether it was meant to happen or not. Stealth Marketing Stealth marketing campaigns are just as the name insists, they are marketing campaigns designed to be stealthy and under the radar of consumers. According to Katie & Katie. 2004) “ this means that a stealth campaign is designed to be seen as a small and simple advertisement that spreads slowly wrought word of mouth, rather than relying on a technique that throws everything out as soon as possible” (up-22). This is designed to make the consumer feel like the company is not jamming advertising down their throats or into their

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everyday lives. As time goes on in the advertising world, everything is getting over-saturated and over-used to the point to where people tend to try and stay away from companies that are constantly bombarding them with advertisements. Stated by Sullivan. 2003) “ Customers are not nitwits who need to be fooled or lectured or hammered into listening to a client’s sales message” (p. ). This is because they want the product they are buying to feel more exclusive and personal, rather than something that everyone, everywhere has. A more exclusive feeling product makes the consumer feel friends, families, and peers, as a way to sort of show off and have a “ look what I have” effect associated with the product. Stealth marketing would be rarely useful for gaming studios based on the fact that the companies usually want their product to be out there and fast.

To be optimized correctly the studio would have to be absolutely spot on when conducting a stealth marketing exercise or it could become nightmare trying to make up for lost assets used during a stealth marketing phase. As stated by Caldwell. (2000) “ Little changes can somehow have big effects” (p. 14) Crowd Funding: The Newest Viral Marketing Method Intro to Crowd Funding Crowd Funding is easily becoming one of the most important aspects of viral marketing today, though some may not recognize this form of marketing as “ viral” or even being an aspect of marketing.

Many have become more aware of and accepted this as a form of marketing enough to note it as a one of the most important marketing strategies today. Crowd Funding in short, is a collection of individuals with the same interests, ideas, or purpose, coming into a larger collection and community with the

intent of donating, or funding, specific amounts of money to another individuals project that they see worthy of the donation.

This collection of donations is then in return used to help the project owner(s) produce the service or good with ease. A much more detailed explanation of the Crowd Funding method is presented below. Crowd Funding Crowd Funding is a method of funding a variety of new ventures or social projects to quest funding from the public and several individuals, these individuals are then given promises or actual future products or benefits involving the project at hand.

Rules and regulations regarding the acceptance of funding in return for items aforementioned by the project owners are solely at the discretion of those which the company has chosen to go through utilizing the crowd funding process, such as Streakier or Indigo. This simply means that the business controlling and hosting the crowd funding project, again like Streakier, has their own set of rules and recesses regarding the promise of equity or products. Crowd funding projects can range in both goal and magnitude, varying from small personal projects to large projects seeking hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars for funding.

Despite having hundreds of millions of dollars invested through crowd funding, basic knowledge about the dynamics of crowd funding is almost non-existent, outside of the still uncommon analysis of particular crowd funding efforts. We still know close to nothing about what makes crowd funding efforts successful or the general distribution and use of crowd



funding mechanics. When talking about Crowd Funding, we will be looking at several different types within the crowd funding world.

These individual types of crowd funding include donations, sponsoring, pre-selling, lending, and equity. Crowd Funding donations are those types of funds given without expecting or receiving anything in return for the funds given. Sponsoring within crowd funding is just an agreement between the owner and the funded to give free PR or marketing, based on the promises of what is agreed between the two parties. Project create a specific product in which the donation, or backer, will be given a piece of hardware based on what has been advertised or otherwise agreed upon.

Lending in the case of crowd funding have the same aspects of normal lending, but could possibly be more disastrous based on the performance of the party given the money, this is because when people lend money, it works just like a loan from a bank, sometimes there are even interest rates, or just flat amounts agreed upon. This as well includes the original amount given in the first place. This type of crowd funding is not so prevalent in today's crowd funding methodology. The last form of crowd ending is a very widely used form called equity; this is widely used by a lot of crowd funding projects today.

This is basically giving the backer either part of the project itself such as special rights, notes, credits, or in some extremes, a part of the company. These types of promised equity forms are usually saved for those who back with large amounts, in most cases these amounts can range anywhere from \$1,000 to as much as \$25,000 or possibly more, based on the project's

needs. There are uncertainties about the long term implications or effects of crowd funding based on if the project's people deliver the products they have promised or not.

The chances of project success vary based on the founders of that specific project themselves, but are also affected by the quality of the introduction of the project, the amount of funding received, and most importantly, the amount of dedication the founders set upon the projects put forth. Founders of projects seem to make good efforts to fulfill their obligations set forth to founders, even though a majority of projects by crowd funding are delayed one way or another. Delays can easily be predicted by a few select items, based on the size of the project or funding, this includes over and under funding.

Over funding is a bigger problem than one may predict or foresee, for example, if a project is over funded a founder or the founding team may take it upon themselves to add more content or just add 'more project' to the standing project, this is done to just make the final product or outcome quality better. This together all suggest that further study or research into the intricate field of crowd funding would be a substantial and greatly informational step towards helping those companies such as Indies development teams create more and over all better quality projects and products.

Crowd funding can be used in many various ways, from promoting a personal project, a company project, and even be used in fund raising for charity. The inner workings of these sites as a user are very simple and easy to use. It is

as easy as signing up with an account to access the availability to promote, donate to, and even start your very own project. The main websites of these types vary from Streakier, Firstlings, to Crosswise. Streakier is a site where project founders try to get money for their own projects from founders, or backers.