

Mechanism – engineering viral marketing

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This posed a unique situation for Mechanism offering a couple of options. They could remain a niche creative shop that specialized in viral marketing where they had proven success; or they could transform into a full service ad agency with a closer relationship to advertisers, and be able to afford more opportunities to leverage content into television and other traditional media. At the time, Mechanism employees were dodging requests from clients for advertising content that was currently not a focus of the company. This put Harris and Cabana in a situation where immediate action needed to be taken.

Viral marketing offers a great bang for the buck for many products and services. It is very quickly becoming an effective and low-cost method of getting a message out to consumers. With the explosion of advertising and marketing on the internet over the last decade, viral marketing has become extremely popular because of its ability to leverage the collaborative nature of online communities. There are some clear properties that a viral campaign must have in order to become successful. The message must present clear value to the customer. A good example of this is Hotmail free email account offering included in every email sent.

This allowed Hotmail to instantly spread like wildfire since there was no cost and marketing was done automatically by the users. A viral campaign must also be easily permeable through the web. This means people must be able to send or 'Share' the content readily. The last property is that the ad must be easy to track. The number of times the ad is viewed, shared or passed over must be quantifiable. This is the only way to tell if the campaign is

successful or not Mechanism had an advantage in the marketing industry: they saw viral marketing as a viable source from an early stage.

By 2007, client companies that usually hired ad agencies to implement campaigns, found themselves splitting work between the ad agencies and small niche agencies to carry out the digital portion. This put Mechanism in a unique spot since they could offer large corporations the ability to consolidate all of the work into their company. Ian Civilian, Animism's creative director stated that, " It was unusual at the time to focus on digital media. So when the market shift happened, big ad agencies lagged behind and had to adapt".

As Mechanism began to take in business from big brands such as Pepsi, Nikkei, and Microsoft; they began to experience tremendous growth with 32% year-over-year growth from 2007-2010. At the time, products such as Tivoli allowed consumers to completely bypass TV ads which gave heavier weight to viral campaigns. Viral campaigns allowed small companies to reach millions of people for a fraction of the cost. However the problem with viral campaigns was that very few of them reached a large target audience. At the time, only 3% of videos on YouTube had over 25, 000 hits.

This is where Mechanism set itself apart from the curve. They guaranteed they could make a campaign for a client go viral, and they had the stats to prove it. They had 10 of the most viewed videos of the day on YouTube, an average of 3.5 million hits per campaign, and a total of over 350 million views for all of their campaigns. Mechanism believed they had to engage the consumer on a deeper level, and that an advertisement had to take on its

own value independent of the product advertised. They also believed that story telling builds brands, which happened to be working out great for them.

Mechanism used a lot of humor and consumer involvement in order to engage the consumer and make them actually interact with the brand being marketed. One of the major ways Mechanism was able to consistently reach such a large audience, was by understanding exactly who and what millennials were about. Millennials are the primary users of websites where viral marketing ads and campaigns are posted. Mechanism also had a three step proven strategy to use for every one of their ads. Their first step was to reach out to popular bloggers and high profile digital influencers for help in creating editorial buzz around a campaign.

This step alone accounted for 51% of the success during a viral campaign. The second step was to distribute content heavily on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. These sites allowed Mechanism to aggregate content for free, promote sharing and promote brand engagement. They also made use of traditional paid TV ads and other original tools for advertisement. Most of their campaigns made use of both online and offline activities. Two of the most important tools of Mechanism's plan was to " build and foster brand communities", and " working at the speed of social media by creating a constant dialogue with the consumer".

Mechanism saw that with the increase in use of social media as generations become more technically savvy, the value of online marketing campaigns increases dramatically. Mechanism made use of influencer networks when

Microsoft came to them to promote Windows Vista. In order to foster a younger image, they recruited online personalities such as Demeter Martin to promote Windows Vista. They made funny and quirky commercials involving him to reach a younger generation of consumers. Following this, Mechanism made its influencer network an integral part of their campaigns.

This strategy proved to work and they later defined the strategy as: identify, engage value exchange, distribute message, and optimize. These efforts allowed them to interact with influences in a personalized way and without imposing strict rules or guidelines in order to build long-term successful relationships with many key personalities. This allowed them to have a selling point for future customers and clients. Mechanism used their storytelling approach in many of their successful campaigns with large brands known worldwide.

They used a multifaceted social media distribution system that allowed them to churn out successful viral campaigns. The advertising market is moving to a more user-engaged, online virtual atmosphere; and Mechanism is in a great position to take advantage of it. According to Ben Stuart, senior UP of marketing at Charles Schwab, " They have set themselves up for the velocity and the complexity of the emerging media landscape'. Mechanism has put themselves in a very unique position in which they can take advantage of the large clients they have garnered by offering a total marketing package.