

## **Better Business Tips: Mastering Marketing Core to More: Converting Marketing Expenses Into Revenue**

By Mark Vega

Surf movies were arguably the first independently created modern entertainment product that enjoyed their own defined niche “core” audience. Consistent expectations, an appetite for product and loyalty within the core allowed the surf film subculture to thrive over the past fifteen years. The formula was simple: find a great wave and lose yourself in it, make sure good cameras are rolling, forget 90-minute conventions when 60 minutes will do, get musician friends to supply cut-rate licenses to top flight tracks, allow liner notes and cover art to be another canvas for self-expression, and give copies to your biggest fans and all surf shops. The model actually worked, and more often than not, filmmakers and sponsors got paid.

But the movies weren’t just entertainment. They were unintentional marketing manifestos. Mastering the sales concept of “core to more,” the pictures oozed a creative authenticity that screamed, “We’re making this for our friends!” Thus, true fans could always be counted on to buy a unit.

This purity of product creation has proven contagious to other consumers. In a few short years, these surf films lured non-surfers into the universe of Hamilton, Slater, Brown, Lopez, Machado and the Malloys. What these amazing surfers and storytellers created was “entertainment that was marketing.” Every picture a promotion for the sport, the lifestyle and for the brand that is the surfer himself. Brands outside the surf world have often tried to piggy back on that authenticity with no luck. (Remember the high end fashion brand in October 2002 putting a custom made/branded surf board under the arm of a super model on a catwalk?)

Today, we’re entering a time when creators and consumers alike are willing to acknowledge that the “marketing is the entertainment.” What that means is the creative elements in “advertising” today are more akin to those in motion picture, television, video game and Web content than print ads and one-note marketing campaigns of the past. What that means is that the marketing is starting to look and feel a lot more like entertainment. What that means is that marketing expenditures are more likely now than not to have the potential to generate a return. (This has driven marketing executives to drink like Mad Men since they’re used to spending all their budget, not budgeting projected revenue.)

Look what those independent-minded, authentic, wave enthusiasts have created - marketing and entertainment have merged. Executives overseeing one can’t do as well unless at some point they’ve overseen the other. They’ve also created a new challenge for themselves. They are making great content that screams for association with friendly brands. It’s not just product placement, it’s a shared DNA. That’s where we’re at today and that’s where you need to be thinking whether you’re a content creator or marketing executive. Your audiences, core or more, are overlapping. Pay attention to the overlap and embrace the fact that you’re making marketing that is as much content as the original surf movie content was really marketing.

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