

Why Can't We Be Friends? Why Can't We be Friends?

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It's funny - what's that you say? The notion of exploring what exactly makes the inner workings of a relationship. I often like to speak about this subject because it plays such a strong role in what we all do for a living - like it or not!

Let me first say that I love to explore human behavior. For me, it's the key to driving purchase. Getting a keen understanding of your intended audiences lifestyle and behavior, in my opinion, should dictate the tactical strategy of any successful marketing campaign. It provides us the opportunity to determine when to deliver a very positive and correct mode of experience when the audience will most be receptive to it. It allows us to open up the possibility for them to partake in what we are sending out into the ethos in a way that they choose.

But don't be fooled. We aren't in control of this media consumption equation. Our intended audiences now have the ability to consume media where and when they want - essentially on their terms. As marketers, all that we can do, is try to nail the opportunity and get them to want to participate in what we our offering.

The question then becomes how do we raise the our likeliness to succeed metric? How can we confidently walk into a client's office and say that this is it? While there are no certainties in life, but there are certainly great attempts and anemic ones - I'm sure you'll agree. So, how do we do this?

We do it by, first of all, quit referencing our intended audiences as targets and begin to try to form the bonds of friendship that will bring them to try our client's brand. Essentially, welcoming them into our community by building the bonds of friendship. See, here's the kicker. As humans we have one notion of what a relationship is. We apply this across the myriad of relationships that exist in our life. I know that I am an intense, sometimes reserved but always passionate person. This is reflected in the types of relationships that I have across the board.

If we begin to look at brands through the lens of friendship some interesting things begin to emerge. How do you select your friends? What do you look for in a friend? What allows you to keep a friend around for a lifetime? Are you beginning to smell what I am cooking?

Simply replace the word friend with brand. We like to surround ourselves with friends that we get along with, that share the same core values and that are around when we really need them. In essence, if we can deconstruct the core elements of friendship we can then understand how to strategically build the perfect brand.

Nobody likes to have friends surrounding them that aren't who they say they are - people that are posers and that simply hop on the latest trends are simply annoying. We/They want to surround ourselves with genuine, authentic people that we/they can connect with. We, as marketers, do the same things with brands. Granted, this is not a static thing. Our internal measuring stick continually moves based our own selfish needs. Therefore, this process of being the perfect friend or the perfect brand for someone is a very dynamic process and requires constant monitoring.

Let me give you a few examples to help further contextualize this. I am not a big fan of running seasonal efforts and then going dark. What happens when you begin to have communications with a friend and they simply disappear? You get upset, confused and go look for someone that is more reliable. Let's use a completely hypothetical example. Let's say Jackson Hewitt and H&R Block were vying for the right to do your taxes. If Jackson Hewitt was talking to you all year and then simply increased their frequency around tax time you'd be much more likely to go there as opposed to "Johnny come lately"; H&R Block which would only come around in a selfish manner when they simply want something from you - your money. How many of us like our selfish friends?

What would you do is you were dating someone for 6 months and then he/she disappeared completely? Then, showed back up 6 months later and acted like nothing had happened? You'd have moved on - correct?

Now, lets look at another common mistake that brands make - trying to make fast friends. UGH! How may of us like the person that shows up on the scene and then won't quit calling, e-mailing and texting us? We generally run in the other direction.

What do we think of our friends that chase trends in an attempt to be cool? We think that they need to find out who they truly are and that they should really quit trying to impress everybody. We usually feel that we could be much better friends with them if they had a better sense of self and felt more genuine and authentic. That would allow us to have a more "real" relationship with them.

Well...The good news is that you can be friends - great friends! There are simply no short-cuts or tricks to brand success just like their are no short-cuts or tricks to eternal friendships. In the end, if we do this correctly, our clients are their best friends because we are constantly evaluating and monitoring their needs and meeting their

needs. We will be the best friends EVER, and they will always want our client's brands around!

Whew..sorry..got a little carried away…:)