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# Explore Guerrilla Marketing Potentials for Trade Show

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EXPLORE GUERRILLA MARKETING POTENTIALS FOR TRADESHOW

by

Jie Chen

Bachelor of English  
Beijing Normal University, Zhuhai Campus  
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**Department of Hotel Administration**

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**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
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Abstract

**Explore Guerrilla Marketing Potentials for Trade Show**

by

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This is an exploratory research paper trying to identify effective guerrilla marketing practices in solving tradeshow marketing challenges. Major problems faced by trade show marketers are analyzed in the beginning: limited marketing budget, ineffective marketing tools and dissatisfaction from exhibitors. The study introduced guerrilla marketing methods by both exploring the theory and identifying successful cases. At the end, specific guerrilla marketing guidelines were built for tradeshow marketers.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Marketing has always been a challenge to tradeshow organizers. One of the most common problems faced by tradeshow organizer is the limited budget, especially since the economy downturn. Compared to 2008, in a survey done by Bartizen Concepts, show organizers complain that exhibition net square footage dropped 8.1%, attendance decreased by 8.7% and exhibition went down around 10.1% (Tradeshow Organizer's Survival Guide, 2009). The situation left the tradeshow organizer nearly no profit. Most tradeshow organizers were forced to cut down marketing spending. Moreover, the marketing tools used by the tradeshow organizers are out-dated. According to Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) 2009 report, nearly 95% of the tradeshow organizers used email as their primary marketing tool (CEIR, 2009). However, according to Direct Marketing Association (DMA), the average open rate of marketing emails is around 20 percent, a click-through rate is 6.64 percent and a conversation rate is 1.73 percent (DMA survey, 2010). On the other side, the exhibitors feel a growing dissatisfaction with the tradeshow. Compared to other new marketing tools which were invented to replace face-to-face meetings, such as online presentation, tradeshow cost exhibitors much more spending in labour and capitals. To sum up, the challenge faced by tradeshow organizers is to increase the value for exhibitors using creative marketing tools with limited budget.

This exploratory paper examines the elements of guerrilla marketing that may cope with the challenges of tradeshow marketing. Firstly, the theory of guerrilla marketing will be discussed. The paper will study guerrilla marketing extensively in different aspects, such as guerrilla marketing history, guerrilla marketing planning and so on. The importance of creativity in guerrilla marketing will be the highlighted. Moreover, it will also discuss the relationship

between guerrilla marketing and brand equity. Secondly, a series of successful guerrilla marketing cases will be identified. The cases are from not only tradeshow industry but also other business sector, such as tourism and so on. With each case, a successful guerrilla marketing tool or model which may apply in tradeshow industry will be summarized. In addition, a series of viral marketing cases which is online guerrilla marketing will be introduced. In the end, guerrilla marketing guideline specifically for tradeshow organizer in pre-show marketing, on-site marketing and post-show marketing would be developed.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate guerrilla marketing potentials for tradeshow organizers. There have been few academic researches introducing specific guerrilla marketing tools for tradeshow organizers. The study seeks to start the process of building a special guerrilla marketing guideline which would provide solutions for tradeshow organizers.

By the end of the study, tradeshow marketers will have a marketing guideline about how to apply guerrilla marketing tools to solving marketing problems and building effective marketing plans in promoting tradeshow. Also, more information about the current tradeshow marketing practices would be available. The trends of the current tradeshow marketing will be developed in the end of the paper.

### Justification

Tradeshow marketing has always been a major problem for tradeshow organizers. Most of the marketing strategies tradeshow organizers used are out-dated and low-efficiency. By introducing guerrilla marketing to tradeshow marketers, they would have more alternatives in dealing with the tradeshow marketing challenges.

## Constraints

Although guerrilla marketing has been invented in 1980s, however it hasn't been practiced very often in tradeshow industry. Consequently, the paper needed to summarize the useful marketing tools and models from other business sectors' successful guerrilla marketing cases.

### Glossary

#### *Tradeshow*

Kirchgeorg (2005) defines tradeshow in *Tradeshow Management* as temporary market events held at intervals at specific places (halls/outdoors area) with a large number of sellers (exhibitors) and buyers (attendees) who interact for the purpose of selling or buying the products or services on display either during the tradeshow or a future day (p. 38). Tradeshows are considered as the mirrors of certain industries, the forums of establishing and cultivating business relationship. Arnold (2002) further defines tradeshow as a show that is open only to qualified members of a specific industry (p. 9). For example, World Tea Expo (WTE) which is a medium size tradeshow is only open to tea industry. All the attendees need to provide certain evidence such as federal tax id during registration.

Tradeshow can be further divided into horizontal show and vertical show. Arnold (2002) divide tradeshow into two categories. Horizontal show is defined as a show with a broad range of audience; vertical show is a show with a particular niche market. However, both types of tradeshow are industry focused, the later one has a higher audience quality. For example, Fancy Food Show which was launched in 1955 has been North America's largest specialty food and beverage marketplace. It is a horizontal show in food industry. However, Coffee Fest which was

launched in 1992 has only opened to coffee professionals. It is a vertical show with a particular market focus.

#### *Exhibitor Service Manual (ESM)*

Golden-Romero (2007) defines Exhibitor Service Manual (ESM) as a manual or a kit developed by the service contractor for an event, containing general event information, labor/service order forms, rules and regulations, and other information pertinent to an exhibitor's participation in an exhibition (p. 255). Most of the time, the service contractor will develop the ESM together with the tradeshow organizers to make the ESM more practical to different tradeshow.

#### *Viral Marketing*

Viral marketing is similar to online guerrilla marketing; it is a new marketing trend. Basically, viral marketing is using internet-based technologies to create a buzz of excitement around a new brand or service (Lindsay, 2005). Scott (2008) defines viral marketing as a simple version online to say something interesting and valuable and to make it easy to find and share (p. 29).

The earliest viral marketing term can be found in 1989, it was about the adoption of Macintosh SEs (MAC) versus Compaqs, when MAC spread out like virus. However, at that time, no internet activities were involved in the marketing campaign. Until mid 1990s, digital media started coming into its own, Hotmail users went from 0 to 12 million within 18 months. Viral marketing campaigns started to hold online. At that time, the noticeable early adopters of viral marketing included Budweiser and John West Salmon. Both of them switched their marketing campaigns using funny commercial videos from TV to internet. However, due to the online technology at that time, it did not achieve significant viral spread.

Until early 2000s, with the development of online technology, viral marketing started to be picked up by the marketers. Initially, viral marketing was used as a standalone marketing tactic focusing on creative material which could be a photographed image, online game, digital video clip or even text (Kirby & Marsden, 2006). Since then, viral marketing develops into various ways. With the development of broadband technology, people started to enjoy richer online content. Viral marketing material started to evolve with more and more entertainment content. More and more brands realized that in order to achieve their objectives they must plan a larger budget viral marketing. For example, Toyota committed a US\$10 million investment to viral marketing.

### *Social Media*

Evans (2008) defines social media as the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into content publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted conversations between authors, people and peers. Social media use the wisdom of crowds to connect information in a collaborative manner. Social media can take many different forms, including internet forums, message boards, weblogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and videos. Social media is also one of the most powerful marketing tools for guerrilla marketing (Levinson, 2007).

### *Microsite*

Jones (2008) defines microsite as a smaller, self-contained Website that can stand on its own or be part of a larger website. Microsites are an effective way to launch a promotion, highlight a product, or drive response to a special offer (p. 118). Microsite often brings fresh image to the parent website.

### *Niche Marketing*

Target marketing, focused marketing, concentrated marketing, and micromarketing are all used as synonyms for niche marketing. Dalgic (2006) further defines niche marketing as a method to meet customer needs through tailoring goods and services for small markets (p.5). Tradeshow marketing is similar to niche marketing because of the characteristics of tradeshow. Most of tradeshow specialized in one certain industry. It has a comparatively small market because it focuses on marketing to the business owners. Some of the tradeshow even has a further focus in certain industry segment. For example, Project Show which launched in 2003 in both Las Vegas and New York is specialized in innovative brands.

#### *Return on Income (ROI)*

According to Schmidgall (2006), ROI is a ratio providing a general indicator of the profitability of a hospitality operation by comparing net income to total investment (p. 247). In tradeshow industry, the most used ROI is exhibiting ROI. According to Marlys K. Arnold (2002), exhibiting ROI means calculating how much business generated compared to the amount of money spent on exhibits. It is important indicator of tradeshow. Usually, high exhibiting ROI means the tradeshow is successful.

#### *Product Life Cycle*

Product life cycles is typically divided into four stages, in introduction, sales grow slowly as the product enters the market; profits are nonexistent due to the heavy expenses of introduction. Growth is a period of rapid market acceptance and substantial profit improvement. In maturity, sales growth slows because the product has achieved acceptance by most potential buyers, and profits stabilize or decline due to higher competition. In decline, sales drift downward and profits erode (Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 205-206). Traditional marketing follows

product life cycle in promotion production. It heavily promotes product in the first period of product life cycle, and slows down as the product made into the maturity period.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### *A Brief History of Guerrilla Marketing*

Every year, millions of money was wasted in marketing, most of those messages either misunderstood by the consumers, or targeted to the wrong audience. Marketing is expensive back in 1980s. Compared to the giant corporations, the small business owners do not have enough money to waste in the ineffective marketing campaigns. They want to use the limited budgets to the right targets. Rather than shouting vague messages to vague audiences, marketers are whispering just the right word in just the right ears, evoking the exact response they desire (Levinson, 1999, p. 10). Guerrilla marketing was born due to the needs of the small business marketers. In 1984, a book named *Guerrilla Marketing: Secrets for Making Big Profits from Your Small Business* by Jay Conrad Levinson set the stage for Guerrilla Marketing in history. Since 1984, Jay Levinson has written more than 30 books about guerrilla marketing. His books appear in 62 languages and are required readings for MBA courses worldwide. Jay Levinson now has been often referred as father of guerrilla marketing. However, back in 1984, even the author did not predict that the concept of guerrilla marketing from the book would completely change the way of marketing. For the first time, the small business could garner as much attention from the consumers as the giant corporation because of guerrilla marketing. Those different, personal, or even weird advertisements in 80s pioneered a marketing revolution for the next century.

In 1990s, guerrilla marketing had entered the mainstream. More and more major corporations started to adopt guerrilla marketing theory in their marketing campaigns. Even the consumers started to notice the difference in the corporations' marketing strategies. For example,

the TV commercials' focuses started to switch from promoting the products to pleasing the audience. The 30-seconds TV commercial used to spending the whole 30 seconds selling products, now they only used the last 3 seconds to present the product and the first 27 seconds to make audience laugh. However, guerrilla marketing can be extremely risky for the well-known business. If their marketing campaigns turn out to be too edgy, not clear and clever enough to pass the messages, the consumers will grow resistance feelings toward the products or service. For instance, in 2002, in order to advertise Microsoft's new MSN 8 Internet service, Microsoft unleashed thousands of colourful butterflies' stickers in Manhattan. The campaign received lots of critics. The residents of Manhattan were angry because the butterflies ruined the city view. Microsoft was ordered by New York City officials to clean up the butterflies and paid fine for corporate graffiti.

With the development of Internet technology in early 2000s, online guerrilla marketing tends to be the new marketing trend. The online guerrilla marketing is also called viral marketing which is cost-effective and time-efficient due to the features of Internet communication. It bases on the fact that the marketing campaigns are so interesting that the prospects pass on the messages to the other prospects by their own intention via Internet. More details about viral marketing will be shared later in this chapter.

#### *What is guerrilla marketing?*

Guerrilla marketing is achieving conventional goals, such as profits and joy, with unconventional methods, such as investing energy instead of money (Kaden, 2007). Prévot (2006) defined guerrilla marketing as means to gain maximum exposure through minimal cost to the company. Most importantly, as the father of guerrilla marketing, Jay Levinson defined it as unconventional marketing intended to get maximum results from minimal resources (Levinson,

2000). Guerrilla marketing is more about matching marketers' creativity than matching marketing budgets. Guerrilla marketing can be as different from traditional marketing as guerrilla warfare is from traditional warfare. Rather than marching their marketing dollars forth like infantry divisions, guerrilla marketers snipe away with their marketing resources for maximum impact (Cohen, 2000).

Compared to traditional marketing, guerrilla marketing has different focuses in terms of marketing theory. Firstly, guerrilla marketing believes that marketing plan should be part of business plan. The traditional marketing theory finds product life cycle as the guideline of marketing planning. The product life cycle typically covers four stages including introduction, growth, maturity, and decline; each stage calls for different marketing strategies (Kotler & Keller, 2009). However, the product life cycle is not necessary the business life cycle. Guerrilla marketing planning focuses on the growth of the business, highlighting the business' competition advantages. According to Levinson (1999), marketing plan may mention all the business benefits, but it concentrates on the big guns, the guns lacking from the major competitors' arsenals. Furthermore, the goal of guerrilla marketing plan is making profits by making the product or service interesting. Guerrilla marketing uses profits as the only yardstick for measuring its performance; it based on psychology-laws of human behaviour-more than on marketers' own guesswork and judgment (Levinson, 1999). Rather than traditional marketing which heavily focus in explaining product functions, guerrilla marketing presents marketing campaign as an exploration journey of product followed by the rules of customer behaviour. It brings in imagination, energy into the product with a consumer point of view. Secondly, guerrilla marketing uses different marketing weapons. Guerrilla marketers believe the most powerful weapon comes from the business itself. According to Levinson (1999), a mandatory weapon for

guerrilla marketers is the business's competitive advantages. The competitive advantage is the unique identity of every business; it is the key to set the business apart from the competition. Moreover, the additional mandatory weapon for guerrilla marketers is the power of information. In this information driven society, guerrilla marketers also believe in sharing knowledge with customers. Guerrilla marketers also believe that business grows with the competitors as long as the industry grows by the product knowledge of customers. Levinson (1999) points out that the more generosity the company shows to public, the better likelihood they'll see it reflected in its growing profitability. Thirdly, guerrilla marketers import their attitude in their every marketing act. The attitude of a guerrilla marketer is dramatically different from that of a non-guerrilla marketer, which is why customers feel the difference (Levinson, 1999). Successful businesses stand out the competition by showing their attitude to consumers. However, attitude alone may not bring success to the business, but it certainly sets the business apart from the competitors. It is important that the attitude of the business should be unique and consist to its competitive advantage. In addition, the consistency of attitude should be in every marketing detail, from splendid national TV commercials to every piece of direct mail. Levinson (1999) points out that the attitude of business must come shining through in all marketing materials. It needs to come across by what the marketers say, how they say it, where they say it and how frequently they say it.

In conclusion, guerrilla marketers have the insight that to master guerrilla marketing is to take action. The first step to take action is to separate the illusion from reality by applying the business knowledge. A master guerrilla marketer should be the master of the market situation.

The marketers should have answers to the following questions:

1. What are the core competencies and the core value?

2. Who are the competitors and what are their core competencies and core value?
3. Who are the partners?
4. What is the short-term goal and long-term goal?

With the answers, the marketers start the marketing by putting the goals in the planning, choosing weapons to execute the plan, and importing the attitude in every marketing act. Action also means immediately move. Levinson (1999) mentioned that “If there’s a correct time to start, it’s right now. If there’s a proper place, it’s right where you are. You’ll never feel that you are completely ready, so you may as well begin right now (p. 238).” The other best quality of guerrilla marketing masters is that they are not afraid of failures. They rather take failures than wasting time in making action.

#### *Guerrilla Creativity*

Although the word guerrilla marketing was coined in 1984, it has already entered the popular vocabulary and marketing textbooks. It has adopted not only by small business but also well-known business all over the world. One of the most important secrets of the popularity of guerrilla marketing is guerrilla creativity. The creativity is the reason that the guerrilla marketing goes viral.

Levinson (2001) defined creativity as the combining of two or more elements from business – with imagination as well as technical skills – that have never before been combined. He (2001) further defined guerrilla creativity as causing human beings to change their minds to the point where they want to purchase what marketers are offering to sell. Guerrilla marketing shared the same marketing channels as traditional marketing; the difference is the way of creating and delivering messages. Guerrilla marketing has a focus in the creativity of the message; it encourages the marketers to bring the imagination and passion to promoting products

and service. However, guerrilla marketing doesn't support in making a marketing campaign out the air, or creating the most absurd message ever. Levinson (2001) pointed out that the birthplace of guerrilla creativity is the knowledge of the marketers. The more knowledge the marketers have, the more likely to succeed at the purpose of guerrilla marketing. Levinson (1999) also pointed out that marketers should begin guerrilla marketing campaign with thorough business research, the more concrete the research, the more sensible the marketing campaign. Doing the research and having comprehensive knowledge are the first step of producing creative guerrilla marketing campaign. In addition, the marketers should understand what their offerings can actually lead to the customers' purchasing decisions. One of the myths about marketing is that some marketers believe that if people like the marketing, they'll want to buy the product or service. However, the prospects may love the marketing but not necessarily want to spend the money. The product and the service must mean something more to the prospects besides being interesting. An effective guerrilla message should bring the useful points out of creative marketing campaign. According to Levinson (2001), it's pretty easy to generate awareness from the customers, but that's not nearly enough to sell the products or service. The difference between creative marketing and creative guerrilla marketing is that the later one always having customers needs as the source of inspiration. As Levinson (2001) stated that guerrilla creativity isn't something the marketers do. Instead, it's something that prospects get. The marketers should take the mind off themselves, and direct it to the prospects.

Guerrilla creativity can be furthered refer as the attitude of guerrilla marketing. It can be both enduring and flexible. It is the consistent identity of the guerrilla marketing. The other myth about marketing is that it should change frequently. Levinson (2001) explained in *Guerrilla Creativity* that some marketers did not gain instant results from their first efforts at marketing is

the reason that they believe frequent changes might help sell more products. However, the guerrilla marketers believe that even the marketing campaign needed to be changed; it can be changed with the headlines and copies but not guerrilla creativity. Guerrilla creativity should be consistent in all the marketing communications. The real challenge of guerrilla marketing is demonstrating guerrilla creativity in a way that people can remember. The idea should be consistent but the way of demonstrated it should be full of imagination and energy.

### *Guerrilla Marketing and Brand Equity*

"If executed properly, a guerrilla campaign can be a low-cost, high-impact way to connect with prospects, introduce your name, or remind customers you are still here" (Hatch 2005, p. 53). In another word, if guerrilla marketing was executed improperly, crossing the ethical, legal, and societal boundaries, it would also bring damaging effects to the brand.

Before further discussing the relationship between guerrilla marketing and brand equity, it is important to have a clear definition on brand equity first. Passikoff (2006) defined brand equity as the status or strength of the brand and its ability to meet and exceed the expectations consumers use to define the Category Ideal. In a word, brand equity is derived from the words and the actions of the customers (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). It is the establishment of brand preferences by the consumers. The consumers will make the purchasing decision based on their brand preference developed by their knowledge of brand equity.

The relationship between guerrilla marketing and brand equity can be divided into three categories. First of all, guerrilla marketing strategies can have a net positive effect on brand equity. Guerrilla marketing is first defined and then described through successful campaigns that helped organizations find new ways to access prospects, interact with audiences, impact a spot market, create buzz, and build strong relationships (Zou & Veil, 2007). Through the enjoyable

experience created by guerrilla marketing campaign, customers will transfer the good impression from the marketing communications toward brand equity. It would help the customers to develop their brand preferences. Secondly, guerrilla marketing can also bring neutral effects to brand equity. Compared to traditional marketing strategies, guerrilla marketing carries more risks regarding passing messages to the prospects. With the element of creative and different, sometimes customers may not be aware that they are being marketed to. Moreover, since some guerrilla marketing strategies depend on publicity, should the local and national media not report on the story, there will be no effect on the company's brand equity (Prevot, 2007). Last but not the least, guerrilla marketing can cause negative effects on brand equity. There is always a potential for backlash as part of any marketing campaign, especially for guerrilla marketing since it mostly depends on the element of surprise. Despite the no-holds-barred classification of guerrilla marketing, there are ethical, legal, and societal boundaries that must be maintained (Zou & Veil 2007). If the marketing campaign bring dangers and inconvenience to public, consumers will have negative association with the brand equity.

In summary, being built on the element of surprise, guerrilla marketing tactics can often be praised for their originality, or blamed for being a nuisance, or a danger to local communities (Prevot, 2007). No matter how creative guerrilla marketing can be, it is important for marketers to maintain the marketing plan without crossing the lines.

#### *Guerrilla Marketing Cases from General Business Sectors*

Since been 1984, guerrilla marketing has been practiced widely in the business world. From studying guerrilla marketing cases outside the tradeshow industry, more valuable experiences can be learned. The experience can be further developed and applied to the tradeshow industry.

In mid 2002, Sony Ericsson Mobile Communication launched a guerrilla marketing campaign to promote their new mobile device which combined the functions of cell phone as well as digital camera. The marketing team hired actors and actresses acting as tourists to ask the real tourists taking photos for them using the new mobile device in popular tourists spot such as Seattle Space Needle. The marketing team also hired a secret filming team to capture the reaction of the real tourists when they find the new product to be attractive and interesting after helping the actors taking pictures. Later, the marketing team of Sony Ericsson made the TV commercials and public relation materials using the selected video shots. This guerrilla marketing campaign aimed to reach customers without them knowing it. Unlike typical marketing element model, the idea of conscious surprise is not present, as consumers are not aware that they are being marketed to, therefore, their reactions can show a more pure effect on how they perceive the brand minus the marketing to be (Prevot, 2007). Sony Ericsson's 2002 mobile guerrilla marketing campaign tried to surprise customers by the product itself. The marketers believe that the natural reaction of the customers can be more appealing. In addition, Sony Ericsson reduced the cost of media production by using those video shots from the real tourists. Similarly, in 2003, Pepsi-Cola bottled water brand Aquafina hold its "Aquafina Pure Luck" campaign in major cities of US. The marketers team in blimps would spot people on the street with Aquafina products, radio a spotter team on the ground and the person spotted would receive a prize. This guerrilla marketing tactic allowed the brand to connect with consumers up-close and personal and with an element of surprise. Attendees at tradeshow often complained that most of tradeshow are easily predictable. Tradeshow organizers can use this guerrilla marketing tactic to surprise the attendees by doing spontaneous promotion at the show. As mentioned above, the tradeshow itself is the

best tool for tradeshow organizers to market themselves. This guerrilla tactic allows tradeshow organizers to market themselves by creating delightful surprises for attendees and exhibitors.

As mentioned above, guerrilla marketing strategies can have a net positive effect on brand equity in the minds of consumers through positive experience by positive association, the consumer's goodwill towards an event, a situation or a specific person. To create positive experience for attendees is another tactic of guerrilla marketing. In 2003, the online bank ING Direct initiated a guerrilla marketing campaign called "New Orange" in Washington DC, San Francisco and New York to promote their new online banking solutions by giving away free rides around metro area. The marketing team also placed ads in the buses and metro subway cars. The team members dressed up as "orange ambassadors" and leafleted the passengers with promotional materials. The marketing team tried to let the customers feel like they can get favourable banking solutions from ING Direct by letting them get free rides first. Moreover, they also want to create a public image that ING Direct is everywhere for everyone. The goal of the campaign was to let the potential customers have positive association of ING Direct by creating positive experience. In addition, the marketing campaign also generated extensive media coverage from TV, radio, newspaper, and online media. Creating positive experiences for customers is another great solution for tradeshow organizers. It is difficult to generate positive association with the tradeshow by only over talking the event. There are many ways for tradeshow organizers to create real experience to the customers. For example, the tradeshow organizers can initiate the discussion on the major social media sites by inviting the past attendees to share their experience. Study has shown that satisfied members are valuable advocates and promoters for the conference (Leach & Liu & Winsor, 2008). By the information shared by past attendees, it created unique experience for potential attendees.

However, there is always a potential for backlash as part of any marketing campaign, especially this holds true to guerrilla marketing since its element of being unconventional. As mentioned above if a guerilla marketing campaign endanger, or in any way, inconvenience potential customers, then the net effect on brand equity will be negative. In 2007, in order to promote the late night cartoon show Aqua Teen Hunger Force, marketing partner of Turner Broadcasting System installed LED displays depicting the Mooninites (cartoon characters in Aqua Teen Hunger Force) in ten different cities, including Boston. Most of the LED displays were installed in private properties without permission. Within a few days of the campaign, the Boston authorities considered the LEDs suspicious prompting the closure of major roads and waterways for investigation. However, it was found out to be only a marketing ploy. The accident caused inconvenience for thousands of citizens in Boston. The Turner Broadcasting System later paid the Boston Police Department one million dollars to cover the investigation's cost and an additional million for good will. Moreover, the general manger of the cartoon network stepped down because of the incident. Guerrilla marketing is innovative compared to traditional marketing. However, no matter how different and creative marketing campaign could be, it is important to keep it within the boundary of laws and ethics. If the customers feel that the marketing efforts are only trying to bring attention without taking social responsibilities, they will have negative association with the brand.

#### *New Trend of Guerrilla Marketing*

Viral marketing is the new trend of guerrilla marketing. Early in 2003, Levinson had already included Viral marketing as one of the most powerful guerrilla marketing weapons. Levinson (2003) pointed out that viral marketing captures the essences of multi-level marketing and applies it to all customers, it's more powerful than many other techniques that lack the

implied endorsement from a friend. The idea of viral marketing relies on giving audience information which is so much fun or so interesting that users feel compelled to pass on the messages by their own intention. Viral marketing uses resources far beyond the marketer's own organization to spread the message very rapidly, much as a virus spreads through close physical contact (Levinson & Horowitz, 2010). With the advent of the Internet and mobile phone technologies, it has become possible to spread messages on a massive scale through e-mail, instant messaging and text messages. The development of technology allows viral marketing reach an unprecedented amount of consumer participation.

One of the earliest viral marketing campaigns is Hotmail. In 1997, Hotmail started to provide free email services. And at the bottom of every email sent out by its users was an invitation to the free email account to the users' contacts. This simple act allowed Hotmail to become the fastest growing subscription based services in world history, achieving an astonishing 12 million subscribers in its first year and half. About 150,000 new users signed up every day, and they gave the company significant demographic information about themselves. It allowed to Hotmail further develop its online advertising service. At that time, Juno was its nearest competitor in the free e-mail arena, only acquired about a third user as Hotmail. And by its 12 million members, Juno already spent \$20 million in marketing. By contrast, Hotmail only invested \$500,000. According to CEIR (2009), 95% of exhibition trade show organizers use e-mail as their primary marketing tool. At the same time, according to the survey conducted by Bartizen Concepts (2008), the respondents were starting to feel a growing dissatisfaction with email: the sheer bulk of email that lands in any individual inbox is creating a noise level that is increasingly difficult to be heard above (Tradeshaw Organizer's Survival Guide, 2009). To avoid

being ignored by the customers, tradeshow organizers can invest more creativity to the email content, making the email marketing message more interesting and appealing.

One of the most ever-lasting viral marketing campaigns is launched by Burger King in 2004 called Subservient Chicken. It is a website based digital game. When the users go to the Subservient Chicken website, they will see a video window featuring someone dressed up in a chicken outfit in an ordinary sitting room with sofa and TV. Under the video window, there is a text entry window allows visitors input the comments for the chicken. For example, you can put watching TV and hit submit, and then the chicken will open the TV and start acting like enjoying the TV. The campaign was designed to promote a new chicken burger range and, based on the Burger King branding, to promote the message that the customer is in charge. The website attracted a million hits in the first 24 hours, and between 15 and 20 million in the first week (Lindsay, 2005). Because its popularity, Burger King still keeps the Subservient Chicken website running until now after the promotion periods ended. It has now become a permanent microsite of Burger King. Show websites have always been considered as an important marketing channel for tradeshow organizers. Research showed website development has been the number one technology investment by tradeshow organizers (Convention and Tradeshow Technology Investment Survey, 2010). Building a buzz-driven microsite can be a new marketing solution for tradeshow organizers.

The other successful case was “the best job in the world” campaign hosted by Australia Tourism Bureau. The campaign was carried in more than 60 countries through online networks including YouTube, Ning, Twitter, and Facebook. The original goal set by Australia Tourism Bureau was to receive 400,000 hits. However, it received a million hits the day after its website launch. The total applicants to the best job were over 34,000. The global publicity generated by

the campaign was worth over \$70 million. The “the best job in the world” campaign was set to create a newsworthy topic and sustain its mass coverage through free media reports and social networks discussion. Instead of putting events on the show floor, tradeshow organizers can consider creating online events as marketing campaigns to drive media attention as a pre-show marketing tool.

### *Tradeshow Marketing and Guerrilla Marketing*

The idea of tradeshow marketing is similar to niche marketing that focuses on certain group of people in certain industry. It requires tailoring goods and services for small markets. The most important customers of tradeshow are the exhibitors. The communication between tradeshow organizers and its exhibitors has been the key to the successful tradeshow marketing. However, according to *Trade Show Organizer Survival Guide* (2009), a comprehensive survey executed by Bartizan Concepts, if there would be one word to describe how tradeshow organizers approach marketing to their exhibitors, it would be traditional. Although marketing has changed dramatically with the development of economy and technology, the tradeshow organizers continue to market the shows they always do. Most of the time, the messages from the tradeshow organizers are unclear and inconsistent. For example, the most common complaints from exhibitors about tradeshow organizers are the confusion caused by the overloading marketing materials. The information in Exhibitor Service Manual (ESM) is considered redundant for years in the industry. Some ESM has more than 450 pages to download and view. Even one of the concise ESMs used by Consumer Electronics Show (CES) has more than 160 pages. According to the survey conducted by IAEE, exhibitors believe that 90% of ESM are useless (*Tradeshow Organizer’s Survival Guide*, 2009). The exhibitors often turn to tradeshow organizers instead of the service contractors when they have questions about the EMS. However,

because the ESMs are written by the exhibition contractors, even most of the tradeshow organizers can't remember the lengthy content.

Guerrilla marketing is all about creating clear and consistent message in an untraditional way for marketing promotion. The theory happens to be the treatments of tradeshow marketing's symptoms. Although guerrilla marketing hasn't been applied in a wide range of tradeshow industry, there are still some early adopters. Derse Inc is one of them. In order to deliver marketing messages differently than the traditional tradeshow marketing, Derse, Inc which is a marketing agency specialize in the tradeshow industry overturned several tradeshow marketing conventions in 2010 at the annual EXHIBITOR tradeshow by applying guerrilla marketing theory. Firstly, Derse launched a mircosite named Challenge Convention, inviting the visitors to share their concerns about tradeshow marketing. The visitors can submit a convention they would like to see challenged by Derse. By building the website, Derse tried to break the first convention in the tradeshow industry, which is business-to-business marketing too serious for social media. The website was a gateway to the topic-related social media pages including Facebook, YouTube videos, Twitter feeds, and blogs. Derse tried their best to answer the visitors' messages. Derse also recorded the process of how they break the tradeshow marketing convention and keep posting on the mircosite as well as in the social media. They considered the key to host successful social media campaign is to keep the interaction and take the promise seriously. Within two weeks, the website had already received more than 100 proposals and thousands of hits. Secondly, most of tradeshow organizers believe that direct mails are overtime. The most common direct mails tradeshow organizers sent out are postcards with the exhibiting information. The challenge of direct mail to tradeshow marketers is how to bring enough attention from the targets. In order to disprove this convention, Derse sent pre-register

attendees at 2010EXHIBITOR show cardboard boxes containing five beans, a white plastic pot, potting soil and planting instructions. Derse tried to set an example of how direct mails could be meaningful to the targets. Instead of plain information, the mailers can also be interesting, creative and exciting. Thirdly, Derse believes that marketing should be everywhere during the tradeshow. In fact, tradeshow itself is the best stage for the organizers to market their show. Most of the tradeshow organizers hold exhibitor resign program at the show floor. It is the best time in the year for tradeshow organizers to sell booths. However most of the tradeshow organizers only market themselves within the show floor during the event. Derse disprove the convention by distributing Post-it Notes in the most unusual places at the convention center in 2010EXHIBITOR show. Besides the tradeshow information, Derse put interesting and inspiring message in the note. For example, Derse staff placed the Post-its in the bathroom stalls located near the conference rooms and the exhibit hall. Notes featured the text, “You can’t learn anything reading bathroom walls,” “For a good laugh, call me” (Valenty, 2010). Those notes make people laugh and also start to pay attention to the marketing messages. The show is the only time of the year that the tradeshow organizers can meet their customers face-to-face. It is the best time to showcase their hard work. They shouldn’t miss any of the opportunities. To market the show other than the show floor, the idea can bring much more exposure for the show organizers. Last but not the least, Derse tried to break the convention that it is difficult to catch the attention from the attendees after the tradeshow. Most of the tradeshow organizers neglect the after-show follow-up. They take it much less important than pre-show marketing. However, in fact, after-show promotion is also important. After a week of 2010EXHIBITOR show, Derse sent out the valuable visitors a test kit. The kit contains a notepad and a pen made by recycled materials. The mailer also includes an invitation to visit the website to share the thoughts about

challenge marketing conventions. The intention of the mailers was continuing the conversation after the show, to show the customers that the marketers do care about their thoughts, the marketers wanted to listen to them, and more importantly, the marketers were there to solve the problems. In conclusion, instead of investing more money to the marketing, Derse invested energy, passion and imagination, which is the most important spirit of guerrilla marketing. “Value the customers’ opinions” is Derse’s guerrilla creativity. Every step of their 2010 marketing campaign encouraged the customers to share thoughts with them. By valuing the customers’ opinions, Derse staff took customers’ concerns seriously. They challenged themselves in the marketing campaign to help the customers solve problems.

Czarnowski, an exhibit and event company opened since 1947 is another pioneer in exhibiting industry applying guerrilla marketing into their business. The company has made client-focused education the guerrilla creativity in their marketing campaign since 2006. According to Kim Merkin, west coast director of sales of Czarnowski, Czarnowski focuses company marketing around educating clients and prospects on what’s new, what’s now, and what’s next in the industry (Nelson, 2009). In 2009, Czarnowski created a small one-day event “What2009” by gathering attendees from the exhibiting industry for free education seminars. “What2009” was an education-centric event which focused on providing tools the attendees need to reduce expense and increase ROI. In return, Czarnowski tried to market itself as an innovative partner in the tradeshow industry.

Instead of building event on its own, Czarnowski tailored the What2009 event by reaching out to the industry. They conducted face-to-face meeting with the important figures such as Mark Watson the principal for MeasureInc, a Claremont, CA-based consulting business focusing on design and analysis of tradeshow, with discussion of major changes taken place in

the industry. They also operated online survey to reach out to the industry in a wide range to collect thoughts and concerns. By the information gathered through the research, Czarnowski was able to develop an agenda that would present attendees with the solutions they were looking for. By further increasing the attendance, Czarnowski utilized an e-mail invitation campaign to get the word out about What2009. Moreover, in order to give the attendees what they want by not breaking the bank, Czarnowski tried its best to cut the event's cost. They used their own corporate office in San Francisco as the event center, and working with the vendors who had an existing relationship with the company and located near San Francisco. The results of "What2009" event proved that the marketing strategy was successful. The event generated \$200,000 direct sales in new businesses for Czarnowski, and created a more positive image among 88 percent of the attendees.

According to Levinson (1999), one of the important guerrilla marketing rules is community involvement. You become involved with the community by helping it. The community becomes involved with you by helping you. The successful results of Czarnowski's "What2009" event proved the importance of community involvement. By giving back to the industry with free education program, Czarnowski built a positive company image with the clients. Through the event, the clients started to trust Czarnowski because they find the company had their needs on mind. Tradeshow business is special, it is full of unexpectation. It is much more difficult for the customers to analyze the ROI than their other marketing tools. If the customers are willing to come to a show year after year, it is because of their trust of the tradeshow organizers. They believe the tradeshow organizers will throw a show which is good enough to attract valuable buyers. Levinson (1999) also pointed out that once the company focused on what they can give, keeping customers contented, and customers sense the

company's positive attitude. Giving back to the community can help tradeshow organizers to build a trust-worthy relationship with customers.

## Chapter 3

### Guerrilla Marketing Guideline for Tradeshow Organizers

#### *Summary of Guerrilla Marketing*

Guerrilla marketing is unconventional marketing intended to get maximum results from minimal resources (Levinson, 1984). A great guerrilla marketing master should plan the marketing campaign base on the development of the business. They should have extensive knowledge of the industry and business itself. They should use their business advantages as the most powerful marketing weapon and the only business identity in all the marketing communications. Also, rather than guesswork and judgment, guerrilla marketers should follow the psychology-laws of human behavior. Most importantly, they should always take actions without afraid of failures. A great guerrilla marketing master is also a great adventurer in the business world. By investing their energy and passion to the business, they are enjoying an exploration journey together with the customers.

Guerrilla creativity should be the ultimate identity of guerrilla marketing, it should be consistent in all marketing efforts. It is the combination of imagination as well as technical skills. It should be developed base on the business advantages. It is the cause for customers to change their minds to the point where they want to purchase what marketers are offering to sell. The birthplace of guerrilla creativity is the knowledge; the more concrete the research, the more sensible the marketing plan. Effective guerrilla creativity besides being appealing, it also brings useful points to the customers.

Every marketing campaign needs to carry the risks of backlash. It also holds true to

guerrilla marketing. As mentioned above, if the guerrilla marketing crossing the ethical and legal boundaries, it will bring negative effect on brand equity. In the contrast, if the guerrilla marketing strategies are done properly, it can bring positive effects to brand equity.

#### *Summary of Current Tradeshow Marketing*

Tradeshow marketing requires tailoring goods and services for certain industry sector. Exhibitors and attendees are the major customers for tradeshow marketers. It can be generally divided into three different categories, pre-show marketing, on-site marketing, and post-show marketing. Base on the literature reviews above, tradeshow marketers are tend to market their shows in traditional ways. The problems of tradeshow marketing are the unclear and overloading messages. Guerrilla marketing has been proved to be a great alternative for tradeshow marketers. There have been a few successful cases in tradeshow industry applying guerrilla marketing practices. However, more successful guerrilla marketing experiences need to borrow from general business sectors.

#### *Pre-Show Guerrilla Marketing Guides*

Pre-show marketing has always been considered as the most important step in generating buzz for tradeshow marketers. For guerrilla marketers, it is important to drive attention from the prospects and also offering valuable information.

As mentioned above, 95 % of the tradeshow marketers using email as their primary marketing tool. However, the public is getting a growing dissatisfaction about the junk mails landing in their email boxes every day. The first step to avoid being considered as junk mail is to make the email worth of opening. The tile of the email should be attractive. The good example of the email title should be precise and direct to the point. The second step is to make the content of the email valuable to your prospects. The content must point out the importance of the tradeshow

to the customers in a creative way. For example, the format of the email can be made into interesting flash, or greeting card. Instead of serious tradeshow logo, it can be change to a cartoon character. However, as stated above, it is important for marketers to remember that it is easy to drive attention, but it is difficult to persuade the prospects to make the purchasing decisions. Guerrilla marketers should keep in mind what are the needs from customers. Last but not the least, it is important to remind the prospects they are part of a community. The successful story of Hotmail proved that a single invitation action at the end of email can generate substantial profits. With the spread of social media, it is also necessary to invite the prospects to share their thoughts in the major social media gateways.

As the survey indicated in literature review that some tradeshow organizers believe that direct mails are out-date and not longer effective regarding bringing potential customers. However, direct mails are still rank third in bringing attendees to tradeshow. Tradeshow marketers need to invest their imagination into the formats of direct mail. For example, instead of normal postcards, they can mail out soil and seeds with the tradeshow information. Also, mails made out of recycled material can be another great alternative to drive attention from prospects. Moreover, the content of the direct mail needs to be creative too. Instead of using the exaggerated advertising words such as largest and most, marketers can bring in daily conversation words to build close customer relationship.

Tradeshow website is still the number one technology investment for tradeshow organizers because its significance in generating leads and publishing updated information. 78% of the tradeshow visitors claimed that websites are the most frequently used source of information (CEIR, 2009). The most common concern of traditional tradeshow website is driving traffic. It is difficult to keep visitors' attention. One of the great solutions is to build a microsite.

Burger King's microsite focusing a video game which generated a million hits after its 24 hours of launch. The cost of building a microsite or writing a computer program is relatively low compared to building a brand new website. The other alternative is to integrate with social media. 88% of the tradeshow visitors expressed that they used a social media site regularly (CEIR 2009). It is important to take social media seriously. Most of the tradeshow organizers had their social media sites up and linked to their main website but seldom post updates or response the messages in a timely manner. In fact, social media has become one of the most important sources regarding to generating leads for tradeshow.

#### *On-Site Guerrilla Marketing Guides*

Tradeshow itself is the best marketing platform to market the show. A successful tradeshow will play a significant role in bringing profits to the organizers. In fact, for most tradeshow organizers the show is the only time of the year that they can meet with their customers face-to-face.

Most of the tradeshow marketers do very little marketing campaigns on the show site. Even they do, most of them are limited to exhibit hall. Guerrilla marketing encourages the marketers to think outside the box. On-site marketing can be done in the most unexpected places. Trash cans, bathroom walls can also become ideal places to do marketing. For example, tradeshow marketers can post creative marketing notes in those most unexpected places. However, tradeshow marketers should understand that the core idea of on-site marketing is generating royal customers. The theme of on-site marketing is to show how much the tradeshow organizers care about the customers. The marketing content don't need to brag about the effect of the tradeshow, it should be more about the industry concerns, encouraging innovation, raising

more attention about sustainability and so on. The marketing should be focusing in building a responsible while innovative image for tradeshow organizers.

In addition, tradeshow organizers can hold more special events on-site to keep attendees stay in the exhibit hall. The more time they spend on the show site, the more likely they will make deals with the exhibitors. Guerrilla marketing tactics allow the tradeshow marketers to create delightful surprises for the attendees. For example, tradeshow organizers can hire dancers and singers to have short-performance in non-designated spot on-site. It will provide the attendees and the exhibitors with nice breaks during the show time.

Lastly, tradeshow organizers tend to do attendee survey after the show. In fact, it is much easier and better to do the attendee survey on-site with real-time answers. With the development of technology, many tradeshow focusing software companies provide tradeshow exhibitors with real-time survey on the smart phone. Attendees can do their survey anytime anywhere at the tradeshow. However, it is important to make the survey short and simple. Also it is recommended to offer some prize for the attendees who finish the surveys.

In summary, on-site marketing usually neglected by tradeshow organizers. One of the reasons is that it is the busiest time of the year for tradeshow organizers. Anyway, it is also the most important time of the year for tradeshow organizers to build relationship with the customers. A little more effort of on-site marketing may bring unexpected profits.

#### *Post-show Guerrilla Marketing Guides*

The intention of post-show marketing is continuing the conversation after the show, to show the customers that their thoughts and concerns are important.

Instead of mailing out traditional survey, tradeshow organizers need to invest more

creativity. Postcards made with creative designs can be a good start. Moreover, instead of all the questions, those mailers can be an invitation asking the attendees to share their experiences at the tradeshow website and social media gateways. In addition, those mailers can be not only papers but also a handkerchief, a pen or a t-shirt if budgets are enough.

Guerrilla marketing treasures community value, giving back to the customers would help in building trust-worthy relationships. For exhibitors, tradeshow organizers can add more value to exhibition by offering attendee list with detailed demographic information. For attendees, tradeshow organizers can offer them complete new products list from the exhibitors. This valuable information might take time in gathering, but it shows the customers that the tradeshow organizers are the leading information source of the industry.

#### *Inspiration from Guerrilla Marketing to Tradeshow Marketers*

Since beginning, guerrilla marketing always brings inspiration to the marketers. It requires imagination instead of money from marketers to promote the products and services. It encourages community sharing from the marketers to their customers. It also recommends marketers to create joyful experience for customers by giving away surprises. All in all, guerrilla marketing can help tradeshow organizers build an innovative image for them.

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