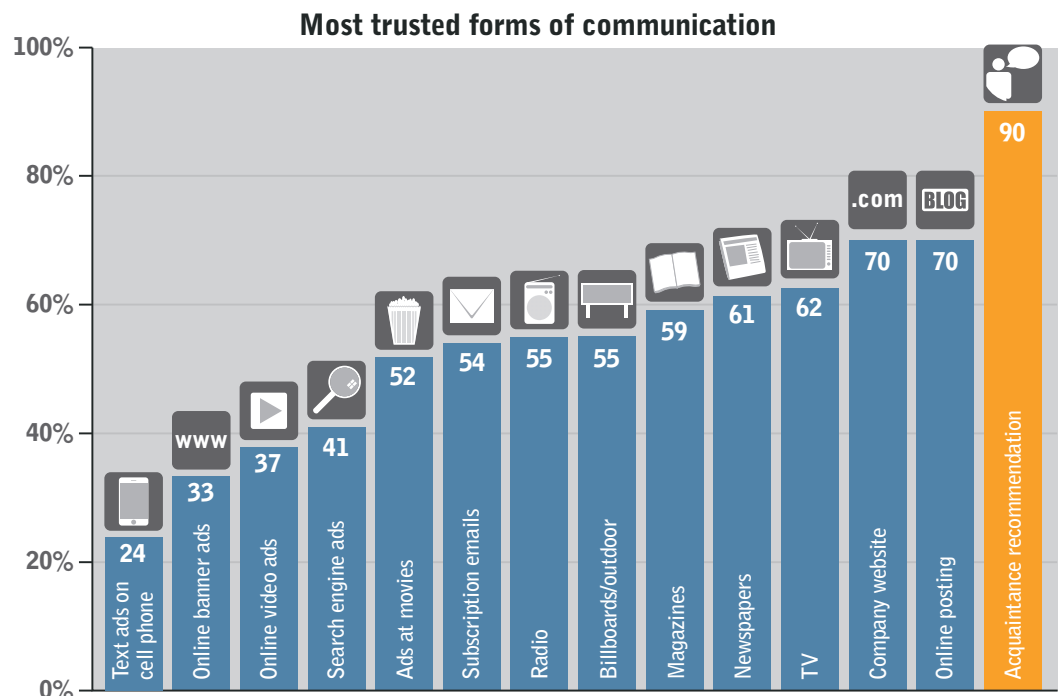


Case studies: Is viral marketing useful for serious, B2B audiences?

When you hear “viral marketing,” it likely conjures up images of zany YouTube™ videos. We’ve all passed along funny clips, good jokes or links to entertaining websites. But does viral marketing harbor a serious side with business-to-business applications? Viral marketing describes an online phenomenon that encourages people to voluntarily pass along messages to others. In short, it’s getting other people to freely spread your message for you. Viral marketing appeals to marketers because, when successful, it broadly spreads a message with minimal costs. And viral builds credibility: A 2009 Nielsen survey determined that “personal recommendations and consumer opinions posted online are the most trusted forms of advertising globally.”¹

Marketing
Insights
from 5MetaCom



A 2009 Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey of 50 countries found the most trusted form of advertising (90%) is a recommendation from an acquaintance.¹ Online postings and company websites were the second most trusted form (70%).¹

As the Nielsen data show, people tend to trust their acquaintances. Viral marketing enables your product or service to essentially piggyback on that bond of trust.

Viral marketing carries risks, though, including:

- Subjective metrics
- Difficult-to-measure ROI²
- Loss of control of your message

Most well-known viral marketing campaigns reached millions of people. However, case studies from the IT world suggest that narrowly focused, business-to-business audiences sometimes respond to viral marketing as well (see back page).

Executive Summary

- Viral marketing describes an online phenomenon that encourages people to voluntarily pass along your messages to others.
- A personal recommendation from an acquaintance is the most trusted form of communication.¹
- Most readily recognized examples of viral marketing reached audiences well into the millions. However, several B2B campaigns have attracted thousands of website visitors or millions of page views.
- Even a narrowly focused campaign can generate sales leads or increase exposure for your company.

3 B2B Viral Campaigns

Campaign 1: The Cart Whisperer



VeriSign wanted to show retailers how to lower the number of “abandoned” online shopping carts.

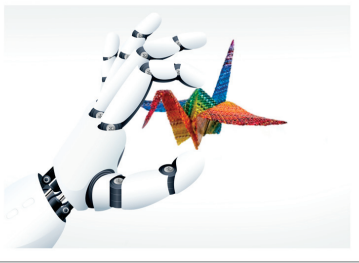
Company: VeriSign™, provider of internet security and identity solutions.

Campaign: VeriSign set out to help retailers establish better trust with online shoppers. By building trust, VeriSign hoped to help retailers reduce the frequency with which online shoppers filled virtual “shopping carts” but then abandoned them before completing the purchase. VeriSign created a character named Liberty Fillmore, whose talent was “rescuing” real abandoned shopping carts from vacant lots and roadsides. The campaign began with a deliberately amateurish website, www.nomoreabandonedcarts.com. VeriSign drove traffic to the site via videos on YouTube™ and elsewhere showing Liberty corralling carts. At the site, visitors could watch additional videos, submit photos to Liberty’s album, read his corny poetry or learn about his sponsors—and how they prevent online cart abandonment.^{3,4}

Response: More than 90,000 unique website visitors after four months. Videos viewed more than 4 million times on YouTube. More than 60 photos submitted to Liberty’s album.⁴

See it at: www.nomoreabandonedcarts.com (as of summer 2010).

Campaign 2: Mr. Torimoto vs. SolidWorks Robot Challenge



In a video by SolidWorks, an origami master goes head-to-head against engineering software to see who can design a robot the fastest.

Company: SolidWorks, an engineering software company.

Campaign: Remember when IBM’s supercomputer took on world chess champ Garry Kasparov? Similar idea. SolidWorks challenged origami master Norio Torimoto to create an origami robot faster than SolidWorks CAD software could design a robot. A time-lapse video captures the race. Trash-talking and a clever ending add humor to the video. If you visit the site, you can download your own robot origami kit for free—along with an electronic drawing of the robot designed by SolidWorks software.

Response: SolidWorks generated positive media attention and online buzz. And although most viral campaigns post their videos on YouTube, SolidWorks hosted the video on its own website. By “self-hosting,” SolidWorks provided better video quality and put visitors just one click away from special offers.⁵

Campaign 3: The Quantum IT Challenge



An IT trivia game enabled Quantum Corp. to identify higher priority sales leads.

Company: Quantum Corp.®, specialists in data protection, archiving and retention.

Campaign: To generate sales leads, Quantum created an IT trivia game. The company sent a mailer to select sales targets. The mailer invited the targets to go online and play the IT trivia game for a chance to win prizes. After playing the game, the target could pass along the link and “challenge” a friend. The game did not go “wildly” viral, and it was deliberately difficult. But the company tracked each player’s score. The score provided the company with data to categorize high-priority and low-priority sales leads. The company planned to implement an email version of the campaign.⁶

Response: Game played by nearly 2.5% of direct mail targets. More than 10% of all targets forwarded the invitation to a friend. Quantum also found the positions held by the players (IT managers and directors) were higher than expected.⁶

¹ Global Advertising: Consumers Trust Real Friends and Virtual Strangers the Most. Nielsen Company website. Accessed 7/23/09 at <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/consumer/global-advertising-consumers-trust-real-friends-and-virtual-strangers-the-most/>

² Marshall, G. Viral Marketing - A Developing Media Channel. NRG Advertising website. Accessed 8/29/2008 at http://www.nrgadvertising.com.au/email_insight_article_4.html.

³ Viral Hall of Fame 2008: Liberty Fillmore, the Cart Whisperer. MarketingSherpa website. Accessed 10/29/08 at <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/viralawards2008/7.html>.

⁴ VeriSign’s “Cart Whisperer” Rolls Into the MarketingSherpa Viral Marketing Hall of Fame. Reuters News Service, June 10, 2008. Accessed 10/29/08 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS134390+10-Jun-2008+MW20080610>.

⁵ Strehlo, K. Using YouTube to Promote Your Business. BusinessWeek website. Accessed 7/20/2009 at http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/tips/archives/2008/10/using_youtube_t.html.

⁶ Viral Hall of Fame 2006: The Quantum IT Challenge. MarketingSherpa website. Accessed 08/27/08 at <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/vas2006/5.html>.