The 5 Marketing Techniques I’ve learned From Disney Movies

Treat others the way you wish to be treated, nice guys finish last, slow and steady wins the race, yada, yada, yada. These are some of the lessons we’ve all drawn from watching Disney movies as kids (and for some of us, as adults). What I’ve come to realize, however, is that us marketing junkies can take away much more than just the Golden Rule. In fact, in my past few weeks at the Greenhouse, I’ve discovered not one, but five techniques that we can borrow from Disney to help us optimize our entire marketing experience.

1) The lovable antagonist:
Q: What do Simba and the Geico gecko have in common? A: They’re both the face of a following much bigger than themselves. When you hear the name Simba, you automatically think of the innocent little cub whose journey to find himself touched the hearts of millions. Similarly, as soon as you see that tiny little gecko with that silly little accent, you know that 15 minutes of your time could save you 15% or more on car insurance. Though sometimes obsolete, a character or mascot is a good way to get consumers to associate with your brand. If you can get them to love your representative, you can usually get them to love your product too.

2) Crazy works:
When was the last time you sat down and had a tea party in the middle of the woods with a Mad Hatter and a talking rabbit? Probably never because, well, that’s crazy. But I bet you know just what Disney movie this scene came from. And that’s the exact same rabbit hole that modern advertising has fallen into. For example: in 2010, Target put on a fabulous light and dance show during New York’s Fashion Week to promote their holiday line. Their spectacle stunned between 3,000 and 5,000 onlookers, and generated 12.6 million Google hits. Vanilla doesn’t taste so good in Marketingland. My best advice is to go with a stunt that’s so crazy, it just might work.

3) Relatability:
Judging by my spell check’s urge to insist that the word “relatability” doesn’t exist, I’m going to go ahead and assume it’s because it doesn’t occur enough. The great thing about Disney movies is that they can be enjoyed by and related to anyone and everyone. Cute and simple enough to be digested by youngsters, yet sneaky and sarcastic enough to get a chuckle out of mom and dad. Every marketing campaign should be based off of this model, with maybe a few adjustments here and there. Keeping your target market in mind, tailor your campaign to suit their interests. However, always remember that everyone is different. If you can figure out a way to reach every corner of your demographic, you can be sure your campaign will be a success.
4) The power of song:
If you were asked to describe your favorite Disney movie without using its actual title, it’s safe to assume that you’d resort to belting out one of that movie’s catchy musical numbers. If this is the case, it means that there is something about that song that connects you to the movie, that the song can be used to distinguish that particular product from all the rest. This is a clever technique to use when marketing your brand. Think of the Free Credit Report.Com guys. It seems as though every week they come out with a new jingle, each one more memorable than the last, always making a point to sneak their name right into the most contagious part of the song. Sophomoric? Or brilliant? Though simple and silly, these songs have a way of embedding themselves in your mind. So the next time you’re in need of a credit report, who will be the first you call? Guarantee it’ll be the one whose name you can’t keep out of your head.

5) Take the money and run:
My guess is that you interpreted that wrong. I don’t mean get in, make millions, and get out as quickly as possible (although sometimes that is the case); I mean build off of your success. The Disney franchise started with a man, a mouse, and a couple wild ideas. Fast-forward almost a century and look how it’s progressed: dozens of cartoon classics, an unimaginable profit in merchandise, and two separate theme parks devoted to the same concept. Why can’t your campaign follow in the same footsteps? Take, for example, Angry Birds. What started as a simple online Flash game has since migrated to Halloween costumes, stuffed animals and other various paraphernalia, even a feature-length film. Once you can differentiate between what works and what doesn’t, opportunities begin to open up for you to evolve. Jump a couple paces ahead of your audience and see where you can go. If executed correctly, you’re likely to see a domino effect of success.

You may never fly a magic carpet. You may never befriend a warthog and a meerkat. And, unfortunately, you most definitely will never have a Fairy Godmother that so conveniently grants your every wish. However, if you think outside the box (‘box’ being that clunky old VHS player gathering dust in the corner of your basement), you can take the proper steps that will make some of your more realistic dreams come true. If a dream is a wish your heart makes, a successful campaign is that dream in hard copy. All it takes is faith, trust, and a little pixie dust…and maybe a late night or two.