

How To Build The Ultimate In Word of Mouth Marketing -- Memes

By Joe Heller, High Performance Sales Coach

Memes are a self-replicating virus of the mind that can empower your future success or dethrone it. Memes pass along from person to person and just as genes replicate in an organism, so do memes.

Where did Memes come from? Memes were first introduced by Richard Dawkins, an Oxford University Biologist. In 1976, he published a book, "The Unselfish Gene" which explains how a meme (rhymes with gene) is similar to its biological cousin, the gene, and argued that a meme is "the basic unit of cultural transmission within a society" implicating memes as a self-replicating organism that influences our minds.

What is a meme? One of the earliest memes was thought to be the advancement of fire in primitive man. Fire is the one of the earliest tracked memes as it spread the concise methodologies of building fire to mankind. Another example of an early meme is the illustrations painted on the walls of caves that taught men how to fish with spears versus using their hands. Other instances of memes are ideas, tunes, catch phrases, fashions, and unfortunately the prejudices that are formed within a society. Examples of modern memes extend from the "Hula-Hoop" craze to AOL's "You've Got Mail".

Just as a gene propagates itself in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm to egg, memes propagate by leaping from brain to brain via a natural progression, which in a broad sense is simply called imitation. If a person hears or reads about a good idea and he passes that idea along to his colleagues he creates a potential meme. If the idea catches on, it is regarded as a "living entity" that begins the spreading of the idea, not just metaphorically but in a very real and engineered progression. The idea is now a meme! A fertile meme can literally spread from its host throughout society and have a very real impact more quickly than anyone can imagine.

Why are memes important? How many of you are proud of the professional work you've done for your clients, yet you are frustrated because when you write or talk about your business it just doesn't get an "ah ha" or even a noted response? Does this sound familiar? A meme is the missing piece of the branding and marketing puzzle. A meme helps us understand the appropriate use of statements that literally translate our communications into a compelling marketing message for your audience to attract new clients. Memes are powerful mechanisms in building, establishing and extending your position on a decision hierarchy by creating an unstoppable word-of-mouth marketing campaign.

How does it work? You probably heard about Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution before you ever read it, right? The passing of Darwin's theory by word of mouth is a great example of a meme. A meme evolves too. A meme operates by taking a complex message and breaking it down into a simple, yet powerful replicating statement that can be passed from person to person. A tagline or a marketing message may not be a meme if poorly structured. A meme used as a tagline must be constructed correctly to work and live within a culture. It must create movement, helping others to understand what exactly you do and how it will create a positive impact and return for your intended audience. Otherwise, you are just adding to the marketing clutter with an ineffective message.

What are the goals for a meme? The whole idea of a meme is to help prospective clients learn how you can help them get what they want and desire with a simple concise and impactful message. A meme also creates an army of virtual marketers that carry your brand message throughout your market, via the expected predictable traits of a meme.

Picture this in your mind: You are at a networking event and you have just used your marketing meme to answer someone's question about what you do for a living. For whatever reason, they did not need your services, but they understand immediately what you are all about. They got it! Several minutes later, that same person drags a friend over to you and says, "You should talk to Kathy she owns a business and needs help building her client benefit message."

Wow! This can happen anywhere with a meme's commanding "cause and effect" relationship over individuals. This is why it's smart to apply your meme to any marketing messages you communicate to your

market. People will understand you more quickly and as a result you will attract more attention, interest, and give birth to the actionable items that surround and progress your marketing agenda.

In creating a “virus-like” propagation, your meme must include several key characteristics. Memes must following these essential steps.

First, it must actively transfer specific information that is immediately and obviously beneficial to your market. Next, it must be effortless, straightforward and simple. Finally, it must be repeatable, conveying an “ease of effort” to pass along from person to person.

Once you have figured out the recipe for your meme using these three characteristics, you will be amazed at how your marketing message is automatically passed along. That is why it is vitally important to apply memes to every marketing message you communicate to your audience. Memes enable your market to understand the benefits of your brand more quickly and efficiently.

As such, your brand meme creates a first mover advantage in the minds of your target market, grabbing an equity ownership in your audience’s mind. You do not have to build an elaborate slogan to create a meme. As a matter of fact, the simpler, more concise your meme is the quicker it will spread. Once your meme has captured the essence of your special talents, it should create an emotional, visual and immediate impact that forges an unbreakable link between you or your company and your target market.

In crafting your meme, it should never confuse your market. Your meme should illuminate your message and cause it to rise above the clutter. If your meme does not make sense, it’s dead. A great test for a meme is to tell it to a 12 year old and if they don’t get it you need to work a little harder in crafting your meme until you hear “I get it”. A meme must prompt an ownership response from your market.

Where do you use your meme? Everywhere! Your meme is the core of your branding and marketing strategy and is used anytime you need to effectively communicate the unique value that you generate for your clients. Memes explain what is unique, distinct and special about you. Memes raise your brand’s qualities and skill sets (natural and/or learned) to the next level of perception, creating a new reality for you within the real estate of your market’s mind.

A few ways to use your personal meme are in tag lines, elevator speeches and anything you say out-loud. Memes translate easily into ads, articles and letters and they can be used in the titles of presentations and reports. Your meme should communicate the vision of your message with a singular congruent theme to your market.

How do you create a meme? The first step is to ask yourself “What do my clients get as a direct result from my qualities, abilities and talents?” Now, brainstorm and write down everything that comes to mind. Develop sentences that provide insights into your unique brand benefit.

I suggest broadening the scope of your thinking by asking prospects, former clients and existing clients who are familiar with you to help you identify your special talents that stand out above all others. Understand that there will be a core idea formed and woven into the fabric of your meme that will be unleashed!

Now that you have some thoughts on paper, you must begin to pare them down into the essential ideas that you want to communicate. This is a systematic process that takes thought, but it allows you to focus your marketing message from the spectrum of a floodlight into a meme with a laser focus that yields a marketing result that’s magnified exponentially.

Now that you have identified and narrowed your benefits down to a core benefit statement that is oriented to your market, and easily remembered, you have a meme!

Here is an example of what a meme’s development looks like:

Initial Statement: I am a Marketing Strategist

Summary Statement: I provide Marketing Strategies

Core Benefit: I help CEO's, Business Owners and Professionals establish their Marketing Model and situate their company as the preferred choice within their target Market. This enables me to build positioning strategies that place them at the pinnacle of the decision hierarchy for their market and stand above the competition, thereby becoming "the choice" to solve their problem not just one of many possible answers.

Meme: Marketing Strategist for CEO's, Business Owners & Professionals

How do you test your meme; how can you tell if your meme works? To effectively assess your meme you must interact or field-test your meme with the people within your target market. When someone asks you what you do and you say; "I am a Marketing Strategist for CEO's, Business Owners and Professionals", they have several possible responses. If they say, "that's interesting, everyone needs that!" or "...you should talk to our CEO!" you've got a winner. On the other hand, if someone says; "what's that?" or "why does someone need that?" you have missed something in your analysis and failed to create a meme. At that point, you need to re-evaluate your core benefits and how to communicate your message to your target market, thereby putting the mechanisms in place to create a successful meme. Testing is critical in composing a winning meme.

Keep in mind, a meme is the principal expression of your identity to your target market. That is why you use it everywhere, from you business cards and stationary to your email signature. A meme makes the most powerful connection possible by bridging the unique talents of your You, Inc. with that of your target market creating a persuasive catalyst between you and your market. In addition, if your meme aligns you with the main values of your market and transmits those values effectively, it allows others to virally do the marketing work for you.

In summary, just as for millions of years, DNA has been the only replicator worth talking about, we now realize that we can take advantage of the "virus of the mind" known as memes that have the power to infiltrate the human culture and penetrate the heart of our target market. We evolve, our markets evolve, and our brand must evolve to prosper. In order to allow your brand to thrive you must introduce a powerful meme, unleashing the contagion, the brand meme that presents your key benefits and value to the world in an easily communicated phrase, known as a meme.

Remember, a meme is the most effective marketing tool you can use in your marketing strategy. Memes describe the benefits of your unique message with laser-like intensity to your market. Memes are simple, straightforward, easily remembered and effortlessly transmitted. Developing a powerful meme lies somewhere between art and logic. Begin today by summarizing your core benefits and honing them to the most congruent and essential message you can to create the greatest impact for you in your target market, the "Marketing Impact" we call a meme. Once you've got it, use your meme everywhere. Discover the power of your meme today!

One final note; in order to become a successful in selling you must become an avid student of what works in selling. I developed the Revenue Warrior Selling System (TM) to give you a competitive advantage and succeed against your most challenging competition. You can find the Revenue Warrior Selling System (TM) on my site <http://www.JoeHeller.com>. Go there right now and click on the Revenue Warrior Selling System (TM) to learn more. It's a great resource from my personal library for yours.

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