

CHAPTER 1

Why Surprise Is Crucial

Three dozen virginal seraphim angels are busy spraying their throats, frantically lining up in choir formation. An army of sweaty Dizzy Gillespies are huffing and puffing their bulbous cheeks, readying for a simultaneous blast of their strangely bent trumpets. The ancient Chinese firework maestro delicately places his bony finger on the ignition switch, itching to flick it forward and light up the skies with explosive rocket color.

Impatiently, they await the triggering event for their synchronized actions—the revelation of this book’s “Big Statement.” So without any further ado . . .

***The element of Surprise
is the most important aspect
in contemporary business.***

There—I said it. And now, for the next 200 pages or so, I have to live up to it.

(Uh, angels and company, it’s been a pleasure working with you. Your checks are waiting in the dressing rooms. You can all go home now . . . Thank you.)

My quest begins murkily, focusing on the fog that’s currently engulfing us. No, it’s not the residue of the

aforementioned pyrotechnics; it's the thickening cloud of marketing messages we are faced with on a daily basis. Too many messages coming at us in too many places and in too many ways: on TV, radio, in print, and magazines; on billboards, buses, taxis, and racecars. Embedded on web pages, appended to emails and text messages when the emails and text messages themselves aren't ads. Disguised as entertainment and news. Through our front door, over our heads, on sidewalks, and on rooftops. Never mind "ad creep"—this is ad infinitum.

This deluge of messages would be easier to accept if they were clever or inspiring, but sadly, they are not. Most of them are downright boring. The end result is a yawn-inducing, decreasingly effective, peasoup-esque haze.

So, back to the "Big Statement." The marketing message blur, while imposing, is not impenetrable. There indeed exists a beacon powerful enough to slice right through it: the dazzling, halogen-like element of Surprise.

While it recalls the frivolity of birthday parties and the silliness of practical jokes, Surprise is far from superficial. In fact, it is an essential tool that can help you sell anything—your product, your service, even yourself. (Yup, it's as effective in building relationships as it is in building brands, but more on that later.)

Surprise is an ultraimportant form of differentiation. You never really look for it; it finds you. "The moments we enjoy take us by Surprise," said the great anthropologist Ashley Montagu. "It is not that we seize them, but that they seize us."¹ Once it seizes, Surprise helps influence decisions, and is often the deciding factor in someone choosing you over the other guy. But until now, its potential in business has remained relatively untapped.

The perfunctory Google search on Surprise yields an astonishing 159 million hits; page after page of links to something having to do with the good word. While delightful, eye-opening, and uplifting, they seem to be miles away from our corporate cause. For instance:

- Surprise.com brings you “hand-picked gifts from stores across the web.”
- There are 32 different international sites for “Kinder-Surprise,” the chocolate egg with the toy inside (make sure you chew before you swallow, kids!).
- You can find loads of books on the subject, almost all for children, ranging from *Purim Surprise* by Lesley Simpson to Harriet Ziefert’s *Surprise!* (Yeah I know; not much of a range . . .)
- Listen to music by legends like Paul Simon (the album *Surprise*) and Radiohead (the “No Surprises” video), or visit the home pages of unknown bands like To My Surprise, Donner Surprise Party, and My Second Surprise, or indie labels like Surprise Attack Records.
- You can drown in the cesspool of celebrity gossip (“Surprise! Angelina is preggers!”).
- Shop at home with Surprise, the French, Avon-like, family fashion company.
- There are countless mentions of Surprise visits, parties, wins, losses, appearances, talks, and comebacks.
- You can discover some very interesting ways to “Surprise” your woman or man (or both).

- Bone up on your history by learning about the American tradition of the October Surprise (a news event, either random or conspiratorially preplanned, with the potential to influence the outcome of an election, particularly one for the presidency), or the 13 ships of the Royal British Navy named the *HMS Surprise*.
- And of course, there's everything you would ever want to know about Surprise, Arizona, a safe little town (only one murder per year on average) with 85,914 residents (including 11 registered sex offenders), where the most common job is construction for males and health care for females, and where the average new single-family home will set you back \$159,200. It may not be Manhattan, but Surprise, Arizona is the spiritual homeland of this book (and is a way nicer town than Success, Missouri or Salesville, Ohio).

You'd think that there would be a more reverential treatment of Surprise among the 159 million hits, given the concept's wide-reaching heritage and power. Just look around you. Like Wi-fi, Surprise may be difficult to see, but it is impossible to ignore. In spite of its rather anemic showing on Google, here is where we'll let Surprise really flex its muscles by showing that it is all the following, and more:

The Basis of All Great Entertainment

Think of Surprise endings in classic films like Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (he's his mom!), *Citizen Kane* (it's a sled!), *Planet of the Apes* (it's New York!), *Soylent Green* (it's us!),

and *Chinatown* (she's the sister **and** the daughter!). Or more recently, *The Empire Strikes Back* (he's his dad!), *The Crying Game* (she's a he!), *The Sixth Sense* (he's dead!), and *Memento* (it's . . . he's . . . uh, frankly I'm still trying to figure it out). Stop me now, because I could go on and spoil movie endings for pages!

On the smaller screen, there's the TV cliffhangers like *Dallas*'s season-ending, "Who Shot J.R.?" episode, its *Simpsons* spoof, "Who Shot Mr. Burns?", or the ever-present twists and turns of shows like *24*, *Deal Or No Deal*, and *Survivor*.

On the bookshelves, Surprise endings are found in just about anything by Stephen King, Ayn Rand, or my favorite, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. (And just wait until you find out how *THIS* book ends . . .)

How about those breakout bands that come from nowhere and capture the nation's attention with an infectious hit song? Or those megastars who generate heaps of publicity by popping up and performing in the strangest places, like the Beatles' rooftop concert in London's Saville Row, the Rolling Stones playing "Brown Sugar" on a flatbed truck through the streets of New York in 1975, or more recently, minishows by Linkin Park and the Jonas Brothers (two separate occasions, trust me!) at the SoHo Apple Store?

Surprise is what separates show business from regular business, a concept explained by actor/director/icon Warren Beatty. Commenting in the *New York Times* he said: "In this Wall Street and corporate world, the discussion has become: 'What is the proven, unique selling property of this product?' The problem is you can't sell entertainment the way you sell cars or air-conditioners. Entertainment is dependent on Surprise."²

The Root of All Sports

Where would sports be without Surprise? Extinct, that's where. Imagine if you knew the outcome of the big game in advance; what could possibly inspire you to watch it? (Yeah, the commercials, but the best ones there pop with Surprise as well.)

Ever since David took on Goliath at Judah Field, the inherent unpredictability of sporting battles has given rise to literally thousands of great sports Surprise stories, of unsuspecting heroes, of impossible comebacks, of improbable upsets, of victories snatched from the jaws of defeat (and vice versa). Some of the most memorable include the 1969 "Miracle Mets" World Series win; the Joe Namath Super Bowl boast upset of the Baltimore Colts that same year; or the stunning knockout of previously undefeated heavyweight champ Mike Tyson by journeyman underdog Buster Douglas in 1990. As a die-hard hockey fan, I've got to cite the 1980 U.S. Olympic "Miracle on Ice" hockey team shocking the mighty Russians and then beating Finland for the gold medal (a feat that was not just voted as the biggest sports upset of all time by viewers of ESPN, but cited as the greatest sports moment of the twentieth century by *Sports Illustrated* magazine). These are the stories you tell your kids . . . and sometimes, too often.

Surprise gives sports more than just its dramatic moments—it is its *raison d'être*. Sportswriter Bob Duff said it best in an article about the demise of team dynasties, those "sure bets" to win the championship year after year after year: "There are no guarantees, even when games mean the most." I'm sure the almost-perfect 2008 New England Patriots would agree.³

Want a guaranteed win? Take in a Harlem Globetrotters game. Or play Solitaire.

The Key to Fashion

Every season, fashionistas line the runways of Milan, Paris, New York, and London in search of answers to momentarily important questions like “Long or short?”, “Wide or narrow?”, “Stripes, solids, or plaids?”, “Anorexic or bulimic?”, or “What color is the new black?” Mixing up hues, materials, lengths, heights, and widths ensures a continuum of discards and purchases; the lifeblood of the industry.

Like sports, the fashion industry thrives on Surprise. In fact, one of the newest modern-day spectator sports is Celebrity Fashion Scrutiny—who’s wearing what, and why. It doesn’t just sell clothes, it sells magazines, and draws eyeballs to web sites and TV. Why else do people tune in to the Oscars?

The Difference in Politics

Surprise has reared its head and roared its power in politics ever since the dawn of democracy. Put the outcome of a race in public hands and watch the fun! From the days of “Dewey Beats Truman” (the embarrassing mistake by the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, who printed the expected result of the 1948 presidential election as its front-page headline) to the 2000 Bush-Gore Florida “hanging chad” debacle to 2008’s see-saw battle between Democratic candidates Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama (Clinton a sure thing! Obama hot, Clinton

toast! Hilary roars back! Obama sweeps! . . . well, you get the picture), followed closely by the Republicans' jaw-dropping decision to plop Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as its VP choice, politics have shocked-and-awed long before George W. Bush decided to visit Iraq.

And it's not just the end results either; the process of getting them also relies heavily on Surprise. To counter a jaded populace who are increasingly nonplussed by tacky attack ads, who don't believe the promises, and who are drop-dead bored by the standard speeches, candidates are creating personal and rather inventive videos to launch their candidacies, to announce their campaign theme songs (Hilary's *Sopranos* closing sequence parody), or to rally the troops (Will.I.Am's "Yes We Can" masterstroke for Obama).

The Underlying Spirit of Web 2.0

I've always said that without the spirit of Surprise, the Internet itself would still be stuck in gear 1.0. Think about this the next time you open an email forwarded to you by a friend: what spreads? The mundane, the usual, the expected? No chance. What "goes viral" are the wild, the unexpected, the unusual and—let's face it—the profane.

Seth Godin, one of the true maestros of the "new marketing," puts it this way: "If you want the word to spread, if you expect me to take action I've never taken before, it seems to me that you need to do something that hasn't been done before. It might not feel safe, but if you do the safe thing, I guarantee you won't Surprise anyone. And if you don't Surprise anyone, the word isn't going to spread."⁴

It used to destroy me when I heard presumably intelligent marketing execs say that their teams are busy cobbling

together “a viral video.” Get with the program, folks—the public decides what’s viral, not the creator. The big-budget corporate endeavors (à la the ill-fated Bud.TV, the \$40 million project called “one of the most ambitious-yet-poorly implemented brand forays into online content/video”)⁵ go embarrassingly ignored while the unheralded, bootstrapped, half-assed, independent eye-poppers like the Diet Coke-Mentos geysers, the supposed cellphone-popped popcorn, or the Blend-Tec scenes of blender destruction rip around the globe like a pandemic.

Surprise is the germ that jumpstarts a Web 2.0 virus; without it, things would spread as rapidly and easily as frozen peanut butter. In a Web 2.0 devoid of Surprise, YouTube would be as interesting as your parents’ Super-8 home movies (which are probably also there, but mercifully ignored).

Surprise is also at the foundation of some of Web 2.0’s most prolific corporate success stories. Show me the psychic that went out on a limb to predict the meteoric rise of Google or Facebook or MySpace or Ning and I’ll show you a liar. (Or a *really lucky* valley venture capitalist.) One of my favorite adages of all time is the skeptical, “He who predicts the future lies . . . even if he tells the truth.” You may have high hopes for a new venture, you may show it by placing a big bet on ’em . . . but you never *really* know.

The “Hot” in Hotels

I bring this one up for one main reason: the infamous, sacrilegious Holiday Inn slogan of the 1970s that stated, “The Best Surprise Is No Surprise.”

Compare that dreary sentiment to the one espoused by Mari Balestrazzi, Vice President of Design for the Morgan’s

Hotel Group, who admits: “One of the company’s original ideas was ‘hotel as theater’ . . . this whole notion of risk-taking and creating environments that are unexpected.”⁶ Down the street at The Meridien, its Senior Vice President Eva Zeigler has recruited a lineup of artists to come up with everything from limited-edition designer room keys, to hands-on cuisine workshops, to a custom-created cacophonic “soundtrack” to greet customers in the lobby. Why do it? As per Henri Scars Struck, who composed said soundscape: “The goal is to Surprise.”⁷

And in an effort to let bygones be bygones, I leave the last word to Peter Gowers, Chief Marketing Officer of the Inter-Continental Hotel Group (IHG), parent company of Holiday Inn: “Our (new) aim is to deliver personalization with personality. You can bring about consistency, but you also get a personal stamp on everything we do.”⁸ That’s one small step for Holiday Inn; one giant leap for Surprise.



Surprise works. It works everywhere. And it works big time. Put simply, Surprise is the difference between a “Holy Jeez!” and a “Who Cares?” And I don’t care what you’re selling—cool stuff, bold ideas, personal beliefs, political candidates, or just plain you—everything sells better with a “Holy Jeez!”

So back to our murky cloud, or as it shall henceforth be known, “The Murketing Message” (a term I SWEAR I came up with before even hearing about Rob Walker and his book “Buying In”!). I mentioned earlier how people don’t believe political promises anymore. Well, in the credibility game, marketing promises don’t fare that much better. People distrust marketers (a Yankelovich study in 2007 tore open the wound

and said that “76% of consumers don’t believe that companies tell the truth in ads”).⁹ They distrust them so vehemently that if they’re not simply ignoring them, they lie to them in surveys, focus groups, and other “intelligence gathering” (2006’s Research Industry Summit in Chicago concluded not just that “50% of all survey responses come from less than 5% of the population,” but one senior researcher went so far as to say, “We’re perpetuating a fraud”).¹⁰

People, however, trust other people. We speak the truth all right, but only behind marketers’ backs. And only to others. This is why the power of traditional mass media marketing is rapidly waning, and as a corollary, why the concept of Word Of Mouth Marketing is becoming increasingly vital—and effective. *Really* effective. Forrester Research revealed that “Friends and Family” are more than five times more influential than TV, radio, or newspaper ads.¹¹ Steve Knox, CEO of Procter and Gamble’s Vocalpoint Word of Mouth Marketing division may be less than objective, but he echoes the sentiments of many when he says that “The most powerful form of marketing is an advocacy message from a friend.”¹² Despite this, word of mouth (henceforth, WOM) is not a self-starter. It needs a catalyst, a kick-start, something to get it roaring.

Surprise is that something. If WOM is the fuel for today’s effective marketing machine, Surprise is the spark that ignites it. And the brighter the spark, the more raging the ensuing inferno.

In the seminal book on the subject, Andy Sernovitz, the former CEO of the Word Of Mouth Marketing Association (every cause has its official governing body), lays down the guiding principle of the genre:

Word of Mouth Marketing isn't about marketers or marketing. It's about real people and why those real people would want to talk about you and your stuff.

Here, here! Or, more appropriately: hear, hear!

In outlining his Four Rules of WOM, Sernovitz validates the need for Surprise. “Rule #1—Be Interesting. Nobody talks about boring companies. Rule #2—Make People Happy. Happy people are your greatest advertisers. Thrill them.”¹³ No need to even go to numbers three or four: point made.

So Surprise isn't a luxury, but a veritable necessity. And it's more necessary than ever in our brave new world of enlightened, cynical, information-omnivorous consumers. Consumers with more access to more data than any society in history. Consumers who won't accept trade-offs. Consumers who take for granted that everything had better be right, every time . . . and know how to bitch loudly when it ain't.

Author James Surowiecki, best known for his breakthrough book *The Wisdom of Crowds*, explains how this wisdom translates into some frightening action:

Even as the quality and reliability of products have generally risen, satisfaction ratings have not budged, and in some cases have actually fallen. Businesses are now dealing with buyers who are armed with both information and harsh expectations. In this environment, companies that slip up, even if it's simply failing to match customer tastes, can no longer count on their good names to carry them through. This gives nascent brands an opportunity to succeed,

*but it also makes staying power a lot harder to come by. Welcome to the 'What Have You Done for Me Lately?' economy.*¹⁴

If that doesn't scare you, listen to this rant from Naomi Wahl, a strategic planner at Ogilvy & Mather, who speaks on behalf of her Gen Y brethren and sistren:

*We are in the Age of the Here and the Now. The Age of the Moment to Moment. For you marketers, trying desperately to grab my Gen Y attention as I rush by, here are some tips. Firstly, your brand needs to be the new transformer of our time; capable of renewal and regeneration while demonstrating that essential 'I can't live without you' shiny feature. Next, don't linger. Tell me what you want to tell me, but tell me quickly because I'm already looking in someone else's direction. And finally, be meaningful. Be my hero, and I'll be your rock star.*¹⁵

Yikes! When it comes to price, quality, after-sales service, the shopping experience, guarantees, the whole enchilada, these guys know what they want. They want it all. More than that, they **EXPECT** it all. And there's only one way to please people who expect it all: GIVE THEM WHAT THEY DON'T EXPECT, when they least expect it. Like this:





Welcome back.

By its very definition and nature, Surprise can't be expected, hence its status as a marketer's indispensable secret weapon. The "secret" part is a fundamental distinction, as a regular weapon, no matter how potent, can be defended against if known. It's the sneaky, stealth stuff that ends up kicking your butt when you're not looking. Or, in the words of feared Prussian military strategist Karl Von Clausewitz, who knew a thing or two about weapons, "The backbone of Surprise is fusing speed with secrecy."¹⁶

And let me tell you, these days, marketers need all the weapons they can get their hands on. The game of persuasion has never been an easy one, but Life 2.0 has made things particularly tricky for professional persuaders, especially when you consider the current status of the media, which has seen its primary function converted from reflective to predictive. In their book *The Deviant's Advantage: How Fringe Ideas Create Mass Markets*, futurists Watts Wacker and Ryan Mathews describe the 180-degree shift in the dissemination of information:

*When most of us were young, news organizations prided themselves on their ability to accurately report on what had happened. Today, more and more space is being devoted to what they believe **will** happen. That's why most of us walk around with a vague feeling of déjà vu. By the time something actually happens, we've read, heard or seen it, generally several times. Ever since Watergate, significant news stories have been "broken" by news leakers rather than news makers.¹⁷*

With broadcast tools like video cameras, voice recorders, and publishing platforms democratized, omni-accessible, and ultracheap; with citizen journalists running rampant everywhere, blogging, vlogging, and podcasting, these days everybody knows everything—or seems to. Appropriately named “Spoiler Sites” (these web sites divulge inside info on films and TV shows long before they’re meant to be known by the general public) are sprouting up on the Net like genetically modified weeds. “Spoiler sites are for people who can’t read a book without skipping ahead to the final page,” SpoilerFix.com’s Isabelle Roy told *Entertainment Weekly*. “We live in a world where everything is instantaneous. We want answers now.”

The result, as per film director J.J. Abrams, is that “People think they’ve experienced things before they really have.”¹⁸ What’s worse, armed with this information, they often use it as a preemptive aggressive strike. An article in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper about how early Internet buzz tainted and basically sunk the premiere of “Gone With The Wind,” a highly touted British stage musical, pondered: “In the blogging age, is it possible to launch a spectacle that will surprise?”¹⁹

Well, the answer is yes, it is. Great Surprise isn’t easy to generate, but it’s worth the payoff. It’s not brain surgery, but it sure ’nuff is a brain workout. Done right, Surprise delivers that special reaction, one I have coined “***The Pow! Moment.***” It’s when your heart skips a beat, you’re overcome with that special little tingle . . . and you can’t wait to see what happens next.

Pow! Moments don’t merely generate delightful astonishment from your customers, they solidify the bond between you and them. And I don’t care ***WHAT*** business you are in,

from a mom-and-pop corner store to a multinational, there is **NOTHING** more important than the bond between you and your customer. Find a way to eternally concretize this bond and you'll never have another business worry. Ever.

But "eternal customer concretization" is easier said (even five times fast) than done. Like Crazy Glue, the Pow! Moment solidifies these bonds faster. It activates the intersect set, when Surprisor and Surprisee become one. If that sounds a little mutant, don't fret. In Surprise marketing, everything is somewhat askew. We live to defy conventional wisdom; to Surprise marketers, two in the bush is worth more than a bird in the hand—way more. We don't fear the unknown, we embrace it, and exploit it unabashedly.

I saw this in action a couple of years ago at a fundraising event at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dallas, Texas. It was at the annual NHL All-Star Game, more specifically the Garth Brooks Teammates for Kids Foundation Gala. After a concert by Trisha Yearwood, a fast-talking Chicago-based auctioneer took to the stage, surrounded by some gleaming, high-profile, big-ticket items up for bid. There were two new Dodge Nitro SUVs, a custom NHL-painted motorcycle made by the Teutul boys of *Orange County Choppers*, an all-expenses paid trip to see Garth perform in a Las Vegas show and have a private dinner with him afterwards, as well as the perfunctory signed original art and hockey memorabilia.

So guess which prize attracted the most feverish bidding? Would you believe . . . *an empty envelope*? It was a great lesson in Surprise 101. The auctioneer held up an envelope, showed there was nothing in it, and started bidding at a couple hundred bucks. For about five seconds, nothing happened. The room was silent and perplexed.

Then the crowd, figuring there had to be some sort of golden catch, started a bidding frenzy. All over the vast Landmark Ballroom, hands popped up and waved fervently, looking like some sort of fantasy-land, appendage forest. The silver-haired auctioneer, a seasoned pro, could hardly catch his breath keeping up with the rising total. When it all died down, he had raised close to \$5,000. For nothing.

Well, actually, not for nothing. The winner took home a bunch of signed memorabilia; essentially leftovers from the silent auction that took place earlier in the evening in the hotel's hallway.

The winner loved it. The crowd loved it. And I suspect Garth's Foundation didn't mind it either.

It may be scary, but exploring and exploiting the unknown provides disproportionate returns. The reward is worth the risk. If you're willing to take the risk.

Putting faith in Surprise can turn yesterday's fish-wrapped news into today's neon headlines. Just ask the people over at Nintendo. A pioneer in the videogame industry, Nintendo became a tired afterthought at the turn of the twenty-first century, playing a distant third fiddle to the whiz-bang wonders of Sony's Playstation and Microsoft's Xbox. Going head-to-head against them was suicide, so Satoru Iwata, Nintendo's president and CEO, took a different route. He introduced the radical Wii entertainment system, with a simple, human-motion-capturing control, which eschewed the industry's traditional hard-core gamer audience and went after regular folk, like yours truly.

When I first had the chance to try the game in the summer of 2005, in a preview setting at the annual Licensing Show in New York, I was astounded. As a guy who hadn't

played videogames in over a decade due to the complexity of button-pushing and sequence-remembering, I was blown away at how easy and intuitive it was. In ten seconds, I was playing video tennis, and playing it well. In essence, Nintendo reinvented the videogame experience from scratch.

“We are not competing against Sony or Microsoft,” said Iwata of the gaming market at the time. “We are battling the indifference of people who have no interest in videogames.”²⁰ “Wii was unimaginable for them. And because it was unimaginable, they could not say they wanted it. If you are simply listening to requests from the customer, you can satisfy their needs, but you can never Surprise them.”²¹

But Surprise them Iwata did. In a major way. He gave people what they didn’t expect. Certainly when they least expected it. And the people responded in kind; in the first six months of direct competition with Microsoft and Sony, Wii outsold Xbox 360 on a two-to-one basis, and crushed Playstation 3 by a four-to-one margin.

The media, unanimously dubious prior to Wii’s coming-out party (sticking its tongue out at its old-school graphics and mocking the system’s seemingly unpronounceable name), soon swooned all over Nintendo. In a *Fortune* magazine piece from June 2007, writer Jeffrey M. O’Brien gushed:

*Nintendo has shown a knack for leapfrogging its industry. Sure, some initiatives failed but the company rarely fails to Surprise. This time, in changing perceptions of gaming, Nintendo has surprised even itself.*²²

O'Brien also spoke to Nintendo's legendary videogame designer Shigeru Miyamoto, the soul of the company for decades (he gave the world superstars like the Super Mario Brothers, Donkey Kong, and the characters from *Legend of Zelda*), and the intellectual driving force behind Wii: "What I want to do," envisioned Miyamoto, "is to make it so people can actually feel something unprecedented." Feel something unprecedented. A somewhat more poetic way to say Pow! Moment, don't you think?

It's not just Nintendo and the wacky world of games. Pow! Moments are being popped by some of America's more traditional, mall-based businesses. OfficeMax's SVP Marketing and Advertising Bob Thacker (responsible for creating the world's largest rubber band ball and the mega-hit "Elf Yourself" viral Christmas Internet campaign) cites "Unexpected events" as his company's two-word marketing strategy.

Then there's the ubiquitous Apple. Even those critical of the company's heavy-handed, secretive, closed-source ways are still impressed with its Pow! Moments. "Part of the joy of being an Apple customer is anticipating the surprises that Santa Steve brings at Macworld Expo every January," wrote journalist Leander Kahney in a tough look at Steve Jobs in *Wired* magazine.²³

Meanwhile, stalwarts like ol' faithful Procter and Gamble are also jumping aboard the Surprise Express. The company's CEO, A.G. Lafley, who took the moribund old-school behemoth and turned it into a cutting-edge innovation breeding ground, boasts: "Three billion times a day, P&G brands touch the lives of people around the world. Our goal is to delight consumers at two 'moments of truth': First, when they buy a product and second, when they use it."²⁴

Three billion Pow! Moments a day? Be still my beating heart! Okay, that may be a little excessive, but the dream of Surprise becoming part of business's standard operating procedure is not unrealistic. And here's why. By now, we all know that the Internet has rewritten all the rules about commerce. As British computer scientist Gavin Potter notes: "The twentieth century was about sorting out supply; the twenty-first is going to be about sorting out demand."²⁵ *Wired* magazine is even blunter in making the point: "The Internet makes everything available, but mere availability is meaningless if the products remain unknown to potential buyers."²⁶

Surprise gets things known. It gets things talked about. And it gets things sold. So look around us again. That fog seems to be lifting a bit. The Murketing Message focus is improving. I'm no Johnny Nash, but I can see clearly now. The rain is gone.

The beam of Surprise is cutting through, and it beckons. Let's see where it takes us.

Summary

THE CRUCIAL STUFF CHAPTER 1 WANTS YOU TO REMEMBER

- Main point: Surprise is the most important aspect in contemporary marketing.
- It's also the reason we watch TV shows, movies, and sports; buy clothes; vote; pass along racy emails; and stay in cool hotels.
- Slash! It slices through the dreariness of the dreaded Murketing Message.

- **Talk-generator.** It is the spark to the flame that is Word Of Mouth marketing.
- **Equation to remember:** Two in the bush is worth more than the bird in the hand.