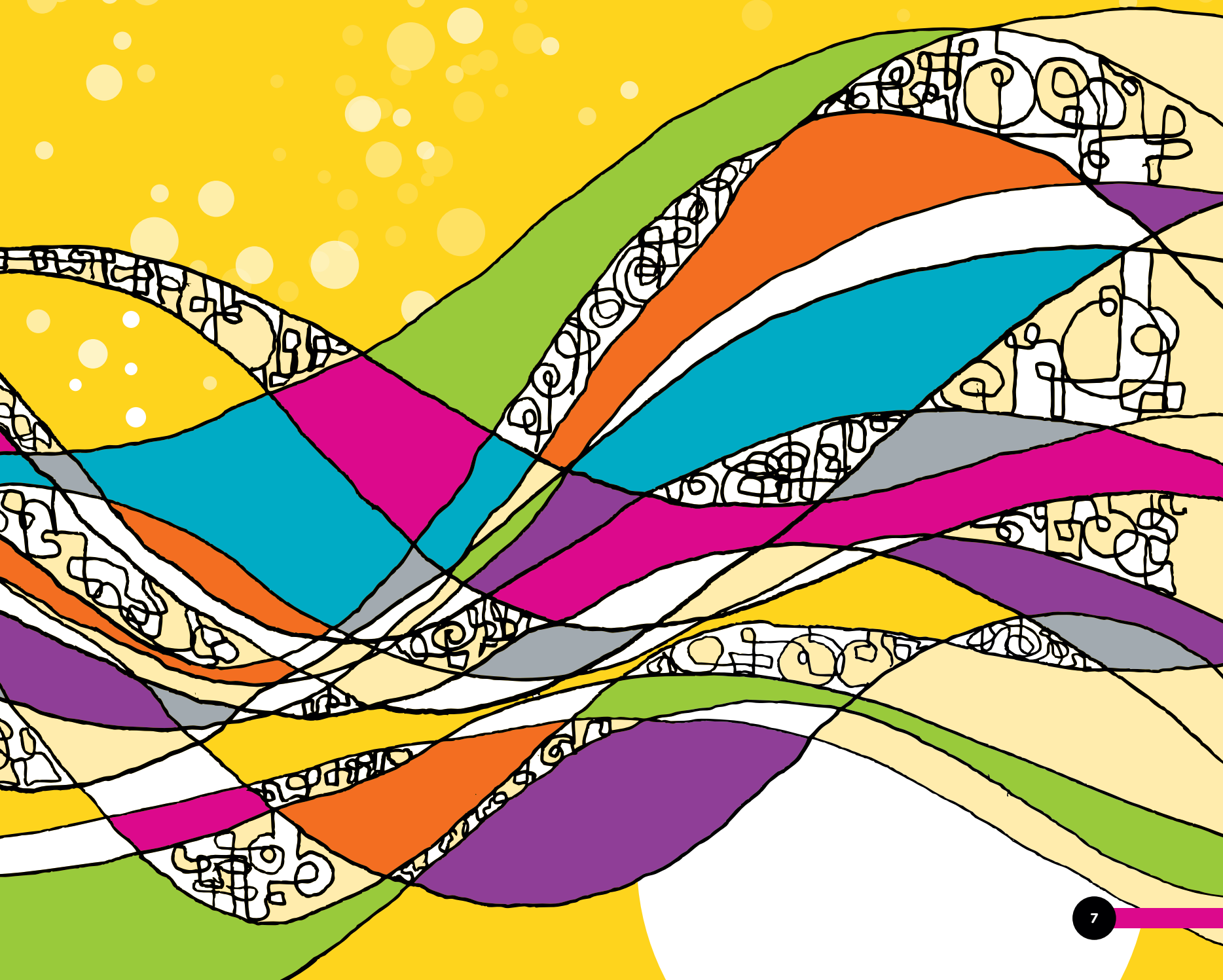


# making waves

The world of marketing is a turbulent place, moving at an incredible pace as technology and attitudes change. **Making Waves** rides the chaos and sets free the power of the masses.



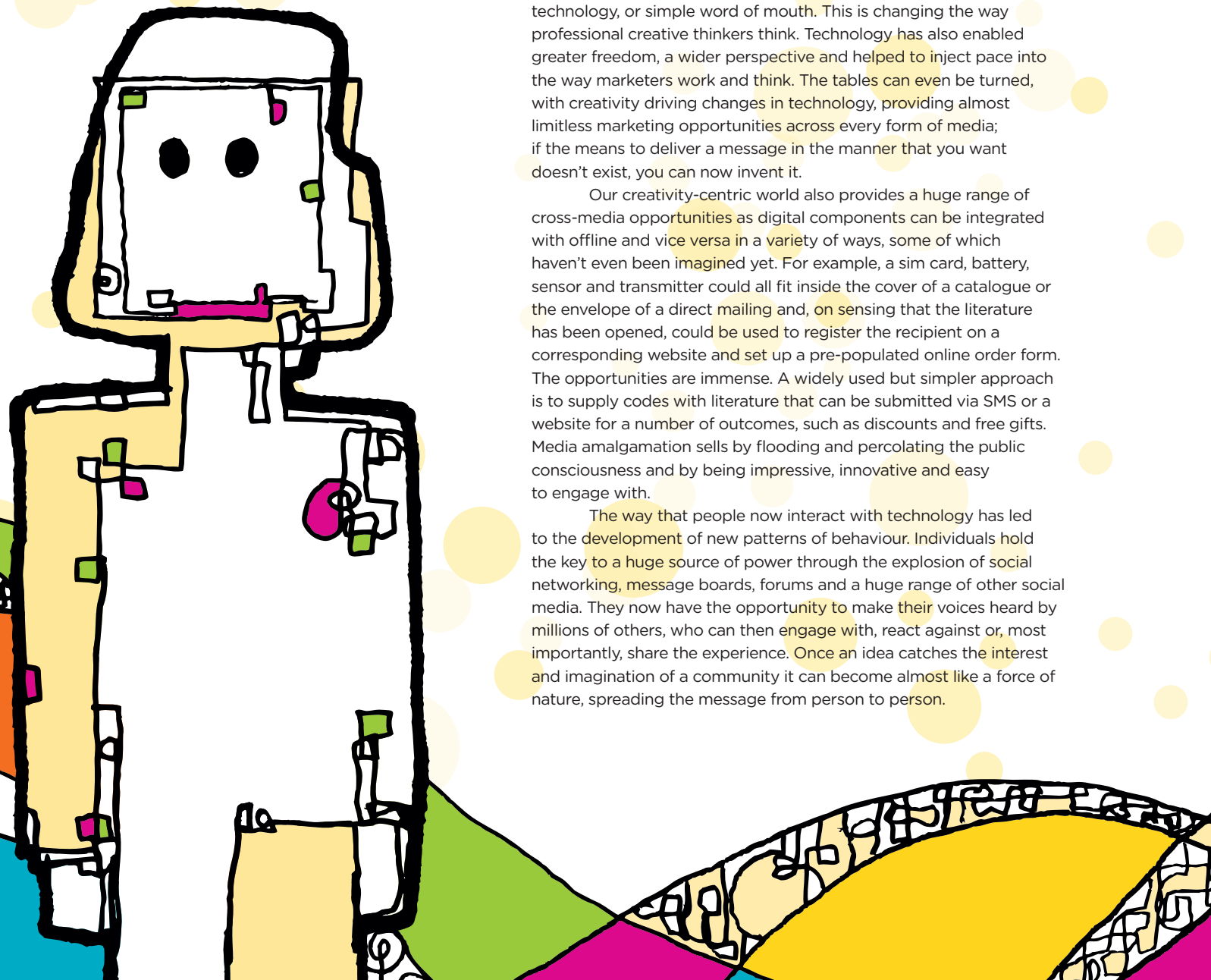


From guerilla warfare in the Ryvita Inch War campaign of the seventies, to a gorilla outdoing Phil Collins on drums for Cadbury at the end of the noughties, big disruptive creative ideas have been the hallmark of all that is great in advertising. However, a big idea can't produce even the tiniest ripple on the public consciousness by itself. To really make waves, an idea needs to be delivered to its audience through the right channels, and these days, the channels themselves are just as important, varied and exciting as the ideas they deliver.

Great ideas flow through people, and the connections that they have with one another, be it through the latest advancements of technology, or simple word of mouth. This is changing the way professional creative thinkers think. Technology has also enabled greater freedom, a wider perspective and helped to inject pace into the way marketers work and think. The tables can even be turned, with creativity driving changes in technology, providing almost limitless marketing opportunities across every form of media; if the means to deliver a message in the manner that you want doesn't exist, you can now invent it.

Our creativity-centric world also provides a huge range of cross-media opportunities as digital components can be integrated with offline and vice versa in a variety of ways, some of which haven't even been imagined yet. For example, a sim card, battery, sensor and transmitter could all fit inside the cover of a catalogue or the envelope of a direct mailing and, on sensing that the literature has been opened, could be used to register the recipient on a corresponding website and set up a pre-populated online order form. The opportunities are immense. A widely used but simpler approach is to supply codes with literature that can be submitted via SMS or a website for a number of outcomes, such as discounts and free gifts. Media amalgamation sells by flooding and percolating the public consciousness and by being impressive, innovative and easy to engage with.

The way that people now interact with technology has led to the development of new patterns of behaviour. Individuals hold the key to a huge source of power through the explosion of social networking, message boards, forums and a huge range of other social media. They now have the opportunity to make their voices heard by millions of others, who can then engage with, react against or, most importantly, share the experience. Once an idea catches the interest and imagination of a community it can become almost like a force of nature, spreading the message from person to person.



Consider the potential of all of these in an explosive cocktail. It's a combination of creative prowess, rich expertise in traditional techniques and the ability to tap the force of online communities. The 'pass it on', ripple-like, nature of this social phenomenon put us in mind of a giant digital Mexican wave, and the unpredictable flooding and flowing that takes place led us to only one possible label for these powerful and fluid events: **Waves**.

Now we can make waves of a much bigger kind, creating big disruptive ideas which gain massive momentum. In next to no time, a ripple becomes a roaring forty, using the audience itself as the most effective medium yet.

## The Benefits

### ROI

The huge efficiencies that occur both through the greater-than-the-sum-of-their-parts media combinations and the fact that it is promoted primarily through the public, free of charge leads to a fantastic Return on Investment. Making waves leads to a greater, faster and cheaper awareness than any other method that exists today.

### Feedback

The sheer scope for feedback that a campaign can achieve through the ability to enter into conversations on a massive scale is astounding. Making waves is not simply one-way, but can create a dialogue where response and criticism are encouraged and facilitated. Feedback is an incredibly valuable commodity in the marketing world and, if properly nurtured, a campaign can harvest a wealth of data on which it can then feed and grow.

### Loyalty

Because of its interactive nature, a campaign that makes waves can create a stronger bond between brand and audience, often to the point where brands are perceived as trusted friends rather than remote corporate assets. A course of relevant and considerate marketing activities could capture the heart and the mind of a customer and generate a high level of personal loyalty and attachment to the brand – or completely repel them if it's not done well!

Wave marketing is far from being an exact science and its chaotic nature can cause no end of headaches, but a well planned campaign should minimise possible difficulties and provide the kinds of returns that would be difficult to sustain through any other means.

## The Splash

To start a wave, you need to create a splash. This can be a big budget, multi-channel marketing push or the tiniest of nudges in the right direction, but whatever it is, it has to be both relevant and original as relevance combats disposability while originality makes a message more memorable and shareable.

As we mentioned above, the ideal process should not be restricted by the available media; there will be a point in the strategic process where the question of what is achievable needs to be asked – have a look at the **Consolidation** section of our **Strategy** chapter – but in the first stages there should be no such concerns. The focus should be entirely on creating the most original and relevant ideas and then appropriating, manipulating or even inventing media to fit it. The **Explosion** segment of our **Strategy** chapter provides in-depth guides on how to achieve original and relevant ideas.

After creating a big idea, the next step is to identify the right place to make the splash, and this requires a good strategy. Every strategy should start with a period of **Absorption**, where a huge range of the aspects of a company/brand and its surrounding environment – customers, competition, etc. – are studied in as much detail as possible, and it is from this in depth research that the answer to the question of where a campaign should start will be found.

### Who to Splash...

A large part of finding the right place to start a wave is deciding who to engage with and establishing how likely they are to take the message and pass it on. Within every target audience there are individuals who are predisposed to search out and share interesting and entertaining media, who revel in the act of discovery. The best way to engage with them is to leave small and inconspicuous tidbits, puzzles or breadcrumbs for them to follow. Usually the challenge is its own reward, but providing prizes can inspire further motivation for people to join in.

A far larger group are much happier letting the message come to them and will utilise websites that compile all of the best media that the previous individuals discovered, or will rely on their social networks to provide links to interesting videos, articles or events both online and offline. This group can then be divided across a spectrum depending on how likely they are to share media and how large their networks are, but generally, the best way to connect with them is to find the places that they are getting their information from and ensure that there are references and links to the campaign positioned on them. For example, if a target demographic is mothers, then mentions on sites such as **mumsnet.com** or their homophonous rivals **netmums.com** will do a great deal to start spreading the word.

Bloggers and journalists are the most useful of all groups. Their raison d'être is to spread the word and attracting their attention gives any wave a phenomenal kick-start.

But what of the passives – those to whom sharing in the context of social media is anathema? Depending on the audience, this group can be both large and critical to campaign success. They are receptive to traditional direct marketing techniques and should be targeted with direct mail and emails.

#### ...And How?

The development of an effective media strategy should be as creative as the big idea itself. Our limitless approach to the development of a campaign is made possible because we can appropriate, manipulate or even invent the media through which we communicate.

The audience, its sensitivities, its viewing, listening, reading and digital behaviours determine the optimum nature and blend of media.

It is important to provide people with what they actually want rather than what they say they want.

The biggest splash comes from presenting people with something that they didn't even realise that they wanted as surprise and discovery are a great catalyst for a recipient's desire to share; providing them with a 'look what I found' moment. If you investigate deeper into target audiences by trawling through their message board comments – filtering programs can be employed for this as they can identify when specific key words have been used – and starting conversations, you will gain far more honest opinions than can be garnered by questionnaires or focus groups, and with that information it should be possible to ascertain what it is that people want, both in a product/service and the marketing that promotes it.

After performing the customer analysis, the next step is to research the media – reading this book is a good start – so that you have an understanding that will allow you to use them to their full potential. Each media has its strengths and weaknesses and can be combined with others to both emphasise the positives and counteract the negatives. The key is to achieve relevance of media as this is just as important as relevance of message. To do this, look at the target audience to determine how they are used to receiving their information and which media channels best reflect them. For instance, a trendy company with ecological aspirations and a young demographic may be best suited to a campaign based around younger magazines, relevant TV programs, social media, emails,

websites and concise mailers printed on recycled materials rather than one that uses half a rainforest's worth of catalogues.

A great way to make an impact is to create an experience for the public to become involved in and want to share with their peers. This can be as simple as a funny video, picture or article or it can be a huge event with light shows and fireworks; the trick is to provoke a response that propels the brand out of the mess of marketing messages that flood everyday life, and into a person's conscious. This is why physical media – such as direct mail and catalogues – retain their importance as, although the internet is a great facilitator for fast and inexpensive marketing, until it can tickle the senses with sensory stimulation through touch, taste and smell, the greatest impact will always be created through a campaign that involves something that the consumer can physically engage with.

#### The Long Wave

'...word-of-mouth marketing will forever be the most powerful way of persuading customers to join us.'

*Richard Branson. The Future of Marketing [The Marketing Society]*

If a wave is started in the right place and imbued with a sufficient amount of originality and relevance, much of the input to spreading the wave is taken on by the public, but at no point will a campaign become completely self-perpetuating; it will always require enlivening by a series of supporting initiatives, such as a well timed surge in social media presence, to give it the push it needs to get back to the forefront of the public consciousness.

There is no point making a big splash, only to watch it quickly fade into obscurity. This is another great reason for using a combination of media as they all have very different response times: a TV advertisement or eshot will have a huge peak of activity in response, but die quickly while catalogues, door drops and even press will have less of an immediate peak but will draw responses over a much longer time period.

The reason for the importance of word of mouth is that, in general, we as a species of consumers are pack animals and we crave reassurance from those around us. Our money is hard earned and any purchase is usually preceded with a mental calculation of **Value** – found through the multiplication of **Quality** and **Benefit** divided by **Price** – versus the **Time** and **Effort** that it took to make the money required. A problem can arise with this process if certain values are unknown due to a lack of experience with the product, service, brand, etc. For instance, the quality of a product could be poor but

The development of an effective media strategy should be as creative as the big idea itself

the retailer isn't going to promote it as such and so the potential customer becomes uncertain; reassurances are, therefore, going to have to be provided before the purchase can be completed. Before the internet, the foremost method of obtaining reassurance was in brand recognition because it stood to reason that a brand that could afford advertising must have a large number of customers, and if they are receiving media coverage then they must be important to, and favoured by, a large number of people. In short, brand recognition was so powerful because there is safety in numbers.

In those decades where brand recognition was key, word of mouth worked best for niche or elite brands – such as Branson's **Virgin Atlantic** – where their customer community was small, discerning and well connected. However, the internet changed this as, above every other advancement that it provided the marketing world – speed, value or potential for targeting – its allowance for a huge number of people to make their voices heard by the rest of that huge number of people, turned word of mouth marketing from a niche approach to a mass market one. As such, peer recommendations and reviews have become the way to sell as they are incredibly accessible and add an extra level of reassurance; they reassure the potential customer that the reassurance is genuine. The product is no longer championed by a faceless mass of populace, but by Dave from Bristol who, as a real person, inspires far more trust. The reassurance relationship has, therefore, advanced from a primitive pack mentality to a civilised dialogue between individuals and it is this dialogue that needs to be at the forefront of marketing activities. A good example of this is **Trip Adviser**, where people who have been on holiday post reviews of the trip online for others to see.

It follows then, that to sustain a wave a company must amass customers who then go on to spread the word about the magnificence of their product and there are five key stages to achieve this:

#### 1. Win the customer

The first of these is the traditional goal of marketing and it remains incredibly important to meet customers' needs.

#### 2. Impress them

To impress a customer, a marketer needs to engage with the product or service and ensure that the communication has integrity; that what you are saying can be substantiated. Otherwise, ultimately, it will fail.

#### 3. Take care of them

To meet customer needs you have to understand that, in the world of waves, loyalty is worth more than novelty. There used to be a divide in marketing: current customers on one side and prospective customers on the other. Businesses that wanted to expand would have to win new customers and this took massive investment, often to the detriment of the existing customers. The thought seemed to be that once all of the wooing and promising had persuaded an individual to

make a number of purchases, those individuals were already in the bank and could be relied on to continue to spend with the brand with minimal marketing input while other conquests were sought out.

However, there is an ever growing movement of people investigating whether there are greener pastures elsewhere and, once again, the availability of a vast array of reviews and comparisons makes it likely that if a better service exists, they will find it. This Lothario-esque approach can, therefore, no longer work. Not only will the customer find somewhere else to spend their money, they will also take their potential as wave makers. To combat this marketers have to pay just as much attention and use just as many resources on current customers as they do on the potential ones. Why, after all, should a new customer get a discount, while the loyal customer gets nothing? Those loyal customers will see that they are being treated unfairly – and it really is quite unfair – and move on.

#### 4. Provide them with sufficient means and motivation to tell the world

This stage requires a variety of channels to be set up for customers to leave public feedback. This can be accomplished through online social media, where it is easy for people to both leave and read comments. We cover the specifics in more detail in our **Social Media** chapter, but the general aim of advertising the means by which customers can publicly query, praise or complain is to make it as easy as possible to spread the word and also to reinforce the honesty and customer engagement of a brand.

Once a means by which customers can share their views has been established, it is important to engage with the reviewers and get involved in the reviewing platform. Look through the comments and reviews and turn them into conversations by responding. The response needs to be dynamic, targeted reinforcement of customer importance, so thank an individual for a good review and address the concerns of a negative reviewer. By taking an interest on the human level, even bad reviews can become opportunities to show how a brand holds the customer's concerns above all else.

#### 5. Cultivating the Why

Most companies market themselves based on **What** they do and **How** they do it – “we make the best cars using the newest technology” – but they rarely say **Why** they do what they do. Loyalty can be triggered by the **Why**, as it creates a set of values with which the customers can identify and engage with. For instance, staying with our car example, telling people that, “we make cars because the world is a fascinating place and we want you to be able to get there,” informs the customers of what a brand stands for. What it believes in. And, in doing so, attracts individuals who have the same beliefs or values. It turns the act of purchasing, from a simple acquisition, to a vote, a pledge or an enrolment.

## Bad Waves

Wave marketing isn't without its problems. Its power is generated in a natural, chaotic, almost Darwinian environment and, as such, there is far less control of how a message is received and reacted to. There will, therefore, be times when obstacles – a bad press review for instance, or a disgruntled customer – will present themselves, determined to derail a campaign's wave building initiative. The trick is to learn from others' mistakes and aim for a preventive approach rather than a reactionary one, as the very nature of wave marketing makes it difficult to implement any counter measures after a campaign has been introduced into the public domain and produced a negative reaction.

One of the potential problems that can scupper a campaign is delivering the message to the wrong audience. **Apple** learnt this when they made the UK version of their 'I am Mac, I am PC' adverts. The ads had the comedians Robert Webb and David Mitchell claiming to be a Mac and a PC, respectively, and meant to present the PC as unreliable and boring while the Mac was cool and fun. There were two problems with these adverts: one was that the vast majority of those viewing them were PC users who weren't going to be won over by being called boring; and the other was that the PC character actually had the best, funniest lines and came across as far more likeable than the smug Mac character. It was so counter-productive, in fact, that **Microsoft** appropriated the 'I'm a PC' slogan in their own marketing.

Another common crisis occurs when claims and promises made in the marketing literature are not supported by strong products or services as it quickly becomes evident that the reality doesn't live up to the marketing and any positive wave will, at best, dissipate and, at worst, turn into a wave of negativity.

One of the most famous examples of this, which has become something of a legend, told to young marketers as a cautionary tale, is **The Great Hoover Flight Fiasco of '92**. **Hoover** had a backlog of vacuum cleaners and washing machines and had the ingenious idea of offering two free return flights to Europe when a customer spent £100 on any Hoover products. Word spread quickly and the response was massive, with a huge number of people taking Hoover up on its incredibly generous offer. The problem was that it was too generous and the travel agents struggled with the demands for free flights. To make matters worse, Hoover were seemingly oblivious to the trouble that they were in and launched another promotion, this time offering flights to the USA. Inevitably, the demand grew beyond Hoover's means and they were unable to deliver. Consumer watchdogs and the media became involved – further publicising, and driving demand for, the offer – and, after a prolonged series of lawsuits, the final cost to the company was £48m, accompanied by job losses for those

involved and a big hit to the brand's reputation. In the end, Hoover had made a massive wave but was unprepared and paid a heavy price for their mistake.

These types of event aren't hugely common, though, and if a campaign does attract negative comments it is not worth panicking. A certain amount of criticism is only to be expected as it is impossible to please everybody. Customers are aware of this and tend, therefore, to base their decisions on a range of feedback rather than being completely turned off by one bad review.

## Wave goodbye and start again

Every wave has its own natural lifespan and begins to dissipate when interest subsides and its energy is expended. If a campaign is based on a promotion or competition, the length of the wave is predetermined, adding urgency to response. If this element is absent, the audience activity around the campaign should be closely monitored throughout to provide an indication of when it is time to move on. The wave-maker should be succeeded in a timely way by a new campaign that capitalises on the impact of its predecessor.


## Creating a New Wave

To summarise, when it comes to starting a new wave remember:

- Make sure that the idea is big, strong, relevant, exciting and interesting as most individuals suffer from a sales message overload and this means that an idea needs to **stand out** if it is to be passed on.
- Most companies can take advantage of a **variety** of direct, targeted marketing media channel.
- No matter the means that are decided on to spread a campaign's message, there needs to be one constant if it is going to create the largest, longest running and most prevalent wave: the **human** component.
- Ensure that the product or service and after-purchase support lives up to the marketing and that there are plenty of channels for customers to spread the word. That what you are communicating has **Integrity**.

- Give it a big start and **know when to finish**; you can even have a cut off point as this lends urgency, creates more interest and drives you to create the next campaign.

Throughout the rest of this book we have aimed to help you to generate the ideas, create the strategies and choose the best combination of media and techniques – for example, traditional direct mail techniques are now being used in the creation of websites – to really make waves. We have captured for you some of the best tips to use in direct response media, the sort of media that allow you to measure their impact easily. However, keep in mind that these are only guidelines and that the best marketing is based on creativity and that any of these guidelines can, and should, be broken rather than get in the way of innovation. As Thomas Eddison once said, “Hell there are no rules here. We’re trying to accomplish something.”



Make sure that  
the idea is **big,**  
**strong,** relevant,  
exciting and  
**interesting**

