

At last... a marketing model that works!

 By [Paul Williams](#)

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My best childhood attempt at 'advertising' involved piling up old magazines on my toy wagon and selling them to my parent's dinner party guests. It was relatively lucrative for a four-year-old, yet my parent's unexpected embarrassment at my entrepreneurial instincts scarred me for life.

A good forty years later, I recognise that perhaps social etiquette requires one not to overtly sell anything to one's dinner party guests (though some 'ex-friends' selling Golden Products have managed to ignore this convention for years), but I must outline that the model for good advertising I established amongst the skewered gherkins and cocktail sausage rolls all those years ago is still one of the most successful models I have found.

It starts with understanding the people, and what drives them. All my parent's guests would never refuse the child of their hosts. (Who could refuse the shy smile of a scheming four-year-old anyway?) Their need to be socially accepted and part of the group defined them and this insight into their needs defined my youthful marketing strategy.

Package the product with the intent to create preference. You'll hardly ever purchase an old copy of *FairLady* from a 40-year-old man, but you'll consider it when it's being offered by a four-year-old with big, fluttering eyes. And next time you'll still be open to purchasing the product, simply to get the chance to be fluttered at by the same four-year-old again. (I know, I know... some of you might consider repeat purchase from the 40-year-old man too, depending on the "packaging").

Make sure it's entertaining to them. I may not have arranged the dinner party, but I made sure my marketing strategy took advantage of the fun and entertainment to let my marketing message come to life. I wasn't just selling old magazines; I was providing interesting topics for conversation and fillers for those awkward silent moments in the party.

If all else fails, give them food. Think about it. The most open conversations we have with others happen around food. We celebrate all the meaningful occasions of our lives around food. If you're going to truly engage with your audience, food is a good fail-safe method. And anyway, people love a free lunch, or dinner, and if you want them to be open to your product, food can go a long way to opening their minds to the benefits of your product.

Create a sense of obligation. Let every part of your campaign point them to the one choice they need to make. Don't tell them what to choose; just offer them the choice and provide them with enough info to make an informed choice. Even as a four-year-old, I knew enough not to demand that my customers purchase my product. Instead, I gave them enough signs to make it hard to choose otherwise.

Ignore social convention and surprise the customer. I am sure few of my parent's guests expected to be offered my

product at their dinner party. Sometimes, if your product has limited appeal within the normal marketing environment (as a worn-out copy of *Fair Lady* from 1972 might have) or the customer is faced with a whole range of parity options, then perhaps it's time to break out of the mould and change the game.

Take the product to the people. Setting up shop in one place when my target market were scattered around the house would eventually reap some results, no doubt, but the quickest way to untold riches was to get the product in their hands. I think I share this strategy with Egyptian souvenir traders, who rely on tourists simply handling their wares and then removing any opportunity for them to return the goods.

But, if you want to be in business for the long term, then the trick is not to irritate the customer... if he or she truly does not want your product, move on; find the customer who wants to interact with your brand.

Have the chutzpah to ask. Hell, if a four year old knows how to ask an adult to pay for second-hand reading matter, surely you and I can ask our customers...? I'm absolutely sure we have a better product to offer them, so what's stopping us from asking? These days, with so many options in the market, sometimes it just needs someone to have the guts to ask the question, "Do you want to purchase my product?" The worst marketing usually never gets to this point.

Make it memorable. My foray into mobile magazine merchandising may have been short-lived, unlike the parent-inflicted punishment that followed, but the story it generated and the laughs my parents got out of retelling it at my 21st birthday have lived with me for all these years. Just goes to show how memorable simple good marketing can be.

ABOUT PAUL WILLIAMS

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