

DOMO REWRITES THE BOOK ON VIRAL MARKETING

More and more frequently these days, advertisers have struggled with the concept of the Internet experience and how to best reach an audience that is hard to locate and largely unresponsive to traditional advertising. Whereas just 10 years ago television and print were still the best ways to reach almost any target audience, advertisers today look out on an increasingly fragmented consumer market. It's not surprising therefore that many marketing executives have allocated increasingly larger pieces of their budgets to Viral



campaigns. Viral marketing is an approach that relies heavily on the Internet and the multitude of social networks formed there to increase brand awareness as fans pass along the message to friends and family. Today viral campaigns can be frequently found on websites like Myspace, Facebook, and many others. Viral marketing can take the form of video clips, Flash games, text messages, e-books, etc. One example of viral marketing was seen in the Nine Inch Nails promotional campaign for their 2007 concept album *Year Zero*. The band left USB drives at concerts and those were followed up with a slew of interlinked websites that revealed clues about the dystopian future in which the album takes place.

There is definitely a solid basis for using the Internet as an outlet for viral marketing campaigns. As of August 2006, Myspace had hit a major milestone, the 100 millionth account was created. The site reportedly has 230,000 new registrations per day. Facebook, another enormous social networking site, has 80 million active users worldwide. With those kinds of numbers it's no wonder these websites serve as an outlet of choice for advertisements of all kind. The problem however with many of the viral campaigns we've seen is that they just don't ring true. By its very nature something viral is passed from one person to the next because they think it's worth sharing with their friends and family. Some of the most popular viral crazes were not started by advertising firms or corporations, but by unknown individuals that had the passion.

When Myspace had just launched back in 2003, nobody could have expected that it would eventually garner millions of regular users and a worldwide audience. The Myspace pioneers simply set out to create a fun home for social networking. But, the idea was one that people felt passionate about and the rest, as they say, is history.



That brings us to Domo, the poster child for viral marketing. In our humble opinion, Domo is perhaps THE great example of the power of the Internet to spread viral concepts and ideas. Domo-kun, as he was originally named, began life in Japan as an advertising icon for broadcaster NHK. Created by Tsuneo Goda, Domo-kun was only meant to last for one seasonal campaign to promote the TV station. As with all great viral concepts, however, Domo-kun found an audience, not only in Japan, but all over the world.

One of the ways that Domo became popularized around the world was through the website www.Fark.com. The character got attention as an internet meme in and around Japan because of a thread on Fark from 2001. From then on, users began using the image of Domo in various flash games and humorous pictures.

So, the real power of Domo lies in another trend, user-generated content. Domo has gained so much positive attention that people have not only started using his likeness for internet inside jokes, but as arts and crafts projects too.



One girl decided to design a Domo ipod cover for her boyfriend, and publish it on her fansite. Within a few days, people picked up on the idea and started making their own ipod covers and other accessories. This is really the powerful concept behind Viral Marketing that so many campaigns have missed; if fans really identify with a character they will spread the word. That is the real power of viral marketing - passion.

While Domo shorts will debut this fall on Nicktoons Network, the immense popularity of Domo on the Internet has allowed us reverse the normal go-to-market strategy. Typically a TV series is launched and then, a year or two later, licensed goods are tried in the market, not always with success. What's unusual about Domo, as Boston Globe writer Rob Walker points out, is

that he is hitting the US retail marketplace long before he is making his appearance on American television. "He's on T-shirts and accessories at Hot Topic, on greeting cards at many Barnes & Noble locations and grocery stores, and is expected to be sold as a plush doll at F.Y.E. stores. Then again, Domo is a merchandisable star not so much because he has a TV show in the works but because of his track record in what is arguably the most

potent entertainment form of our time: clowning around on the Internet.” And that’s exactly the point. Never before our current technology could any brand have such hype surrounding it before it has even hit the airwaves.

This month we have launched a major Domo promotion on Veoh.com whereby they will be premiering some of the new Domo shorts on their online video service. Veoh.com has 25 million unique monthly users across the globe. Most importantly, the site draws largely a teen and young adult audience, perfect for keeping our current fan base at the core of everything we do. During June and July, 12 new shorts will premier over the course of five weeks and, additionally, will help shepherd users to the Domo-Nation site. On Domo Nation, www.Domonation.com, the news section features a Domo Veoh Challenge, asking fans to get involved and design or upload an original Domo image for a chance to win Domo merchandise.

So, beyond building awareness and loyalty for Domo we expect the Veoh promotion will also drive traffic to Domonation.com. Long term, Domo Nation will become a key cog in maintaining and keeping the Domo brand a fan-based, fan-personalized, fan-led brand. With Domo success is not driven by Brand Management as much as by Fan Management. And that’s how Domo is rewriting the book on Viral Marketing.