

"GUERRILLA MARKETING FOR THE ONLINE WORLD."

JOLT!

**MARKETING TACTICS FOR
PROGRAMMERS, DESIGNERS,
FREELANCERS, MAKERS, AND
ENTREPRENEURS.**

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Jolt

*Creative marketing tactics for programmers, designers,
freelancers, makers, and entrepreneurs*

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Introduction

To get people to buy, you need their attention first.

Attention is the lifeblood of your business. If people don't know who you are, it doesn't matter how good your product is. You can't sell what people don't see.

The good news is that it's easier than ever to get your message out. The internet has democratized mass communication.

As a kid growing up in the '80s, I had three TV channels. Everyone watched the same shows because there weren't any other choices. I was limited by availability. The only way to hear about something new was to see it on TV, in the newspaper, on the radio, or in a magazine.

The internet has spawned thousands of new channels. YouTube alone has 17,000 channels with more than 100,000 subscribers each. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat make it easier than ever to engage with customers. Blogs still attract significant traffic: On WordPress alone, over 409 million people visit a blog each month.¹

The downside? It's harder to get people to pay attention to what you're saying. When I was a kid, only the big media companies had a megaphone. Now everyone has one. Attention is a currency and there's only so much of it to go around. Consumers now have thousands of places where they can spend their time and attention. The pie isn't bigger, and there are

¹ <https://wordpress.com/activity/>

more people that want a piece of it.

The doors

It's hard to rise above the noise, but if you don't, you can't be in business.

Imagine a hallway with hundreds of doors. Your product is behind one of them. What the customer doesn't know is that your product is a pot of gold. Your competitors' products? They're buckets of coal.

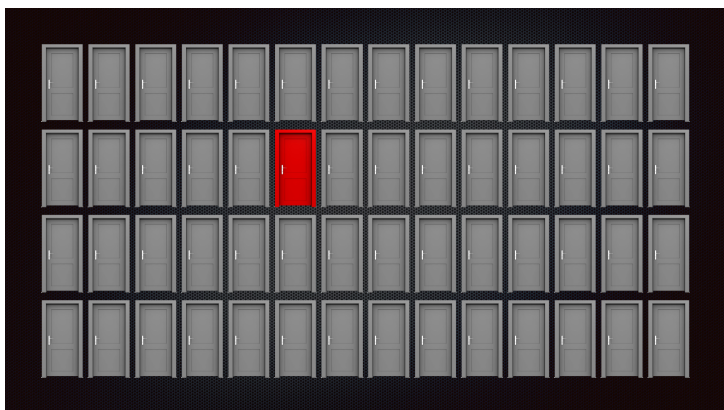
The customer needs to choose the right door to get to the pot of gold. They can only choose once. The doors themselves all look the same: they're solid and black.

How would you help the customer get to your product?

First, you'd paint that black door red. Give your customer a reason to notice *your* door.

Second, you'd probably put a sign on your door. It might say something like: "If you're looking for a pot of gold, open this door!"

Third, you'd leave your number. You know those tear-off phone numbers you see on bulletin boards? You'd have those too, just in case the customer wasn't ready to commit. This way, they'd have something in their pocket to remember you by.



A real pot of gold

Marketing can attract customers, but they'll only stick around if your product is good.

At its core, marketing is appealing to human desire. That's what gets people to buy.

To succeed, our product's quality needs to live up to its promise. Good marketing cannot “outrun” a bad product. Ultimately, word of mouth prevails.

"Most marketing problems are a product problem." — Lars Lofgren

People make their purchasing decisions emotionally and then justify them rationally.

For those of us who make things, this means two things:

1. A product's emotional appeal are what gets customers in the door.

2. Usage and enjoyment are what gets customers to stick around.

If we want to run good businesses, we need both.

Surprise them

So let's assume your product is great. How do you get people's attention? How can you, in effect, paint the door red?

You can't use the same tactics as everyone else. People are in a slumber. They have thousands of messages thrown at them every day. People don't respond to outdated methods.

This gives you an opportunity: Be different, break out of the mold, and surprise folks. People long for originality, creativity, and imagination.

Terry O'Reilly, host of the radio show and podcast *Under The Influence*, summarizes why this approach is effective:²

The element of surprise is one of the most powerful tools in marketing. It creates impact. Surprise is the vital element of any good story. As marketer John Steele says, in surprise lies the energy to change a mind, convince, inspire, recruit or persuade. In other words, surprise is a catalyst for action.

That's what this book is about: Delivering the jolt of excitement that your audience craves.

Each chapter features a unique marketing idea you can try. I'll provide you with real-world case studies for each. As well,

² <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/undertheinfluence/radio-still-makes-waves-1.3588661>

you'll get specific action steps to use in your business. Some early reviewers called it "guerrilla marketing for the online world."

These are unorthodox tactics. As you read them, you might think: "Nah, that won't work for me." Push yourself to consider it. My job is to make creative suggestions. Your job is to think of creative ways to apply them.

My goal is to move you out of your comfort zone and inspire you to try something new. My hope is that this creative stretching helps you acquire new customers for your business.

Let's get started.

2

Rage Against the Trend

In the previous chapter, I told you to jump on trends early. In this chapter, I'm going to tell you to do the opposite.

Sometimes you can get more attention by going against the grain. Derek Sivers takes this position on his blog:

I know I'm not the only voice you hear. There's a message I know that most of my readers or listeners are hearing, because it's a common message we all hear these days. I don't want to just duplicate it. So I try to think of a good counter-[argument]. I do it to compensate for something I think is missing in the common message. So my public posts are a counterpoint meant to complement the popular point.¹³

We see this in music all the time:

- Punk rock was a reaction to disco and arena rock.
- Grunge was a reaction to the hair metal scene in L.A.
- Conscious hip hop was an east coast reaction to the west

¹³ <https://sivers.org/counter>

coast's gangsta rap.

If you can't be early, be different

The benefit of jumping on a trend diminishes greatly once the market becomes saturated. Everyone is trying to duplicate the early-movers' steps, trying to a piece of the pie. In his 2014 XOXO talk, Kevin Kelly warned attendees:

*Anytime you try to emulate someone else's success, you're only going to get a sub-set of their success. What got them there won't get you there.*¹⁴

Do you know anyone with a Microsoft phone or a Blackberry? Both were late to the full-touchscreen mobile game. They tried to replicate Apple's success by making copycat phones and charging a premium for them. Android succeeded by making the operating system free to manufacturers. This allowed them to move faster and cheaper than their competitors.

Once you give up this idea that the path is set for you, it becomes freeing. Now you know it's up to you.

To succeed, you need to forge your own path.

Case study: Pokemon Go

I mentioned this game in the last chapter. It's a fascinating example of countervailing popular wisdom. It breaks the rules. Sara Haidar reveals some of these in her excellent article,

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iicmnizKPIk>

*Pokémon Go vs Growth Hacking:*¹⁵

1. The game doesn't ask you to invite friends (or upload your address book).
2. It doesn't send push notifications.
3. There is an in-app store, but it doesn't prompt the user to buy upgrades.
4. Up until now, the game hasn't been featured in any of the app stores.

If you've played a popular game like *Clash of Clans*, you'll immediately notice the disparity. *Clash of Clans* feels like a virus: it's constantly sending notifications, and asking you to make in-app purchases.

More so, Pokemon Go spread organically, with very little spending on advertising. It's rumored that Supercell, the studio behind *Clash of Clans*, spends over \$1 million a day on marketing their games!¹⁶

Pokemon Go broke other rules when it comes to gaming too. It's a real-world game that gets you off your couch, exploring landmarks like museums, monuments, and parks. The game is also social. It's not uncommon for players to interact when they meet up at Pokestops.

A phenomenon like this makes people curious. They want to try it for themselves.

¹⁵ <https://medium.com/@pandemona/pok%C3%A9mon-go-vs-growth-hacking-c2b1315cb4a4#.we1q35ly6>

¹⁶ <http://airherald.com/clash-of-clans-spend-1m-a-day-in-marketing/4933/>

Case study: My blog

The predominant trend on the web right now is clean, flat design. Everything is designed to look crisp and professional.

I decided to go the other way. My website is decidedly rough, raw, and rugged. I use an unfashionable monotype typeface. My links are the browser's default color: blue. It looks, well, ugly.

Surprisingly, people love the design. It's so different, it's refreshing.



Quit copying "best" practices. Following the crowd just means you blend in. You don't want to fit in; you want to stand out.

Be careful

Before you go into rebel mode, carefully consider your move. Some trends are so strong and prolonged that they're worth investing in, regardless of how late you are. For example, if you still don't have an email address, I'd say you should probably get one. Your fax number won't cut it anymore.

What you're looking for are the rumblings of revolt. You

don't want to be the lone wolf, you want to be part of a resurgence. Have your ear to the ground. If notice a thread of discontent, it might be time for you to lead the countermovement.

Checklist

If you're going to rage against the trend, make sure it's a good move by following this checklist. All of these should be true:

- Has the trend become a best practice or common wisdom?
- Is there already an underground countermovement?
- Is your audience open to the countermovement?
- Can you engage in the countermovement and still connect with your audience?
- Does the countertrend still allow you to sell your product?

Your turn

Opportunities

As soon as something becomes a best practice, that's an opportunity for disruption. Here are some ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

Web design

What are the current trends? If it's popular to have a white background, try a different color. If everyone's using photos, try hand-drawn illustrations. Does every website have a pop-up asking you for your email address? Create an "anti-popup"

where you say:

To improve your reading experience, I've purposefully not used a popup here. Want more from someone who hates popups as much as you do? Subscribe here.

The fact that you're different will mean you'll stand out.

Honest Instagram

On Instagram, everyone's trying to create the illusion of a perfect, colorful dream world. What if you did the opposite? Take only black and white photos, and show the gritty side of your life.

I'm trying this myself with a new account called @sohagard. I started with zero followers. This will be an ongoing experiment; check back and see how it goes!

Reverse the maxim

Our culture has common sayings that have been around forever. One way to surprise people is to modify these truisms. For example:

- **Instead of "happy hour," why not "sad hour"?** This is exactly what the Kona Brewing company did in 2014. They asked, why only one happy hour? Why not make 23 hours of the day happy, and have one sad hour?¹⁷
- **"Don't go where the money is; go where the money is going."** Here I've mixed an old proverb with Wayne

¹⁷ <http://www.duncanchannon.com/2014/05/dear-mainland-check-out-our-first-work-for-kona/>

Gretzky's famous quote: "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been."

A different incentive

It's common practice to offer people a free PDF if they subscribe to your mailing list. Why not offer something else? Here are unique ideas other people have tried:

- **Useful templates.** Bidsketch is online proposal software. What do they offer as a free incentive? Offline proposal templates for Microsoft Word, Apple Pages, and Adobe InDesign!¹⁸ The connection to their product is clear: If folks want templates, they'll likely benefit from proposal tracking software.
- **Free stickers.** Why not send subscribers something real? DesignGood.com will send you stickers via old-fashioned post when you signup for their email list.
- **Photos, sounds, videos.** Music for Makers is a stock music site.¹⁹ They sell royalty-free music. For \$25 you can download a track and use it on your promotional video, podcast, or presentation. You can also sign up for their email list and receive a free MP3 every Monday. These are the same songs that are for sale, but available only for a short time.

¹⁸ <https://www.bidsketch.com/proposal-resources/proposal-templates/freelance-writing-proposal-template/>

¹⁹ <https://musicformakers.com/>

About the Author

Hi, my name is Justin Jackson, [@mijustin](#) on Twitter. I've done product marketing for startups like Sprintly, as well as consulting for clients around the globe.

I love marketing, and I love making things. I've married these two passions on projects like [MegaMaker](#), [F*cking Webmaster](#), [Text Me Slacker](#), [Nerd Mullet Propaganda](#) and the [Product People Club](#).

You can email me at words@nerdnorth.com.

For more information about Jolt, visit justinjackson.ca/jolt.

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Writing a book is damn hard. This is my third book, and I always forget how hard it is.

My name's on the cover, but there's no way this would have happened if it weren't for the following people.

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Renee Jackson (who happens to be my mom) and Karen Unland (who is a dear friend, and has over 15 years experience as a journalist) saved me on this project.

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My family

I'm a pain in the butt to live with. When I'm in the midst of creating something, I'm often distracted, moody, and exhausted.

My wife Lorinda, and my kids (Sadie, Marty, Jamis, and Liam) are amazing. My highest motivation is to provide for them. Making things like this book helps me to do that.

The first readers

To those of you who bought the initial version of this book and helped me make it better: thank you.