

Lessons from Willy Wonka on the art of promotion

 By [Andrew MacKenzie](#)

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"He's brilliant!" cried Grandpa Joe. "He's a magician! Just imagine what will happen now! The whole world will be searching for those Golden Tickets! Everyone will be buying Wonka's chocolate bars in the hope of finding one! He'll sell more than ever before!"

A great story teaching children to be [grateful, polite and humble](#), and for parents a reminder not to breed a culture of entitlement and greed with the next generation. But as marketers we can learn a few lessons from this story about the foundations of great marketing.

Keep it simple

Wonka can make the most incredible and complex confectionary but his campaign is a simple, no barriers, no tech frills, in-pack instant win. Across his brand, his consumers open their packet to see if they have won a golden ticket. That's it. Short and sweet.

Get consumers' attention

Win a holiday? A telly? Stuff you never knew you needed? Cash? Whilst little imagination goes into 'BIG' promotion incentives, Wonka's promotion did two things: it acted as an incentive to purchase, and it became an expression of what made the Wonka brand so special. Wonka understood the mystery of his confectionary and what happened behind those gates, was what made people love/buy his chocolate.

Thinking of your brand, and considering the consumer mindset and buying behaviour (which is a little less rational!) allows you to take advantage of a huge attention grabbing, creative opportunity.

Which leads us onto...

Great design

The golden ticket might not have been such a marvel if it wasn't golden. Beautifully designed promotions, with thought given to the target market and have increased appeal through foiling, textures or enticing imagery, are more likely to gain more traction.

Have the right team

The Oompa-Loompas were the backbone of the Willy Wonka empire: loyal, hardworking and knowledgeable. Pick the right team to run your promotion: do they have the right consumer insight, creative skills or media buying capabilities?

Exclusivity

Although Wonka only gives away five golden tickets, individuals' hope is enough motivation to drive them wild to search for a winning bar.

By limiting the number of prizes, and announcing when each ticket is found, the fear of missing out becomes feverish. Yes, high frequency of win is a great thing to drive sustained engagement, but don't forget that people play in hope, rather than expectation.

Know your niche

Wonka knew that his niche was children, and his promotion captivated them. What child wouldn't want to tour a chocolate factory and indulge in free sweets for the rest of their lives?

Deliver on your promise

So many brands make great claims of winnings and consumers get into a frenzy, only to be left disappointed when the prize doesn't hold up to its promise. How a consumer engages with your brand, and the feeling they are left with differentiates you from your competitors - so give them an experience they won't forget for the right reasons.

Consider the personal brand

The enigma of Willy Wonka definitely added to the mystery of his brand: similar to Richard Branson with Virgin and Steve Jobs with Apple. It doesn't have to be one person, but the 'who' behind a brand plays a huge role, so discover who and how you might be able to use as a lure for consumers.

Wonka was a brand guru. Investing in your company brand, your product brands and your personal brands is so important... and generally in business everything stems from your personal brand, so take a cue from Wonka and use your personal brand to breathe life into your company brand.

Diversify, diversify, diversify

Willy Wonka was the king of innovation, he could have easily rested on his chocolate bar laurels, but he created Fizzy Lifting Drinks (placing him in the highly-competitive soft drink category), Everlasting Gobstoppers, Three-Course-Dinner-Gum (which today would have him in a battle with Extra and Chappies), Wonkavision... you name it, he invented it, and he wasn't afraid of failure. If something failed Wonka (and his Oompa-Loompas) would keep going until they got it right. Have the same approach to your products and promotions you run.

Make it famous

Wonka was a showman and a great storyteller and fame was at the heart of his mission. His promotion was talked about, shared and trending. Imagine the impact it would have had in today's social media age where storytelling on a digital platform is literally booming!

49% of South Africans have access to the Internet, and 11.8 million of us (South Africans) have a Facebook account, and 6.6 million have a Twitter account. Imagine those users all craving likes, retweets or new followers who are driven further by the frenzy if allured by something novel or limited edition.

If you want a promotion or a campaign that people remember, even after all the tickets have been found, deploy your

strongest creative minds. The right promotion has the potential to explode into mainstream and social media spaces making your clients famous for all the right reasons.

Accoring to World Wide Worx and Fuseware's annual SA Social Media Landscape study.

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