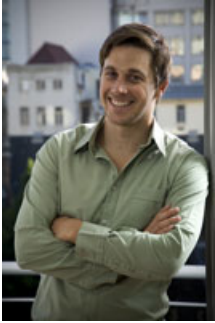


Nine step dummies guide to WoM marketing

 By [Jason Stewart](#)

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When people talk excitedly about your products or services, they are a powerful magnet for attracting new customers and driving sales. Here are nine easy steps to word-of mouth marketing (WoMM).



1. What is WoMM?

It's the exchange of first-hand information from one person to another. Word-of-mouth marketing stimulates word-of-mouth.

2. What does it do?

It starts (and maintains) an active, mutually beneficial dialogue between your customer, your intended customer and you, the brand. It gives people a reason to talk about what it is you do and offer.

3. To whom is it most suited?

WoMM works best for brands that require a public voice. It's a formidable marketing tool for brand managers, marketing managers, marketing directors and brand custodians in general (ad, PR and brand management agency personnel).

4. In which industry does it offer the best ROI?

WoMM is relevant to all industries as long as people are involved. The question to ask is more about what role one needs WoMM to play. i.e. "Is my brand / product / service remarkable enough to stimulate WoMM?"

5. Why use it?

With traditional media, your brand stands a 1-in-325 chance of generating awareness, versus a 1-in-3 chance via word-of-mouth of generating action. Brand credibility and trust are down. Consumers have stopped basing their purchasing decisions on traditional media referral channels. They've started looking for referrals from a trusted source (i.e. an "influencer"). South Africans are particularly partial to word-of-mouth. We are 86% likely to recommend a product (and that's 17% higher than the world average).

6. So how does it work?

WoMM bridges the gap between awareness generated through traditional advertising and the "trust factor" required in getting people to buy your brand. It works when "influencers" share knowledge about your brand with other individuals (e.g. their friends or colleagues) in an informal conversation. Influencers connect with their peers and unleash personal, experience-based conversations about brands that they have tried and tested.

7. Who are these 'influencers'?

Influencers are people (like you, me and Joe Soap next door) who have a greater than average reach or impact socially, because of the amount of talking (and sharing) they do! In addition to their social connectiveness, they also have sufficient credibility and respect in order to provoke their audience into action.

8. How would a WOMM campaign typically unfold?

HaveYouHeard will develop a WoMM strategy for a brand once we understand exactly what needs to be achieved. The target market, the product, the campaign objectives and budget available influence the execution idea.

We then start the process of identifying and recruiting the most influential people within whose circles the brand concerned is marketed. This is a very extensive on-the-ground process and takes between 4-8 weeks to complete effectively. We then begin to build relationships with the influencers with the goal being to convert them to informal brand ambassadors who will go out and naturally spread WoMM and recommendations about the product.

There are three pillars to every campaign. The first being education, which we find is vital as many purchase decisions are ill-informed. (Generally the reason why consumers won't purchase your brand is because they have heard something false about your product and this has generated a misperception.)

The second pillar is experience, where the influencers get to experience your product for free. This is vital, as most WOMM is normally spread based on product experience.

The final pillar is engagement and this looks at how we engage with the influencers and the type of relationships we build with them.

The amount of WoMM generated from a campaign is directly related to the enthusiasm that the influencers have towards the benefits they have experienced from the product. Word-of-mouth's best friend is momentum, meaning that it gets going very slowly and then starts building up until it's finally strong, sustainable and self-running.

9. The big question - how does one measure the success of WoMM?

Based on the brand's objectives, certain performance indicators are set and ROI is thereby gauged. HaveYouHeard includes many different performance indicators in all campaigns, such as conversational reach and impact, change in perception, message, as well as behaviour.

The ultimate success of a word-of-mouth campaign is in the sustainability of the word-of-mouth generated. Are people still spreading the messages? Are people still excited about the product? Are people still buying, using or active? Are people still recommending the product to their friends? If the campaign is able to create an environment stimulating all of the above, then the WoMM has been successful.

ABOUT JASON STEWART

Jason Stewart is the 30-year-old entrepreneur, co-founder and MD of HaveYouHeard, South Africa's first specialist Word-of-Mouth marketing (WOMM) agency. After working and travelling for three years, Jason returned to Cape Town to pursue studies in advertising. He enrolled at the Red & Yellow School of Advertising, where he obtained a postgraduate Higher Diploma in Marketing and Advertising Communications Management. Contact him at jason@haveyouheard.co.za.

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