

Innovative Strategies for Launching New Products

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Far too often, and more often than they'd like to admit, companies spend many millions of dollars building a product that fails in the market when it is launched. Achieving "product fit" in a given market is not 100% scientific. Companies like P&G create thousands of concepts that get boiled down to hundreds of prototypes, and only 2% of those prototypes typically do well enough in consumer research to even reach the stage of becoming full-fledged products that are launched. There are exceptions: Companies like Apple, that create products that delight their customers consistently, have created an ardent following of fans that eagerly await their next product. Apple's product launch, therefore, consists of an unveiling of the new product in front of their fans and the media takes over from there.

Not every company is like Apple, of course. So, once you have a product that could potentially achieve product-market fit, what are the best possible ways to go to market with it? There are many options for introducing the market to a new product. The most effective launch campaigns today use interactive media and social media because they provide the best return on investment and have a very broad, yet targeted, reach.

Consumers have consistently shown better recall for interactive campaigns compared to any other medium. In fact, the presidential campaign for President Obama was said to have gained a significant lead because of his team's savvy use of the Internet and more specifically, social media, for spreading awareness and for fundraising. President Obama has continued his use of social technologies since taking office. Figure 1 shows his Twitter page:

The image shows a screenshot of Barack Obama's Twitter profile page. At the top, there is a blue navigation bar with the Twitter logo and links for Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out. Below this, the profile header includes the Obama campaign logo, the name "BarackObama", and a "Follow" button. To the right of the header, there is a "Verified Account" badge and a summary of profile information: Name (Barack Obama), Location (Washington, DC), Web (http://www.barack...), and Bio (44th President of the United States). Below the bio, statistics show 762,868 following and 1,976,825 followers. There are also sections for "Tweets" (319), "Favorites", and "Actions" (block BarackObama). A "Following" section displays a grid of user avatars. The main content area on the left shows three tweets: one about insurance discrimination in NH, one about health insurance reform facts, and one congratulating Justice Sotomayor.

Fig. 1: President Obama's Twitter page.

Let's talk about some specific strategies in this space. A common strategy is to create a "teaser" landing page for an ad campaign to generate buzz and mystery four-to-eight weeks before the launch of a new product. The idea is to drive curiosity among the target consumers and lead them to a page where they can provide their e-mail addresses to receive

notification of the product on the day of the launch. Using this strategy, many companies can start reaching out to their target customers even before the product is fully ready. This gives them more time to gauge and garner interest in the community for their new product. If done early enough, this strategy can also guide the refinement of the product being launched by getting feedback from the signed-up early adopters.

Of course, no social media campaign can be complete without involving Facebook and Twitter into your strategy today. Facebook reaches more than 250 million people as of this writing and is still growing. The cost of advertising on Facebook is about a tenth of the cost of advertising on Google's search terms. If you also combine the reach of social ad networks like SocialMedia, Lifestreet Social, RockYou and SocialCash, the level of reach and the micro-targeting that is now possible is unprecedented in the history of marketing. Figure 2 that shows Facebook's detailed targeting options. You can even target people by their relationship status and keywords they put in their Facebook profile that include their hobbies and interests:

2. Targeting

Location:

Everywhere
 By State/Province
 By City

Age: -

Birthday: Target people on their birthdays

Sex: Male Female

Keywords:

Education: All
 College Grad
 In College
 In High School

Workplaces:

Relationship: Single In a Relationship Engaged Married

Interested In: Men Women

Languages:

Connections: Target users who are connected to:

 Target users who are not already connected to:

Targeting
 By default, Facebook targets all users 18 and older in the default location. You can change any targeting specifications you wish.

Location
 Facebook Ads uses IP address and a user's profile information to determine a user's location.

Keywords
 Keywords are based on information users list in their Facebook profiles, such as Activities, Favorite Books, TV Shows, Movies, etc.

Connections
 Connections are users who have become a fan of your Facebook Page, a member of your Group, RSVP'd to your Event or authorized your Application.

More Help
[Ad Targeting FAQ](#)

Fig. 2: Detailed targeting options on Facebook

As this space becomes more mature, the some Internet-savvy companies are starting to use the space to their advantage. Starbucks, for example, recently used the Facebook Apps ecosystem for their ice cream give-away campaign. Figure 3 shows the Facebook page for the application that Starbucks used for its campaign:

facebook Home Profile Friends Inbox 3 Anand V. Chhatpar Settings Logout

Share a Pint of New Starbucks® Ice Cream [Become a Fan](#)

Wall Info **Reviews**

About Share a Pint of New Starbucks® Ice Cream

Up to 20,000 free coupons for pints of new Starbucks® Ice Cream will be given away to friends every day through July 19. That's over 800 pints per hour!

This application allows you to send a deserving friend (or yourself) new Starbucks® Ice Cream. Choose any friend (on or off Facebook) and enter their mailing address. They'll receive a coupon for one complimentary pint of the flavor of their choice.

No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited/regulated by law. Sponsored by Conopco, Inc., d/b/a Unilever. Open to legal residents of the U.S. and D.C., 18 & older. Recipients may not reside in CO, TN. Limit one coupon per household address. Ends 11:59:59 p.m. ET on 7/19/09. For Terms and Conditions, [click here](#).

Starbucks Ice Cream, ©2009 Unilever Englewood Cliffs, NJ under Authority of Starbucks Coffee Company. All rights reserved. Starbucks, the Starbucks logo, and Frappuccino are registered trademarks of Starbucks US Brands, LLC.

Friends using this Application [See All \(11\)](#)

About new Starbucks® Ice Cream

New Starbucks® Ice Cream
 Inspired by your favorite Starbucks® beverages, now available at your local grocery store.

Go to Application

Add to my Page's Favorites
 View Updates
 Block Application

Information

★★★★☆ (3.4 out of 5)
 Based on 421 reviews

Users:
 191,103 monthly active users,
 11 friends

Category
 Just For Fun

Fig. 3: Starbucks uses Facebook to launch their new ice-cream flavors.

Much has been said about Twitter in the media already. It provides another communication medium for distributing your message very rapidly and with very low cost to millions of people. Unlike Facebook ads, however, Twitter messages (called "tweets") are not in your control and it may be risky to start with just Twitter to spread your company's new product message.

Another effective way to create an interactive campaign for launching your product is to engage your audience with an "idea contest." BrainReactions.net provides an Idea Contest platform which allows companies to create and launch a contest that can be promoted to their target audience. Figure 4 shows the screenshot for an idea contest launched by startup Moonjee.com that provided just a \$500 cash prize but was able to gather over 800 ideas from many global contributors in a matter of days. The contest also led to pre-signups from interested consumers on Moonjee's Web site.

The screenshot shows the BrainReactions.net website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with options: Home, Brainstorming Rooms, Open Brainstorms (highlighted), My Account, Admin, and Customer Support/Feedback. The main content area is titled "Open Brainstorms" and features a contest announcement for "Moonjee". The contest title is "IDEA CONTEST: How can Moonjee be launched to thousands of users as an engaging web application that transforms photos in fun and useful ways?". The contest ended on July 3, 2008, with winners: UKJohn (1st), nrybeck (2nd), kkunkel (3rd), dadeal (4th), and nob (5th). The contest description includes a video link and three questions: a) How can Moonjee gain thousands of users by marketing online? b) What are some cool or creative ways for Moonjee to earn revenues?, and c) Which new interesting features can Moonjee create for the next generation of its website? An "Additional Background" section describes Moonjee as a web application for online photo makeovers and lists potential marketing and revenue ideas.

Fig. 4: BrainReactions.net Idea Contest

These techniques for going to market represent just the tip of the iceberg of what's possible today with interactive media. Contact Frost & Sullivan's expert team of strategic consultants who can definitely help create a customized go-to-market plan for your team's newest product launch.

About

Anand Chhatpar is the CEO of BrainReactions LLC that provides innovation services ranging from idea generation to innovation training. BrainReactions produces BrainWaves <http://brainwaves.brainreactions.com>, a quarterly e-magazine focused on Innovation. BrainWaves is a media partner for Frost & Sullivan's GIL global conference focused on Growth, Innovation and Leadership: <http://www.gil-global.com>