

Top 10 MOST IGNORED Rules of Marketing

#3 - Customers LOVE Surprises

If you've read Rule #2 then you're probably pretty confused. I spent that entire article arguing that customers **HATE** surprises. Well they do. But, after they HATE them, they **LOVE** them.

Customers truly HATE surprises. What they love is to be reassured with what they know, with the familiar. But, once you've fit your business into their comfort zone, in order to keep them happy and ravenously loyal you'll need to shake them up on a regular basis.

It's like the woman who desperately wants a husband for the security and familiarity the marriage relationship guarantees but, once she's a Mrs., is quickly disillusioned without the passion, excitement, and surprise of the prenuptial courtship.

Did that sound sexist? Maybe it is – but it's true... I know that from experience. It could also be the driving force behind why my female clients understand, accept, and internalize this concept much more readily than their male counterparts.

If how all this works is still a little fuzzy, let me give you a few concrete examples of what I mean.

Example #1 My favorite concert

Years ago I saw Chuck Mangione in a college gymnasium. The show started with his then current hit "*Feels So Good*." The rest of the first half of the show featured one "familiar" hit song after another. By the time we got to intermission, I really was "feeling so good."

Then, right before the second half started, Chuck came out and made an announcement – part of which was this, "Please withhold your applause until the set is complete and the lights go down." The audience sat quietly stunned and confused as the band silently returned to the stage dressed in monk-like robes and, under eerily subdued lighting, played the music from Chuck Mangione's at that time unreleased "*Children of Sanchez*" album.

I was mesmerized... as was everyone else in the audience.

I can't count the number of times I've told people that if someone had been standing at the exits and told me that I had to pay 5 times the original ticket price for having witnessed that concert, I'd have forked it over in a flash.

First half: no surprise – loved it. Second half: big surprise – loved it. It sealed the deal.

Example #2 The Promotion of the Century

You ate them... we all did.

Well, maybe we didn't eat them, but we all bought them. And you can bet it wasn't

because we had a craving for caramelized popcorn. We bought boxes of Cracker Jack because of the worthless free prize inside.

The prizes weren't even that great! I don't think I ever kept one for more a day or so.

What we loved was the mystery, the anticipation, the hope – that's what drove us to find out what lay wrapped up at the bottom of that cardboard box.

We didn't spend our allowance, or paper route money, or babysitting profits on the prize... it was the **sur**-prize that we loved so much.

Example #3

The ad that changed Super Bowl commercials forever

On January 22, 1984 during the Super Bowl XVIII telecast, Bill Bixby pitched RadioShack personal computers. Alan Alda did a spot for Atari computers. Nobody remembers those commercials or any of the other ads that ran that year. What people remember is this: automatons and a young woman with a sledgehammer.

Apple's "1984" Macintosh commercial changed Super Bowl advertising forever.

It was such a surprise that the most common response to it was "What the hell was that?"

I'm sure you've seen it... but if you haven't YouTube's got it here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxShzoUjiAQ>

These days just about every Super Bowl commercial wants to surprise the viewer. Some try so hard they're silly. But the entire ad industry has accepted one thing for sure, that eyes are tuned to the Super Bowl for more than just a football game. Viewers are looking for that one great commercial... the one that delivers the biggest, most entertaining surprise... the one commercial they can love.

Example #4

Oprah's big surprise

It's Monday, September 13, 2004 and it's the first show of Oprah Winfrey's 19th season. Oprah's got a surprise in store for each of the 276 members of her studio audience.

The surprise? I don't even have to tell you. EVERYBODY with a TV knows she gave away 276 brand new Pontiac G-6 sedans.

Here's what you may not know. Oprah's TV ratings for 2004-2005 were the highest in the show's history. People tuned in to her talk show not because they thought they'd get a car, but because they didn't want to miss the next big surprise.

So, there you have it. Hopefully enough evidence to make the case that **customers truly love surprises** and the concept of the "pleasant surprise" should permeate every aspect of your marketing. Your promotions must apply the "Cracker Jack" principle – where customers expect a "free prize" in every email they open, every newsletter they read, every webinar they attend.

Does that mean that every communication you send out has to rise to the level of Apple's "1984" or Oprah's big surprise? Yes... and no.

Swing for the fence

The top 10 major league home-run sluggers of all time couldn't manage 1 home run for every 10 times at bat.

These are players whose very fame stems from their penchant for delivering home runs and the best of them connected less than 1 time out of 10.

Home Run Percentage Top 10 All Time Leaders					
Rank	Name	Percent	Rank	Name	Percent
1	Mark McGwire	9.42	6	Ralph Kiner	7.09
2	Babe Ruth	8.5	7	Alex Rodriguez	7.04
3	Barry Bonds	7.74	8	Harmon Killebrew	7.03
4	Jim Thome	7.37	9	Albert Pujols	6.97
5	Adam Dunn	7.18	10	Manny Ramirez	6.93

You can build a solid reputation for delivering pleasant, unique, unexpected, and welcome surprises to your audience event if most of your efforts fall somewhat short of the mark. Just **swing for the fence** on every promotion. Make the effort to turn every contact into a "Cracker Jack box" that your customers can't wait to rip open and get to the free prize inside.

Customers really LOVE surprises and they'll love you and your business for supplying them.