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Strategic Insights On:

Consumer Electronics

Consumer Electronics

Always swiped, zoomed or connected to the latest in tech, we're often fortunate to be tapped to turn consumers onto the latest electronics brands. Building new brand advocates or creating ambassadors, our goal is simple, create strategies that becomes music to the ears.

We hope you enjoy this content and evok's commitment to the consumer electronics industry. If you would ever like to be a guest writer or suggest blogs for us to write, please contact us at info@evokad.com.



THE 4 BIGGEST MISTAKES CONSUMER ELECTRONICS BRANDS MAKE

Is Your Company Making These Mistakes? Here's How to Fix Them

No brand is perfect. Emergencies happen, strategies fall short and some seasons are better than others—it's the cost of doing business. But not every downfall is unavoidable, some mistakes can be prevented or corrected before they affect your bottom line.

As an agency, we see the full breadth of brand struggles, and there are certain missteps our team sees day in and day out. Wondering if your brand is making the same mistakes? Keep reading to find out the four most common mistakes we see and quick tips on how to fix each one.

Trying to Reach Everyone

You can't please everybody—the old idiom rings especially true when it comes to brands and their audiences. In fact, unfocused messaging for the masses only results in more people not connecting with your brand or your products.

How to fix it:

Narrow down your audience until you reach your ideal customer—these are the people your messaging should resonate with. Creating buyer personas is a great way to get an in-depth description of who you need to be talking to.

Having an Outdated Website

It sounds like an oxymoron, but there are plenty of technology brands out there with outdated, badly performing websites. To any savvy marketer, that's the equivalent of leaving money on the table.

How to fix it:

It may be time to invest in a new site. But first, do your research: what are your customers looking for in your brand's website? Sending out a customer survey is a great way to get answers and guidance as you map out your new website.

Lacking Social Media Presence

Nowadays, if you aren't on social media, you practically don't exist. The same goes for brands. And a less-than-strategic presence is almost as bad as not appearing on these networks at all.

How to fix it:

Create unique content for your social channels that's both helpful and entertaining for your ideal customers. But remember, each channel has its own strengths, so don't repost the same content across all of your profiles.

Not Focusing on Customer Communications

Whether you're a B2B personal electronics company or B2C brand providing commercial solutions, you have one thing in common—the customer is number one. Not communicating with them is not only a mistake but a missed opportunity to learn what your customers think of your brand.

How to fix it:

Customer service isn't limited to call centers and complaints, it should be a part of your business operations as a whole. From replying to customers on social media to sending out weekly or monthly newsletters with special offers, keep communication lines open with your past, present and potential customers.

Want more insights on marketing consumer electronics? Here are three points to remember if you're selling high-end products and a look at how virtual reality is transforming advertising.



HOW TO BUILD YOUR CONSUMER ELECTRONICS BRAND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow the Three E's to Elevate Your Brand on Social Media

Gone are the days when you posted on your brand's social media when you felt like it or just when you had time.

Now, you have to employ a fully integrated and optimized strategic plan to capture the right audience at the right time.

Ultimately, you want to stand as an industry expert and persuade others to trust and buy your consumer electronics brand. According to a study by CEA, 65% of high-engagement social media users (13.5 or more hours per week) turn to social media before they make a consumer electronics purchase.

So, how can you push through the fodder and find your audience? Follow the three E's: entertain, educate and enlighten.

Entertain

Generally, electronics are meant to last for a couple of years, and after a consumer buys your brand, you want to entertain them in the meantime.

Try to tie current events into your brand. For example, the Winter Olympics was an ideal event to mix into your conversation because everyone could be a part of it.

But now think about the future. What's the latest TV, meme or YouTube video everyone's talking about? How can you talk about that, incorporate your brand, and intrigue others to join the conversation?

Educate

Consumers like to learn the ins and outs of their electronic devices or appliances. To satisfy this, give pro tips and field any and all questions on your social media.

Your pro tips can even be timely. For example, Canon used #CanonTip and #ValentinesDay on Facebook and gave out tips and tricks for photographers leading up to February 14th.

Time also matters for questions. If a user turns to your social media to ask a device questions, answer it as soon as your company bandwidth allows. On top of that, refer the consumer to customer service as the last resort and try to resolve their problem then and there to keep social media engagement high.

Enlighten

Lastly, enlighten your audience. But not a spiritual type of an enlightenment—we're talking informational enlightenment.

Consumer electronics is a fast and changing world. Keep your audience informed on industry happenings and the next latest and greatest devices or appliances.

If you successfully follow these three E's, you'll elevate perception, drive awareness and increase engagement, and, ultimately, convert.



3 POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN MARKETING HIGH-END ELECTRONICS

Reaching the Right Audience For Luxury Consumer Electronics

From state-of-the-art personal fitness equipment to televisions that blend right in with your home décor, consumers are willing to pay a premium price for luxury electronics. Status symbols, lifestyle enhancers and instruments of pure delight, these top-of-the-line devices sell the idea of being the best by owning the best.

But, how exactly does a brand get to the top? More importantly, how can your product stand out as the right and only choice for your ideal buyer?

Marketing high-end devices breaks all the traditional rules of advertising. Here are three points luxury electronics brands must keep in mind when defining a strategy for premium product sales.

Don't Play the Comparison Game

There is no worthwhile opponent for a true premium product. Sure, there may be similar devices on the market, perhaps even at the same price point, but none can ever quite measure up. At least, that's what consumers must believe to invest in your goods.

That's because luxury items are inherently unique. Consumers purchase these products because they are an expression of what makes them different from everyone else. That item becomes a part of their personal image and embodies their identity. It says, "I don't care what everyone else is doing, this is who I am." Comparing your device to another brand's will only result in diluting your product's uniqueness.

Meet Consumer Wants Not Needs

No matter how you spin it, nobody needs a pair of premium headphones or talking refrigerator—they want it. High-end consumer electronics brands must understand and appeal to the difference between needing and wanting.

Typically, advertisers appeal to a consumer's wishes, presenting solutions to problems they may or may not know they had. That is not the case when marketing high-end electronics. Instead of appealing to needs including safety, confidence and comfort, luxury items appeal to who we aspire to be, the life we want to lead and how we want to feel.

Be Exclusive But Stay Visible

In many cases, exclusivity drives desire. But if “just anybody” can get their hands on your product, the appeal of it as a luxury item is gone. High-end brands must find a sweet spot between exclusivity and visibility—making the mass market aware of your product when only a sliver of that audience will ever become a paying customer.

Before you think you’re flushing advertising dollars down the drain by marketing to people you know won’t buy from your brand, remember, luxury items should feel off limits to a large part of the population. To create and uphold that perception for your own brand, your campaigns need to reach the average consumer and spark their aspiration to one day become a patron of your brand.

With wearable technology taking the world by storm and new products entering the market every day, luxury electronics will only continue to climb consumers’ wish lists in 2018 and beyond. Where does your brand stand?



THE FUTURE OF WEARABLES HAS MADE ITS SECOND COMING

The Second Wave of Wearables is Happening Now

We're experiencing something interesting within the wearable industry right now. It's almost like a second wave of consumer interest with the release of devices like the Apple Watch 3 and Fitbit Ionic smartwatch.

Now, more than ever, wearables are making a comeback, and you'll get no complaints from the consumer electronics industry. With that said, here are a few of our predictions for the future of wearables, and how it can affect everything from the way we consume to how we work, live and interact with others.

Healthcare Will See a Major Boom

Apple and third-party companies already have a slew of health-based apps available for use on their respective devices, which means terabytes of data are being sent to healthcare providers, physicians, and pharmaceutical companies regularly.

This trend is expected to continue with more connectivity options between patient and doctor, as well as more emphasis on monitoring other parts of the body both inside and out.

New Insights For Retailers

There's going to be a major push towards creating a seamless, in-store shopping experience for customers. This could manifest itself in a couple different ways, including:

- Using GPS-based technology to pinpoint where someone is in the store, then serving him or her relevant coupons/discounts as they pass by certain displays or designated shelving units.
- Enhanced analytics tools that would let retailers know everything from how long someone spent looking at a specific item (via smart glasses), or how long someone spent walking around a specific display or store (via fitness trackers).
- More IoT integration between voice-activated devices at home and wearables (i.e. asking Alexa via a smartwatch if there are eggs in the smart fridge at home and letting you know via push notification).

What all this means for marketers is there's going to be even more of a push for people who understand and can interpret enhanced data from wearables. Artificial intelligence is also a facet that many marketers and advertisers will need to familiarize themselves with.

Stay Ahead of the Curve

There's a whole realm of possibilities that could come with the next generation of wearables, all of which will have significant impacts on how you market to your target audiences. Having a knowledgeable and forward-thinking agency on your side can help you navigate the ever-changing consumer electronics landscape.

Contact us today at 407-585-8231, or email us at info@evokad.com, to learn more about how Evok can help enhance the way you approach marketing in the modern world.



DON'T LET YOUR OFFICE E-WASTE KILL OUR ENVIRONMENT

There's a lot of trash in this world. No, really. Nearly 40 million metric tons of electronic waste (e-waste) are produced globally each year. So, any consumer electronics company worth their salt needs to start doing what they can to reduce their carbon footprints and make a more positive impact on the consumer landscape.

Luckily, we have just the right tips to help bolster your brand while being environmentally responsible.

Be an Environmental Advocate

As a brand, putting your best, most eco-friendly foot forward will go a long way toward building a strong, cause-driven identity to which conscious consumers can relate.

Everything from reduced/recycled product packaging materials to offering repair and refurbishment incentives for older devices can greatly affect the amount of waste your company produces.

A Note on Telecommuting

The modern office infrastructure has gone through some major changes in the last decade or so, in that traditional office spaces are shrinking as work-from-home and telecommuting programs increase, which is helping reduce climate change. Fewer commuters on the roads and less energy expended in brick-and-mortar office buildings means saving thousands of tons of greenhouse gases.

A reduced need for office electronics would also mean less e-waste produced, so there's a win-win situation if you're looking for ways to become more ecofriendly.

Take Out the Dang Trash

It's not enough to tell others how to help the environment. You must also be willing to practice what you preach. Participating in recycling programs that help dispose of everything from Keurig K-cups to empty toner cartridges will help reduce your carbon footprint considerably. Holding periodic hardware sales is another way to get rid of old office equipment without completely trashing them.

Bottom Line: There's only so much of the Earth to go around, so doing your due diligence to keep the planet clean not only helps future generations, but also sheds a positive light on your company's environmentally conscious actions.



ADVERTISING AND THE VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE

With virtual technology (VR), we've come a long way from the days of clunky, overpriced peripherals and questionable eyesight issues. Specifically, VR has seen a tremendous resurgence over the past decade with both gamers and early adopters of consumer electronics.

With its slow yet steady integration into the mainstream, some advertisers and brands are scratching their heads as to how the technology can be better used to engage with consumers, while other brands, like Nike, are already riding the wave of VR success.

Regardless, the advertising world will eventually have to make room for VR in the near future, so here's a few things publishers and marketers need to be aware of as the industry moves forward.

Virtual Reality in Modern Advertising

It's no surprise that consumers are beyond frustrated with certain digital ads, like banners and pop ups, as they're considered general nuisances of the online experience. VR's ability to give consumers more of a choice when interacting with sponsored ad content is advantageous to brands considering making the transition.

Consequently, companies like Facebook, Google and others are leading the charge to make VR more accessible to the average consumer. VR-enabled videos are already a common occurrence on YouTube and 360-degree interactive videos dominate several news feeds, so what's the hold up for advertisers and publishers?

The Ethical Issues of Virtual Reality

The flip side of VR that some technologists and users fear is the idea of desensitization—the inability to separate the real world from the VR one. Ongoing studies are in place to monitor and interpret the implications of prolonged VR use, so before we start assuming everyone's going to be jacked into the Matrix, realize that there are no current (and hopefully future) applications that keep consumers immersed in the VR environment for extended periods of time.

Another issue creeping up into the conversation at large is the movement to criminalize certain acts carried out against another within the virtual reality space. Granted, there are important legal and ethical issues that could come with the proliferation of VR, but again, they're not immediate, outright concerns for both makers and users of the technology.

Ultimately, for every piece of revolutionary technology, there is an inherent dark side that can come when placed in not-so-great hands, so advertisers must do their due diligence to ensure VR is used safely, securely, and above all, ethically.

What's Next For the Industry?

Much of VR's potential success will rely on three factors: managing price points that are appealing to the consumer, leveraging device portability, and creating a practical, ease-of-use system.

All eyes will remain on VR, though, as the user base shifts to a younger demographic that isn't nearly as technophobic and are willing to try new things, for longer, regardless of cost.



iPHONE X VS. iPHONE 8: A LOOK AT CUSTOMER CONFUSION

Apple surprised the world with their announcement that on November 3, we can expect to see three new phones: the iPhone 8, iPhone 8 Plus, and the iPhone X. It's called the "iPhone ten", not the iPhone X—just to clear up any confusion. Moreover, the differences in the phones and which one they should choose is a little confusing to consumers. How is Apple marketing these new phones and how are they taking the confusion away?

Distinct Similarities and Differences

The iPhone X and 8 have many similarities. They both have A11 bionic chips, improved cameras, wireless charging, and support augmented reality apps. The iPhone X is the higher-tech phone and called the future of phones because it has edge-to-edge OLED (organic light-emitting diode) screens and facial recognition—the first phone to ever have this technology—and a more vivid display.

The display on the iPhone X is larger than that of the 8 and 8 Plus. The iPhone X also comes with a larger price tag to match, which, at \$999, makes it the most expensive phone on the market and even priced \$300 more than the iPhone 8.

In 2013, Apple launched two phones at the same time: the 5C and the 5S. The 5C was the less sophisticated of the two. "The iPhone 5C was a 'good enough' phone for developing markets. It was to get into China, India, and Latin America," said Jefferson Wang, a senior partner at IBB Consulting. "Here, the iPhone 8 is still the flagship phone. They haven't bumped anything down. They created an ultra-premium layer."

Back in 2013, Apple's strategy was to get their phone in everyone's hands. But now, they have a more exclusive strategy. With the 8 and X phones, both being of the highest quality, they have created devices beyond the technology of any other competing product to appeal to the high-end market. The strategy in this launch is to be at the top of the phone market. They still have the older generation phones for sale and with all the different phones available, it will be the most phones ever offered by Apple with eight phones of new and older generations available for purchase. Now, they will have a phone in a price point for every customer.

Marketing Tactics to Counteract Confusion

To combat the confusion of the different phone choices, Apple has created videos to promote the different features of each phone. They also have side-by-side comparison charts so the consumer will know the features of each phone. The main selling feature of both the 8 and X phones is the ability to use augmented reality apps.

Preorders for these new phones have models sold out before they even go on sale. Materials used for the iPhone X are in very limited supply, so they will sell out quickly. So how has Apple built such a strong brand and a strong fan base? Here are some ideas on how they did it:

- They ignore their critics and do what they think is right. They do not listen to the people that tell them they cannot do something. Every time they have tried something new, like the iPad, they were criticized that it would not work. Clearly, they've proven those critics wrong.
- They have always used original design on their products and do not use standardized parts.
- They charge a price they feel is fair based on their quality, innovation, and uniqueness...which is usually two times that of the competition.
- They use marketing techniques that do not overload the customer on technical terms. They show the consumer what the product will do for them and how it will improve their lives.
- They extend their brand's message to all aspects of their company. Their ads, products, support systems, and packaging all have the same brand feel.
- They have built a strong loyal following by offering a high-quality product with high-end service.

Regardless of how Apple markets their products, they do not just want to be the leader in the marketplace, they want to own the market.



WHAT'S NEW WITH APPLE?

The highly anticipated annual Apple Conference happened on June 5 and it was then that Apple revealed what we can expect to see next. Questions consumers were asking included everything from the new iPhone 8 and Apple Watch rumors, to iOS updates, to name a few. Let's explore what's new with Apple.

Homepod

Similar to the Amazon Echo, Google Home and Sonos systems, the Homepod will be used as an entertainment device - one can ask it to play a certain song or the name of the lead singer on a certain album. A Siri device, you will be able to ask it questions regarding the weather, recent news headlines and home conditions. This will be available in black or white, will be priced at \$349 and is expected to launch in December.

iMac

Apple announced at the conference they are launching all new versions of their hardware. The iMac desktops will come standard with better graphics and retina displays that support graphics for VR content. The MacPro will have a 5K display and an 8-core processor, with an option to increase to 18-core.

They will have up to a 4TB Solid State Drive (SSD), and up to 128GB of Error-Correcting Code (ECC) memory and built-in 10GB Ethernet. The new iMac starts at \$1099 and the MacBooks will get an upgrade as well, starting at \$1299. High Sierra is the working title of Apple's new version of the MacOS. It will bring updates to Safari, blocks auto play videos, possesses new photo editing tools and better sorting tools.

Apple Watch

Consumers can expect to see upgrades to the Apple Watch, with new faces including Mickey Mouse and Toy Story. Siri will also send wearers reminders on their watches, encouraging them to exercise or be more active.

For fitness-focused people, while at the gym, your watch will sync with the gym equipment to share calorie and activity level. There will also be a music upgrade to allow users to locate their music faster and organize it better.

iOS Update

Although iPad sales have gone down, Apple is still committed to the iPad this year. The upgrade to the iPad iOS11 will improve multitasking and be able to drag and pull apps around better, similar to what has been available in the MacBook. Launched was a 10.5-inch screen, a 12-megapixel camera, 7MP selfie cam and 10 hours of battery life. Apple also rolled out a 12.9 inch iPad.

Apple accessories like the Apple pencil will also be getting an upgrade to come out later in the year. The pencil will be smoother and easier to use. The cases for mobile devices will also see some newer colors.

In the iOS software update, Apple made it easier to pay and receive money from contacts by using iMessage. Siri can now translate into different languages with better speech upgrades. Mobile devices will also take better photos in low light. The upgrades have added a safety feature that detects when the user is driving a car and will automatically go into do not disturb mode.

Augmented Reality

Apple has talked about doing more with Augmented Reality and really showed it at the conference this year. They launched ARkit to help developers build augmented reality apps for the iPhone and iPad. A demo at the conference showed how virtual objects can be placed on a real table through the iPhone's camera. Pokémon plans to use this new technology to improve real time in the game.

iPhone 8

There are lots of rumors that Apple will come out with a new iPhone version, especially as this year is the 10th anniversary of the iPhone. Apple is keeping it a secret, but they are planning something big this year for the phone. There have been some leaks as to what we might see in this new phone design. The phone will be redesigned with an edge-to-edge display that will eliminate the home key and even may replace the fingerprint recognition with facial recognition technology.

The display itself is said to be a flexible plastic OLED rather than an LCD. The phone will have cordless recharging capabilities, better display and, of course, will be faster. It is also expected to be water resistant. While these are all rumors though, we hope to know what Apple has in store for this new phone soon.



EXACTLY HOW SMART ARE SMART TV'S?

Mechanically, it is the same TV as a “not-so-smart TV,” but a Smart TV connects to the programming source by wired Ethernet or Wi-Fi, which connects to your home network, allowing consumers to stream movies, TV shows, surf the Internet, etc. Every Smart TV manufacturer makes their TV’s with different software so they all offer different things, yet most support the most popular apps like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Instant Video and Pandora; the higher-end models may offer more TV apps than the lower-end models.

Some TVs even allow you to add the camera accessory to use Skype and video services, for an additional cost. Others allow you to purchase apps that have different gaming options. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter can be accessed using your Smart TV, and some really advanced TV’s have pens that allow you to write on the TV, leaving notes for your family – who won’t eventually find that note?

What You Need To Know

Since most consumers access the Internet on their Smart TVs via Wi-Fi, a strong signal is required for reliability, and consumers who have a large home or the TV is positioned far away from the wireless router, may need a signal extender. Fix this, or you might be watching your favorite movie and have it buffer just at the best part.

But, even if you have a great Internet connection, your operating system may freeze or crash from time to time, but usually just shutting the TV off and turning it back on will fix this issue. Security risks can be perceived as high, as these TV’s can be hacked and get viruses just like your computer, so consumers are warned to be very careful with personal information.

In fact, many recommended not shopping on a Smart TV, as they are less secure than your computer. A concern of the people using the camera attachment is that someone can hack your TV and spy on you while in your living room, so you might want to make sure you disconnect when not in use. The only additional cost with the Smart TV is the Internet service and a small upfront-cost of about \$100 for most models.

What Smart TVs Mean for Advertising

Samsung and LG are the first of the Smart TV manufacturers to put advertisements in their TV Software. This type of advertising is still pretty rare in the TV market but you will see this more and more. Some TV’s allows consumers to select the ad banner and decide if you would like to see the ads or turn it off if you don’t.

Advertising companies are creating software for Smart TVs to track consumers purchasing habits after seeing an ad, with smart TVs attached to home IP addresses, we can provide multi-touch attribution to connect first-party data and track actions users take on advertisers’ sites” after viewing TV ads. This information will help advertisers track how effective their ads are, which will allow them to use their dollars where they can generate the most revenue.

The newest Smart technology is called “addressable TV,” and will change TV advertising forever. Data can be obtained from IP addresses to capture interests from searches on computers, smart phones and tablets. If a consumer is searching for a blouse on their computer and then later in the day they get an ad reminding them of that new blouse on their phone, they might think they must really need that blouse and it is destined to be theirs.

This is how marketers are targeting their ads to people that have an interest in a certain product and we know this based on their search history. This is similar to the concept of the addressable TV, where advertisers can show different people different ads while watching the same show.

They can target their advertising to the people most likely interested in their products or services. The advertisers get a larger impact from their ads and the consumer gets more relevant ads, people may even enjoy watching the commercials with this technology. It might be a while before we see this in our homes, as audience measurement will need to integrate traditional, panel-based gross rating points and internet-enabled, census-based measurement before the potential of addressable advertising can be fully realized.



VIRTUAL REALITY: ADVERTISING'S NEW WAY OF STORYTELLING

What if you could take on an adrenaline-filled adventure without any of the risk... play alongside your favorite pro athletes...be front row at the next Beyoncé concert... all from the comfort of your living room? With virtual reality technology, these experiences, and many more are made possible. For advertisers, what once seemed a medium too far into the future to explore is quickly becoming a very real part of today's digital world—what story will you tell?

If Seeing Is Believing, How Far Can First-Hand Interactions Get You?

An evolving technology presenting endless new opportunities for advertising and marketing teams, virtual reality has the potential to truly turn the ad world on its head. VR technology takes consumers for a ride, a jump, a walk and nearly anywhere else in the world, to do nearly anything. It can reach audiences with experiences they are already seeking, allowing advertisers to deliver that emotion and engagement with a branded message.

Leveraging Tomorrow's Technologies Today

From major sporting events to promoting major films and television shows, the advertising industry has already proven the success of this new technology.

Mountain Dew created a VR skate experience by capturing a 360-degree scene with six GoPro cameras. Consumers just had to put on a pair of goggles to become fully immersed, dropped into a whole other environment. This opened up the world of skating to a whole array of people who had never tried it before, while also providing a way for Dew Tour fans to get the once in a lifetime opportunity to skate through iconic places with their favorite professional athletes.

Coca-Cola's World Cup experience also made participants feel like they were a part of the game. Starting in a make shift locker room, guests put on goggles which gave them the ability to walk onto the field and play along side some of their favorite players, without getting out of their seat.

Recently, Create Advertising Group announced the creation of its own virtual reality division with an installment promoting Robert Zemeckis' new feature film *The Walk*. The experience asked movie fans "Can You Walk the Walk," placing them on the wire spanning the two towers of the World Trade Center, 1,300 feet above New York City. Each of these uses gave the audience an experience that could never be possible otherwise.

The Future of Virtual Reality

Gartner Group projects over 25 million virtual or more limited augmented-reality combined headsets will be in the hands and over the eyes of consumers globally by 2018. Companies like Samsung, Google and even Facebook have begun to unveil their VR experience headsets and Sony is currently working on bringing VR technology to a potential 10 million households with its gaming headset, Project Morpheus. With these numbers, it's only a matter of time before the call for advertisers is undoubtedly sounded and this new medium begins to be more broadly explored.

Although this technology may be our future, as advertisers, we cannot rely solely on its innate “wow factor.” Challenging ourselves to hone in on a brand's authentic story is still our number one priority, and one we must achieve through a great execution, strategy and concept. Only then can we map our ideas into these facets of emerging technology and once again revolutionize the way advertising campaigns are consumed by their intended audiences.



INFLUENCING THE INFLUENTIALS

Businesses devote a good deal of their budget to advertising and marketing with the goal of reaching as many members as possible of their target demographic group. One philosophy claims that reaching select members of the desired demographic will result in “word of mouth” advertising that effectively spreads the word about their product or service among diverse groups within the larger group.

Ed Keller, CEO of NOP World Consumer, a market research company, observed that within every group are individuals who influence the opinions and actions of others. Such people do not necessarily hold public office or have a high public profile, yet have several traits in common. They move within several social circles, are always the center of the conversation and are considered by others to be a credible source of information.

Keller calls these socially active people “Influentials” whose high degree of connectivity makes them important generators of buzz. His book, *The Influentials*, co-authored with Jon Berry, studies how such individuals create the ripples that radiate out to shape buying habits – and what businesses must now do to reach them.

So who are the Influentials in the 12-volt world? Start taking a good look at local and regional car sound scenes. Consumers not only note what the national champions use in their winning installations, but also what competitors who are active in their local sphere choose.

No matter how small the town, if there’s an install shop hosting a show or competition, you can be sure its owner is an Influential. If you’re a manufacturer, target him to start carrying and/or promoting your products. If you own an install shop, you know the people who are serious about competing or tricking out the tightest whip. Because other people with money to spend follow their lead, make sure you get the Influentials into your shop. Influence the Influentials, and watch how positive word of mouth builds business.