

The Red Letter



I Give You My Words

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Can You Join The Cult of Cults?

In branding, "cult" is anything but a four-letter word. If your brand achieves cult status, you can begin enjoying the pot at the end of the rainbow: word-of-mouth.

A cult brand is one that brings out passion in its users. They love it, would never use anything else, see their choice as a source of pride and, beyond that, make the brand part of their lifestyles. Most importantly, cult users talk about the brand every chance they get and insist that others try it. They'll even go so far as providing their own to their friends, family members and other potential users.

Most cult brands start on a shoestring, with no venture capitalists financing them early on. They're fighters, survivors, and they never stop going at the competition. They do more than what it takes, go the extra mile to make customers happy and keep them that way.

According to Jay Conrad Levinson, there are seven golden rules building a cult brand:

- Consumers want to be part of a group that's different.
- Cult brand inventors show daring and determination.
- Cult brands sell lifestyles.
- Cult brands listen to the choir and create brand evangelists.
- Cult brands always create consumer communities.
- Cult brands are inclusive.
- Cult brands promote personal freedom and draw power from their enemies.

Remember these rules. Then, think the Volkswagen Beetle. Macintosh. Harley-Davidson. iPod. And now...think your brand.

10 Commandments of Media Relations

1. Never call a press conference unless you have legitimate news.
2. Speak or write from an audience perspective.
3. Make the news easy to understand, read and use.
4. Tell the truth, even if it hurts. The truth will go away much more quickly than a lie.
5. Never speculate. Say "I don't know" if you don't know. If you can, add "...but I'll find out and get back to you."
6. A direct question is best answered directly.
7. Don't use or repeat offensive language.
8. Never argue with a reporter.
9. Be prepared.
10. If you don't want to read it or hear it the next day, don't say it.

Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers. – T. S. Eliot

The Good Word

The Farther You Go Down This Road, The Further You Will Fall

Forgive the headline's mangled and mixed metaphor, and think about the difference between farther and further.

Unless you're selling bicycles, cars or rollerblades, you can't say your product or service will

take prospects/customers farther. Be bold and sure, and tell them it will take them further, certainly. But farther? If it's not on wheels, no.

"Farther" refers to physical distance, "further" to an extension of time or degree:

- The marketing manager walked farther (distance) than anyone else during the company outing.
- Our auditor is looking further (degree) into allegations of steroid use by the marketing manager.

That's it. I can't take this one any further...or is it farther?