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# Five Marketing Tools Apple Exploits to Build the Hype

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*Blog post in Fastcompany.com September 2012.*

The iPhone backorders, tweet cascades, and exploding stock prices aren't unrelated - Apple is doing something right (besides making products people worship). Once you've got the goods, here's how to take a page from its marketing playbook. Whether it's launching its latest iPhone or iPad, Apple sure knows how to create buzz with consumers and the media (recent maps debacle aside). While other companies fight for attention, Apple seems to effortlessly dominate the media - not to mention the hearts and minds of customers - with its new product launches. Recently, Apple sold 2 million iPhone 5's on day one, and then a couple of days later the stock hit the stratospheric price of \$700 a share. So you could say they're doing something right.



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In researching hundreds of successful entrepreneurial companies for my new book, I was struck by strategies and tactics used by Apple to create media and consumer buzz that were not commonly employed by other brands.

If you want to build buzz like Apple does - and maybe someday get your stock to their level--take note of these five marketing tactics:

### **They cultivate an air of secrecy and intrigue to fuel speculation and buzz.**

Many companies go to great lengths to preserve confidentiality during the product development phase, but Apple is a master of the teaser marketing campaign, dragging on the suspense for as long as possible. For weeks if not months before the release of every iPhone, the media conversation builds to deafening levels. Apple stokes the buzz by providing virtually no information. For example, Apple announced a press conference for September 12, 2012, but didn't say what the press announcement was about. In essence, Apple created a cliffhanger as the media and bloggers speculated, "What could it be--the new iPhone 5 or something else? All the bottom-up speculation in the media and blogosphere generated phenomenal consumer interest--for free. Only after weeks of free buzz did Apple launch a paid media campaign to keep the momentum going.

#### **The Takeaway:**

Start building relationships with the media and bloggers--the influencers who cover your industry. Nurture and expand them over time. Remember, the Internet is word of mouth on steroids. Marketers have always known that the best way to promote



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your product is to get others to do it for you. Nothing is more valuable than getting third-party experts to tout your brand. Take another page from Apple's marketing book and launch a teaser campaign, a series of short, cryptic announcements that lead up to a larger, full-blown marketing campaign, and watch the interest and momentum build.

### **They create the illusion of scarcity to increase demand**

Luxury goods marketers have long realized that scarcity (real or perceived) makes a product more desirable and in demand. Scarcity not only increases the value of a product, it propels the procrastinators and all us who want to be part of the trendy crowd to step up and buy. That's why it is a favored tactic of designer handbag manufacturers and other luxury goods. Apple has found its own ways to hype the sense of faux scarcity. It did not have enough phones available when it went on sale. Just one hour after the iPhone 5 went on sale for preorders on September 14, 2012, the Apple website reported that heavy demand had necessitated delayed delivery. Adding to the illusion of scarcity was the fact that you could only pre order the phone, and lines were long. The tactic worked. Not only did the iPhone 5 set a record for first-day sales, even two weeks after the iPhone went on sale, it was on a backorder of three to four weeks, prolonging the difficulty (and desirability) of owning one.

#### **The Takeaway:**

Consider intentionally restricting production of a product to create scarcity and fuel demand for your product. Other tactics you can explore are making the offer only



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available for a limited time or until a certain number have been sold. Or you can report on your website or customer sales calls that only a small number of certain items are left in stock--but only if that's really the case.

### **They focus on a "friendly" customer experience.**

Apple products have always been designed to be different, delightful and friendly. I say "friendly" because the core driver of every Apple product is the removal of complexity in favor of ease of use with innovative features like touchscreen "gestures" for zooming and scrolling or SIRI, your personal assistant. Its history of innovative, "friendly" gadgets creates anticipation about what they will do next to advance the consumer experience. The new iPhone 5 ads capture its new friendly features in one phrase: "4-inch Retina display, ultra-fast wireless, iOS 6, in a thinner, lighter design."

### **The Takeaway:**

Think outside-in as smart branders do. Begin with your customer first (outside), then figure out how you can improve your product or service to meet that customer need (inside). Ask yourself, "What would make your product easier to use for customers?" and "How can you make the customer experience special and different--at every touch point?" Think of the customer experience holistically. Don't stop with the product design, but look at the way it's sold and displayed in the store or on your website, as well as the customer service experience with your call center. Make sure that the customer benefits your product offers are crisp and clear in all your marketing--like the iPhone tagline above.



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## **They wow customers through design and packaging**

Not only does Apple have a history of product innovations, they package their products brilliantly. Steve Jobs famously looked outside the tech world for design and packaging inspiration, at Japanese packaging design, Italian car finishes, and the like. He was one of the first technology leaders to realize that beautiful design can be an important product differentiator. Apple's brand architecture is monolithic. Every touch point conveys a modern, minimalistic brand image from the product design itself to its packaging to the Apple store where you can buy it. Go into an Apple store and you'll find the same design aesthetic and brand personality as you'll find in the gadget in your hand. Many customers are so wowed by Apple's beautiful, "open me first" packaging that they don't throw it away, which is called "unboxing."

### **The Takeaway:**

Make sure every touch point where customers come into contact with your company and its products conveys your company's brand personality with a unified visual identity, a distinct look and feel that sets you apart from others. Find a visual hook, a visual something, a design, a color, a logo or a shape that your brand can own in the minds of customers. Aim to have a visual identity that is instantly recognizable like Apple's.



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## **They create a passionate brand community of fans who identify with Apple's brand values**

While other tech manufacturers see their products as utilitarian, geeky and inexpensive, Apple is the opposite: cool, friendly, and upmarket. Apple has created a brand culture that has attracted a passionate brand community of followers who identify with the brand's innovativeness, simplicity, and coolness. They are fans who look into the entire family of Apple products and must have the latest gadget right when it comes out, even if it means waiting in line for hours. It's quite a phenomenon to behold.

### **The Takeaway:**

Write down your brand values that define your brand culture. Remember Apple's "Think Different" ad campaign that defined Apple's brand values and brand culture? Here were the opening lines: "Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in square holes..." Once you have defined what your brand stands for, then zero in on the types of consumers who share those values, and create digital communities through social media, blogs, or in-person meet-ups so that it's easy for your brand's fans to connect to your company and each other.

If you want to get your products noticed, maybe it's time for you to start breaking the rules as Apple does.