

# What's possible...

## ...in your business

## Growing your business can be tough... but it doesn't have to be...

What makes the videos Gangnam Style (1bn+ viewers) and Dave Carroll's ode to United Airlines (12m viewers) go viral?

**Word-of-mouth** is the key – 'hot' gossip works a dream.

### Hot gossip can work for your business too

In his groundbreaking book, George Silverman shows you how to make the most of word-of-mouth marketing so maybe your business can go viral!

Follow Silverman's 5-stage process and you'll immediately see ways of improving your marketing.

George suggests we are exposed to 200-1000 sales and marketing messages a day – other commentators suggest more!

And yet a quick Google search will prove to you the declining power of advertising. Why? Because you, me, everyone, are now 'blanking out' this constant bombardment of interruptive marketing messages.

### 'Phone a friend!' pays off...

When a friend recommends a book, film or restaurant, chances are you'll take the recommendation seriously. Chances are you'll buy. The same principles apply to your business. As an example, look at our "click here to pass it on now" button

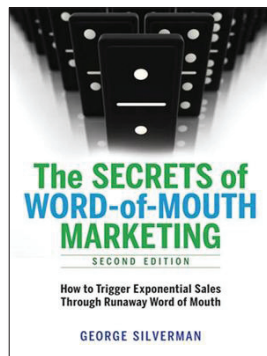


for our book summary. People are more likely to act on a recommendation of someone they know, colleague or even a stranger than any other form of marketing message.

Here's how one of the world's marketing experts – George Silverman – suggests you put word-of-mouth to work for you...

### Credibility makes all the difference...

An independent messenger adds credibility to any message – more than the most sophisticated, expensive and well-worked marketing material.



But it gets better...more powerful than word-of-mouth's credibility, reach, speed and ability to break through the clutter, is it's **POWER TO GET PEOPLE TO ACT.**

Study after study has shown what happens in the buying process. Usually prior to buying there is a pressure-free conversation between the buyer and a colleague or a friend. In this conversation the product is spoken of glowingly – then the purchase is made.

In addition, word-of-mouth occurs spontaneously, without you having to be there.

### Where are you now?

On a nine-point scale how does the word-of-mouth about your firm stack up now?



Where do you want your word-of-mouth marketing score to be? Plus 4?

### 'Plus 4' firms reap the results

'Plus 4' organisations plan a word-of-mouth marketing strategy. 'Plus 4' firms do what they can to get experts, local influencers, typical customers and prospects talking with each other about the product or service and raving about its virtues.

In particular 'Plus 4' firms design their communications to support word-of-mouth. They...

- Make benefits, claims and promises **OBVIOUS** and **COMPELLING**
- Provide **CREDIBLE INFORMATION** – make it clear, balanced and believable
- Provide **REVEALING COMPARISONS** showing meaningful differences
- Make it easy for people to **TRY** their products
- Make **GUARANTEES** ironclad and generous
- Give **RELEVANT** and **BELIEVABLE EVIDENCE** – testimonials, case studies, statistics
- DELIVER** their service better than anyone else

# What's possible...

Here are three 'Plus 4' organisations you'll recognise...

## • The Internet

Probably the most important communications advance in human history. The internet took off almost entirely on its own through word-of-mouth. It is a truly democratic phenomenon, owned and controlled by no one entity. It took off with no marketing, just people telling people, telling people...

## • Apple

Apple's cult-like status is an example of a company that did not advertise until relatively late in the game. Apple relied almost entirely on word-of-mouth and friend-to-friend referrals



## • Tyrrells Crisps

Tyrrells grew from just one man and his deep-fat-fryer to a national business due to a commitment to natural produce and the recommendations given by their delighted and loyal customers



## A 5-stage decision process – Your word-of-mouth marketing system

Customers usually adopt the same process when making a buying decision.

The key is being able to help the customer and communicate clearly at each stage.

Support your customer through these stages and you increase the speed and likelihood of them making a favourable decision.

### STAGE ONE – Deciding to decide

To move people from disinterested to active investigation is all about the claim, the promise and the expected benefits:

- “You really ought to find out about the new iphone, because it has some great new features. I love mine”
- “Have you heard about...? You really ought to look into it”

### STAGE TWO –

#### Choosing from options

So now your prospect is interested in your product or service category. Most people will not go ahead without doing three things:

1. Identifying options
2. Studying information about these options
3. Weighing options to see which will deliver most benefits

**Word-of-mouth capable of moving people at this stage focuses on hard information:**

#### Help them find options:

- “Have you looked at ....? They have a great selection”

#### Help them weigh up their options:

- “Here's what seems to be working for most people...”

### STAGE THREE – Trial

After weighing up their options your prospect will be thinking about a trial – observing the product in use and evaluating its performance.

There are only two ways to get experience, directly, or indirectly.

**Direct Trial** – Help your prospects attend a demonstration or find some other way of seeing the product in action - free cheese on the cheese counter. A 30-day free trial is common with web-based software – how can you adapt this concept to your product or service?



**Indirect trial** - the best source of indirect experience is word-of-mouth, talking with users and experts and getting their reactions. How can you make it easy for your prospects to experience indirect trials through other people's experiences?

**Word-of-mouth capable of moving people at this stage focuses on experience:**

- “How have you found the product to perform?”
- “Had any trouble with it?”
- “Try it, you'll like it”
- “I've been using it in a situation like yours”
- “What works out best for me, is...”
- “Here's the lowdown about the problems...and here's how to avoid them”

## STAGE FOUR – Becoming a customer

Once the trial has been successful, you need to make it easy for your prospect to inform you of their intention to buy and use your product or service.

You have to deal with announcements, availability, delivery, service, guarantees and training issues. In some cases, you have to decide where your product/service fits in with alternative products or complimentary services they already use.

**Word-of-mouth capable of moving people at this stage focuses on the practicality of implementation:**

- “It really was a smooth transition”
- “It didn’t disrupt my operation”
- “It was easy for people to learn”
- “There was a minor problem that they fixed immediately”
- “My people welcomed it”

## STAGE FIVE - Expanding use and recommending

This stage is all about helping your customer move beyond their intended use and encouraging them to be an advocate for your business.

Regular, high-volume users are often better word-of-mouth advocates than low volume users.

Even when someone is a customer, they still have a choice of whether to use your product as their first, or last choice. There may be additional circumstances in which to use your product.

So, priority, frequency and new uses can be as important as brand choice. An example of this is the slogan...

*“Reach for Campbell’s. It’s right on your shelf.”*

It was determined most people had Campbell’s soup on their shelves...they just didn’t think to use it, even though they bought it!

Once a person feels comfortable using your product regularly, they will want to recommend it. Recommendations give the user self-justification and the pleasure of knowing other people will benefit too.

**Word-of-mouth capable of moving people at this stage centers around new and expanded usage:**



- “I’m using it all the time”
- “Have you tried it for...?”
- “I recommend it highly”

## When word-of-mouth works best...

In formal professions (such as accountants, lawyers, consultants), where it is the service of the individual and their professional nature, business growth is almost totally dependent on word-of-mouth.



**Why?** Because in a professional practice, the products are the results you create and your knowledge, expertise and professionalism.

Usually customers are buying your future ability to solve problems and create solutions.

This is an inherently more uncertain process than with other products. This extreme uncertainty means your prospects and customers need extreme amounts of reassurance from credible, independent sources.

Reassurance comes with real-life experience of your products and services; the kind conventional marketing can never deliver.

## Delivering your word-of-mouth...

Here are some ideas you might use to nurture greater word-of-mouth for your business:

- **An affiliation program** – form a membership of preferred customers and promote discussion
- **Events** – hold an informative seminar worthy of generating word-of-mouth
- **Directly appeal to tell a friend** – offer special incentives, such as discount for customers and their friends
- **Internet** – set up an internet site with a discussion group or forum and ‘ask the expert’ sessions
- **Do the outrageous** – For instance, a restaurant gives away all food during the main dinner hour on a random Monday, but no one knows which Monday! Guaranteed to get people talking!
- **Empower your people** – empower employees to do over the top things, especially to turn around a dissatisfied customer
- **Advisory group** – Meet with them for a half hour to an hour by conference call every month or two

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- **Network** – Set up a regular conference call or discussion group with non-competitive, forward-thinking people in other cities. Brainstorm ideas for bringing in new customers and selling more to existing customers
- **Special sales** – run sales or discounts for preferred customers only, but allow those customers to bring in a friend
- **Testimonials** – enclose testimonials from real customers in all ads and promotional materials
- **Referrals** – ask for referrals. Ask people for the names of their friends to add to your mailing list
- **Script** – tell people exactly what to say in their word-of-mouth communication. For instance, “tell your friends about our superior service”

### Your thoughts....

### Increasing the speed of decisions = growth

This sounds odd initially but it changes your thinking and transforms results.

Focus on...*reducing your customer's decision making time about your product or service.* How can you do this?

### Beat the bottlenecks

- Map your customer's decision processes
- Focus on your customer's decision roadblocks and rough spots
- Reduce friction and remove holdups by concentrating on communications which move people to action
- Use the 5-stage process mapped out earlier to guide your communications

Your communication speeds up decision making which makes word-of-mouth happen more often and more effectively for your business.

### Your Next Steps...

1. You'll discover much, much more about “The Secrets of Word-of-Mouth Marketing” in George Silverman's book. You can and should get a copy at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
2. Build these kinds of word-of-mouth activities into your business and you will be surprised by how often, and how quickly people respond
3. If you know anyone else who could benefit having their business “go viral” please feel free to pass this on...



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### Your Actions (next steps)