

## Try Some New Promotional Concepts by Del Suggs

We tend to think of promoting campus events as a series of steps. We put up the posters. We distribute the flyers. We hang a banner. We send the press release and photo to the newspaper.

Those are all important steps. However, sometimes we get so caught up with the pieces that we can't see the whole. Basically we end up going through the steps without thinking about why. And "why" we do a promotional task is very important.

Let's consider two very important concepts in campus promotion that will help us understand why we do certain publicity tasks. Those concepts are **repetition**, and **guerrilla marketing**.

Repetition is a primary function in all marketing. How many times have you seen the same Domino's, McDonalds, or other ad on television? The brains behind the science of marketing don't just run those commercials to spend money. They understand exactly what they are doing-- they are planting an idea in your mind.

They know you've got to use repetition in all of your promotion. Repetition is important. Repetition helps you to connect with those you want to attend your events. Repetition helps to inform your potential audience members. Repetition helps

people to remember the message.

There is only one problem with repetition. Each time you repeat a message, it loses a bit of it's edge.

Here is a good example. I call it "Poster Blindness." The first couple of times you see a new poster, you actually read it. Then, at some point, it becomes wallpaper. You no longer notice the poster, because you've seen it so many times before. It's repetition used to the extreme.

So, in order to use repetition effectively, you've got to find numerous methods of repeating your message. It's like being a good teacher. If you say the same thing over and over again the same way, you're boring. If you say the same thing over and over again different ways, you're an effective teacher.

The idea is to repeat yourself, but to do it creatively. That's where our second concept comes into play: Guerrilla Marketing.

Guerrilla marketing is a term coined by advertising guru Jay Levinson to describe inexpensive and unorthodox methods of promotion. Guerrilla marketers are creative and cheap. The idea is to promote in an unconventional manner. It can be even more effective, because often people don't

even realize it's really marketing!

Here's an easy example of guerrilla marketing. Remember the movie "ET"-- when Elliot lures the alien from the shed into the house. ET follows a trail of "reece's pieces" candy. The producers tried to use "M&M's" but got turned down by the candy company. Reece's candy saw the marketing potential. Their candy sales went through the roof when the movie became a hit, all without a big ad budget. Everybody learned about "reece's pieces" through the movie.

We do guerrilla marketing all the time on campus. Mostly, we do it because we have to-- we don't have the budget to buy ads on television, radio, and the newspaper. Some of the most creative guerrilla marketing I've ever seen was on campus.

Here's a favorite of mine, done by a university in North Carolina to promote one of my concerts. The program board ran a classified ad in the "Personals" section of the campus newspaper that said:

"Chad-- meet me at the Del Suggs Concert on Thursday night. I'll bring the massage oil for later.... Love, Megan."

Everybody on campus was talking about the ad, wondering who Chad and Megan were. And you can bet

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everyone knew about my concert!

Here's another favorite: if you make banners and hang them in your student center, misspell an obvious word. Write "Del Suggs In Conert Tonight in the Student Center"-- leaving the "c" out of "concert" People will point it out to their friends (and to strangers) that the banner is misspelled-- and everybody will read it and understand the message. Of course, you can only do this occasionally, or you will simply appear illiterate!

Now let's look at how you combine repetition AND guerrilla marketing.

What you want to do is think of creative ways you can repeat your message. You practice repetition: you have posters, banners, ads, buttons, bumperstickers, all the multiple ways to publicize your event. Then, you make some of those publicity tools guerrilla marketing techniques so your target market doesn't get tired of seeing the same message. You'll have amazing success by combining these techniques!

Let's reconsider "poster blindness." What if you put up posters promoting your event, then went back a couple of days later and turned all the posters upside down? People would read them like they were brand-new posters. Or

how about this-- what if you went back to your posters and secretly began to deface them-- drawing a mustache and glasses on the faces. Soon, everyone on campus will be looking at the posters, reading them and wondering who was defacing them!

Or this simple idea: put up the posters a few days before an event. Then the day of the program, go around and apply a bumpersticker-size paper strip that reads "TODAY" or "TONIGHT" (which ever is appropriate). I call that "refreshing posters." It takes stale "wallpaper" and makes them into new posters again.

Try this guerrilla marketing and repetition trick. Imagine you have a concert scheduled for Friday night. Get on campus early every day for the week before the event. On Monday, sneak into every classroom before the first class and write on the chalk or dry erase boards one word-- "BIG". On Tuesday, go to every classroom and write "BIG CONCERT". On Wednesday, go to every classroom and write "BIG CONCERT FRIDAY." On Thursday, go to every classroom and write "BIG CONCERT FRIDAY 8 PM." You get the idea. Just reveal a little part of the message each day, to keep people reading.

Here's another: write the message on the board, but

write it backwards (like DaVinci did in his notebooks). It will take some effort for people to read what you've written, and they will tend to remember it. Especially if they see the same message other places, like posters, flyers, and advertising.

Don't get caught up in all the little tricks and techniques and forget the big picture. The whole purpose of these clever promotional ideas is get people to know about and attend your programs. Remember to use repetition of your message, and try some guerrilla marketing techniques. You'll pack the house every time!

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