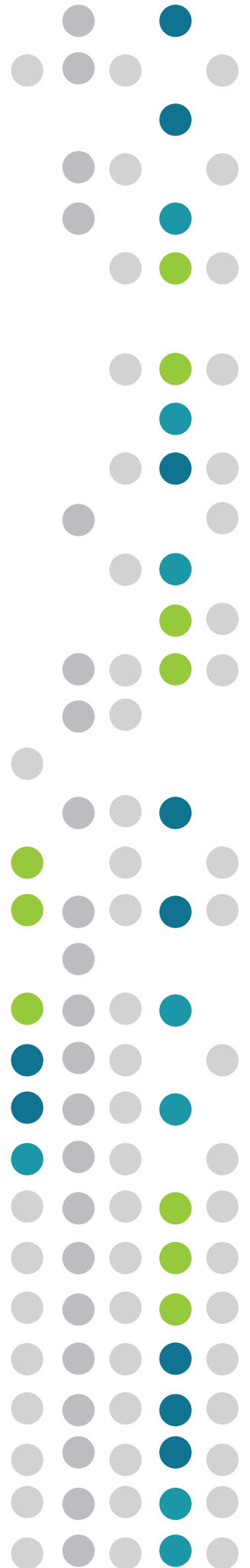




2024'S FIRST VIRAL SENSATION

Seven Things Any Business
Owner Can Learn From the
Stanley "Quencher" Cup.



HOW DOES A SIMPLE WATER BOTTLE BECOME SUCH A SENSATION?

As we talked about in Episode 1 of *Marketing Mondays with Marilyn*, the current popularity of the Stanley 40oz “Quencher” cup is an excellent example of how viral marketing can take off and become extremely profitable for a company. It’s also a great argument for how making a pivot that you didn’t even realize you needed to make can be one of the best business decisions ever.

You have surely seen one of these cups in the image below. They are EVERYWHERE now, coming out of seemingly nowhere. And in early January 2024, they made the news because there were legions of shoppers all over the country camped out outside of Target stores, trying to get their hands on exclusive pink and red colors that were released in collaboration with both Target and Starbucks. Seems crazy but really...moments like these are what every business hopes for - that people will be SO committed to buying something from you that they will go to pretty great lengths to do it.

You may be surprised to learn that while the exclusive Quenchers it seems everyone is after are new colors for Stanley, the product itself is not new AT ALL. They have been around since 2016, but nobody was buying them...in fact they were ALMOST discontinued altogether. And Stanley is not a new company either. They have been around since 1913.

So how did this happen? How was Stanley able to capture that lightning in a bottle, or rather, a 40oz tumbler? The following pages is a case study of seven things that Stanley did right with their marketing...and how you can learn from and apply those things to YOUR marketing efforts.



1 FIND OUT WHO YOUR PEOPLE ARE - AND MARKET TO THEM.

As we discussed in the video, prior to the explosion of the Quencher cups, Stanley's customer base was typically male and consisted of people who enjoy outdoor adventures like camping, fishing, and hiking, or people who work outside and needed to keep their drinks warm/cold for extended periods of time, such as construction workers, linemen, etc. As such, this was also the demographic they were marketing to...there was no real targeting to speak of. And you know what they say about that: When you market to everyone, you reach no one.

When meeting with the ladies from the Buy Guide, they brought up an excellent point to the Stanley executives: they were making a mistake by not marketing to women between 25-50. For example, nurses, teachers and moms on the go who would want to carry water or coffee with them everywhere were exactly the kind of people who would buy one of their 40oz cups, so they could stay hydrated throughout the day.

There was definitely "proof in that pudding" as they say, because the 25-50 year old woman was also the typical follower of The Buy Guide, and many of them had already expressed interest in the Quencher cup.

As a result of that insight, Stanley revamped their marketing quite a bit, including refreshing all of their materials, redesigning their website, and introducing new colors, some which were geared towards women. They also partnered with the Buy Guide to send the cups to other influencers in order to spread exposure.

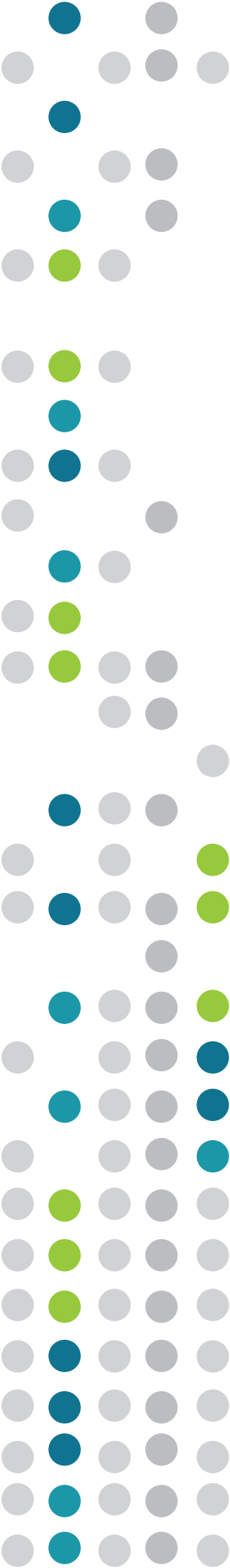
After doing this, sales absolutely exploded and the Quencher cup became a hot commodity that everyone wanted to get their hands on.

The big takeaway: Even a great product can fail in front of the wrong audience. That's why you want to always be VERY clear about who is already buying your products, who you WANT to buy your products, and what you need to shift in order to reach them better.

2 CREATE SCARCITY AND THEN EMBRACE IT.

Remember back in 2007 when people were sleeping outside of the Apple Store to get their hands on the new iPhone? Or when people have done the same to get a new video game, a pair of limited edition sneakers, concert tickets, or any new Nintendo product?





Those are some great examples of how scarcity can compel people to do some interesting things to get what the things they really want!

Scarcity in marketing is not new nor is it a secret, but it is an extremely effective tactic with which to promote a product. It is all about creating that sense of excitement and urgency, compelling the consumer to ACT NOW so they don't miss out on something (aka FOMO, the fear of missing out).

By restricting the availability of a product, either through limited production or time-limited offers, scarcity marketing taps into that FOMO and intensifies our desire for what is in high demand and difficult to obtain. It's a clever strategy that capitalizes on our longing for what we perceive as valuable and hard to come by.

Stanley did this by releasing new cups in collections, with limited stock in each drop...instead of just one large product order.

This created scarcity in that THESE particular cups are around until they are gone and then your chance to own one will be gone...so you need to act today to make sure you get one. This also created an easy "timestamp" of sorts for the influencers who were promoting the product to their followers.

This was a very successful action as, without fail, every release they have done this way sells out, and at it's peak, the waiting line for new tumblers was over 150,000 people.

And, it created an interesting new group of people the likes of which Stanley had not experienced with one of their products before: Collectors. Because the colors were promoted as "new and limited edition" it planted the idea in some people's minds that the cups were collectible. And as result, it created a whole new market where people buy/sell/trade cups with other "collectors." Some people own DOZENS of them and keep buying more to match their outfits or so they can have "rare" colors, etc.

It's worth noting that the average retail price for the Quencher is around \$45. And that's if you are lucky enough to find one to buy in a regular retail environment...on the secondary market, the most highly sought after colors are fetch two to three times that price.

The big takeaway: The fear of missing out can be a compelling motive for many consumers to act sooner rather than later, so do not be afraid to use that in your marketing tactics to drive sales.

3 LEVERAGE THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

Like it or not, social media is here to stay as a part of all of our daily lives. So why not put it to work for your business in a way that can increase sales and gain customer loyalty?

Stanley encourages customers to share about their experience on social media using branded hashtags. To support all the “social proof” they were collecting from social media users, Stanley also revamped its social media presence to tell more compelling stories. They have done an excellent job creating a community around their product and encouraging people to share their experiences, which then creates user generated content they can use in their marketing efforts. This created a sense of community among Stanley enthusiasts, while amplifying the brand’s reach and presenting potential new customers with the social proof they needed to feel confident purchasing from Stanley.

Stanley also actively collaborated with influential brands like Target and Starbucks, popular athletes and outdoor enthusiasts, and celebrities like country star Lainey Wilson. While these people wouldn’t be necessarily considered to be “influencers” as we know that term to mean...they are people who have fans and audiences...and by partnering with them, Stanley was able to use those partnerships to build trust through authentic endorsements.

As with anything popular, there are also going to be...drum roll...MEMES, probably making fun of all this. There have been lots of them already (we have a few examples below). That is par for the course, and if I were Stanley, I wouldn’t take it too personally. They are still making huge amounts of money on these cups, even if Becky in Toledo thinks it’s ridiculous to wait outside in the cold for hours to buy one.





4 SELL THE BENEFITS, NOT THE PRODUCT ITSELF.

Prior to the whirlwind that is the Quencher cup, one of the big marketing faux pas that Stanley was making as a company was marketing their products as “sometimes products.” Meaning “Hey guys, if you like to camp, we have fantastic tumblers, coolers and other items to keep your drinks hot or cold.” This is an “okay” positioning for things like coolers etc. because those ARE “sometimes products” for most people.

However, they were marketing the Quencher this way too, and this was a blunder, because it is an ALL DAY, EVERY DAY product.

Doctors agree that drinking water is excellent for your health, and that the average human should consume 4-6 cups of water per day for optimum hydration. The Stanley 40oz Quencher holds up to FIVE CUPS of water. So even if you only fill it once a day, you will get the middle range of the hydration you need...and if you drink more than that, then excellent. The fact that you only need to fill the cup once a day is a benefit that will appeal to most busy people...it's one less thing to worry about.

A water bottle is what people would consider a “virtue purchase,” meaning it's item that will benefit your health...so you can easily justify the cost for this reason. Also, the Quencher has other features that makes it stand out above other similar tumblers - despite it's size, it fits into a standard car cupholder. It comes in a TON of colors. And it has a built in handle.

You can't talk about this tumblers success without also talking for a moment about it's detractors. There are definitely people out there saying things like “Geez, \$45 for a water bottle?? How is it different than a Yeti, or a Tervis or the XYZ cup I bought at Walmart?!?” To some of these people, a tumbler is just a tumbler, just like a donut is just a donut. But people who are “in the know” are aware that a tumbler is more than just a tumbler, and there is a WORLD of difference between a donut you get at the gas station and say, a Krispy Kreme donut. Just saying. Not everyone is going to be your audience...and that is perfectly OKAY.

Stanley does not market the Quencher by comparing it to Yeti or any other cup. They do not explain why it's “better” or “different” because...they don't NEED to. There are tons of loyal fans on the internet that do it for them. They market the Quencher like it's revolutionary - and PEOPLE BELIEVE IT. That's marketing magic.

The big takeaway: Selling the benefits of your product instead of the product is always a winning strategy. People love when you solve a problem for them or address a pain point...and that drives them to become a CUSTOMER more than just about anything else.

5 MAKE ONE PRODUCT A GATEWAY TO OTHER PRODUCTS.

One of the “ripple effect” benefits that Stanley has experienced from the overwhelming success of the Quencher cup is that people started taking a look at what else they had to offer...and many of them have bought THAT stuff too.

Is it because Stanley is the only company out there that makes coolers, thermoses, barware, lunch boxes and around 15-20 other products? Definitely not. But if you have had a good experience with a company’s products and you happen to need something else that they offer, then why wouldn’t you buy it from them?

Consistency in quality is a cornerstone of building brand loyalty, and Stanley has done a lot of work in building that consistency. They also recognize that one of their greatest assets besides offering consistent quality was their authenticity and heritage. They tapped into the nostalgia and emotional connection that consumers had forged with their brand over the years IN ADDITION to the new face of it that now offers softer colors. Instead of chasing trends or imitating competitors, Stanley stayed true to their core values: they embraced their unique story, and leveraged the trust they had built over decades.

The big takeaway: The easiest customer to convert is the one that you already have.

6 BE EXCELLENT AT WHAT YOU DO AND LEAN INTO YOUR STRENGTHS.

It is worth noting that when it was time to pivot their marketing strategy, Stanley did NOT do one thing with the Quencher tumbler that many companies do when faced with a product that is under performing. They did not change the design of the product itself, only expand the color offerings. Perhaps they learned a lesson from “New Coke” (People under 40, Google that for an explanation...) or perhaps they were just confident that the Quencher was a GOOD product, it just needed the right audience. By staying true to their brand promise and not chasing design trends with gimmicks or add-ons, etc. they leaned into what they already knew they did well, and the product spoke for itself. Once it found the right audience, that is.

The big takeaway: Marketing will only take you so far. If your product doesn’t stand up against the competition—or if it doesn’t stand up at all—the best marketing in the world won’t save you.





7 REWARD YOUR LOYAL FANS AND EVANGELISTS.

When I was researching this case study, I found a quote from The Buy Guide founder Linley Hutchinson which talked about Stanley's Affiliate/Influencer strategy that I found incredibly interesting:

"That's how people shop these days. We don't have time to browse the internet. It's so nice to be able to hop on social media and be told what to buy."

She's not wrong. Social proof and endorsements from trusted sources can be huge influences (no pun intended) in making buying decisions. People seem to be busier than ever these days...so when looking for a fairly low priced consumer product, all we really want to know is that what we are buying is a good product. **Believe it or not, people want to be told what to buy.** When someone assures us that this investment is going to be a solid one, we are more inclined to listen and press that "Check Out Now" button.

And what about the people who are out there doing "the influencing?" What is in it for them? Stanley's marketing exec, Terence Reilly, has gone on record saying the brand has almost no influencer partnerships budget. Instead, they seek to reward "true fans" who organically talk about the product with commissions. They have delivered on that promise many times over...and they always encourage people to share their stories, photos and experiences...which they utilize routinely in their marketing. Not only does this build goodwill and loyalty amongst their customers, but it builds community. It's a winning strategy across the board.

The big takeaway: The recommendation of another customer is one of the most powerful marketing tools any company can utilize to drive sales. Social proof is priceless - encourage your customers to share their stories - and reward them for it.

**Need some help implementing these or other marketing strategies that will help your brand enjoy explosive growth? Contact us today for a FREE consultation on what we can do to help YOUR business!
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