



THE DICKS + NANTON CELEBRITY BRANDING AGENCY

The Next Big Thing: It's All About "U"

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You spend a few minutes on the internet idly looking at vacation resorts in Cancun. You click away and suddenly you see, on the next website you go to, a banner ad offering a terrific package deal...to a Cancun resort.

You're on Facebook and you notice a friend of yours has just "Liked" the "Mad Men" TV Show page. You "Like" it too – and a few seconds later, an ad pops up on the right hand side of your Facebook screen that wants to sell you "Mad Men" vintage clothing.

Marketing has achieved a whole new level of individualization – and it's taken generations to make it there.

The Baby Boomers were born into unparalleled prosperity and brought unprecedented social change. Then came the Generation X'ers, the first group to deal with the new realities of divorce, diversity and displacement – they felt freer to embrace new realities and less bound to tradition. After X came, naturally, Generation Y – the first generation to grow up with computers, cell phones and the beginnings of the internet – and the first to find entirely new and innovative ways to communicate and interact that affected all of us.

Now, we believe we're seeing a whole new generation emerging because of how quickly these technologies have evolved in sophistication and adaptability – a generation we humbly propose should be known as "**Generation U.**"

We know, we know, alphabetically, it's a few steps back. But, in terms of where this generation's experience will take them, believe us, Generation U will be more than a few steps ahead – of *all* of us. And any marketer or entrepreneur who doesn't embrace their expectations will find themselves way behind the times.

Generation U is the Next Big Thing we all need to understand.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MASS MARKET

You're listening to an old Motown Supremes song on iTunes. The "Genius" suggestion box to the right suggests songs you can buy performed by Stevie Wonder, the Four Tops, Smokey Robinson and other Motown acts.

You find the new music video by your favorite musician online – and you also find out that, if you upload your photo, you can be in the video and download that personalized version to show everyone you know.

In the old days, local stores were mostly owned by local people, not corporations. The owners would get to know their regular customers, make it a point of knowing their likes and dislikes, and, when those customers would come in, point them in the direction of something that they might want to buy. But that kind of suggestion came naturally out of real relationships, rather than cold marketing maneuvers. The store owners knew what their customers specifically liked and did their best to deliver.

That scenario, for the most part, belongs to the past, due to the advent of supermarkets, superstores and super-malls. The customer became just one of the herd to most brick-and-mortar operations, whose salespeople had to do their best to jumpstart a relationship in only a few moments; one that should, in reality, have taken years to properly build.

And just as stores were no longer about building any one-on-one relationships, marketing and media became all about "mass." Since these giant companies had to talk to everybody at once, they engaged in "one-size-fits-all" advertising. National campaigns sending the same message all across the country, even where it might not even make sense. These were the order of the day on TV, radio, billboards, newspapers and magazines. Coke had to be "the real thing" for everybody... everywhere!

While this level of mass marketing was new (and effective) with Baby Boomers, Generations X and Y quickly caught on to all the tricks of this type of blanket marketing – and became jaded and immune to it. Mass messages had nothing to do with these new kids on the block, who were already feeling alienated and isolated – because

many traditional community structures were already falling apart.

No, X and Y were more interested in new technologies that brought *them* together in personal, one-on-one ways – videogames, cell phones and the first home computers. Even TV became more personal, as the rise of cable and satellite TV brought more niche channels like MTV, CNN, and Lifetime — aimed at specific audiences instead of an entire household.

The stage was set...for U.

BECOMING U

You're on Amazon buying a baseball glove for your son. As soon as you click to put it in your online shopping cart, Amazon quickly recommends a bat, cleats and baseball pants as well.

It's time for your car to get serviced. You get a letter from the owner of the dealership that has, automatically inserted in it, your name, car and model year, the last date of service and a \$20 coupon off the maintenance it needs at this time.

With traditional marketing no longer the go-to solution with the new technology, and a new kind of consumer, big business now had a classic conundrum; in order to reach the new mindset of consumers, they had to talk to them as individuals – but, in order to be cost-effective, they still had to use mass marketing tools.

The upside? Well, the same technology that changed the face of a generation also was capable of changing the face of marketing. As internet marketing and data collection became more sophisticated, it was suddenly a lot easier to 'key in' to people's preferences and buying history. Tracking people's activities when they came to a company's website, including how long they stayed and what they looked at, gave marketers a lot more to work with – enabling them to personally "talk" to potential clients and customers in a way that was incredibly individualized.

Social Media tools like Facebook really 'sealed the deal'. When people are publicly sharing their favorite music, movies, books and hobbies, it's incredibly easy for any marketer to reach an already-interested prospect. And that prospect is very likely to check out an ad for something in an area in which he or she is already incredibly interested.

More and more, every kind of company is finding ways to create a more personalized experience for its customers – to the point where those customers *expect* that kind of attention – and are disappointed and dismayed when they don't get it. Generation U is all about *you* – because companies know they have to treat you as an individual to the fullest extent possible. And when they fail to do so, they suffer for it.

THE SECRETS OF SELLING "U"

You want to design your own special Nike athletic shoe. And Nike wants to let you do it – with not only a dedicated website that allows you to customize your "swoosh" footwear, but also at actual physical NikeID store locations where you can do it on the premises.

Your local dentist sends you a special offer that you need to redeem on the internet. You go to the website specified on the direct mail piece, and see that your name is actually in big letters on top of the website.

As I've said, Generation U customers want to be treated as individuals, not as a herd. In a marketplace where you can customize your computer screen, your web browser, your smart phone and countless other upscale products 'to your heart's content', one-size-fits-all marketing no longer fits anyone.

So how do you best approach Generation U when you want to make marketing magic? Well, there are four steps any marketer needs to take in order to effectively reach and connect with "Generation U":

1. IDENTIFICATION

Who are your potential customers? What do they want? Why would they want it from you? In this initial stage, you need to collect the most complete and reliable data about the people who already buy from you and those who might – so you can best meet their wants and/or needs.

2. DIFFERENTIATION

Some people want one thing – others want something else. That's human nature and that's why we're all individuals. Classify and prioritize the target groups that will have the most lifetime customer value/potential profit to you and find the most effective message to reach them.

3. INTERACTION

What communication channel is most effective to reach these target groups? Direct mail? Google Ads? Facebook or Twitter? The channel that's going to be the most effective is going to be the one in which the target group is most likely to participate. A younger group is more likely to be doing Social Media – for an older demographic, direct mail or email might be best. Keep in mind the response on your end is *key* – the faster you're able to react when they actually show interest in what you're selling, the more likely the sale, so have at least a foolproof automatic follow-up system in place.

4. CUSTOMIZATION

When it comes time to buy, Generation U wants to be able to control the product. Some kind of personalization of product or individualization of service should be part of what you're offering. Again, they want what you're selling to be what *they* want it to be – not what *you* want it to be. The more you can give customers exactly what they want, the more of a chance they'll come back for more.

“U” IS A TWO-WAY STREET

A lawyer, who knows many people are reluctant to seek legal advice, posts a series of YouTube videos featuring himself on camera, talking directly to potential clients to put them at ease about the process of hiring an attorney.

President Obama, hitting a low point in opinion polls, breaks protocol and appears on the popular daytime talk show, “The View,” so he can informally present his talking points in a relaxed setting that's personality-oriented, rather than from an imposing podium surrounded by reporters.

What do you respond better to – a generic message from a company? ... or a personalized letter from an individual you're familiar with and like, who's offering a similar product or service?

We'd bet a few dollars that you're much more willing to trust a human being than a faceless entity any day of the week.

Just as Generation U wants to be approached as individuals, they also appreciate being approached *by* individuals. The notion that “people buy people” has never been truer than it is today – so marketing not only needs to be personal, it should also be personality-based.

If you want your business to thrive with Generation U, you've got to start promoting your personal profile too. You need to promote your personality, not just your product or service, through getting featured and quoted in the major national newspapers, on the major TV networks, in best-selling books and popular podcasts, with online blogs, articles and videos, so that your potential clients feel like they know who you are and trust you – before you've even made contact with them.

It's kind of a reverse-personalized approach, but it's still the same concept – you've got to approach your prospects as people, people that are highly relatable, but also perceived as high-level experts in their particular field. It makes a potential buyer feel comfortable about approaching you and also creates trust in your experience and expertise.

A tornado wrecks havoc on your area – you go out with your video camera, put together a report and upload it to CNN's iReport site. It ends up being used in their coverage of the damage.

Smart Cars, a new generation of electric/hybrid cars, allows you to create your own mobile masterpiece by selecting from unlimited paint colors and a variety of wrap designs. With their easily-interchangeable body panels, you can customize your 'smart' (yes, its correctly spelt with a lower case 's'), however you want, whenever you want.

Those two examples above, and the ones we've used all throughout this chapter are real-life examples of Generation U marketing in action. You'll note that all of them use unconventional means to create unique individual interactions – either on the side of the buyer or on the side of the marketer.

The more populated this world gets, the more all of us feel the need to have control of our own destiny – and to have our best chance at expressing ourselves individually. The businesses that 'get' that will prosper – the ones that don't will struggle.

Now, more than ever, put yourself in the shoes of those you're marketing to. How do *you* like to be treated as a customer? More likely than not, *you* want to be in control. *You* want to make the decisions. *You* want the product to be what *you* want it to be.

And that's just what Generation U is all about.

**If you would like more information about Marketing Your Products
or Services Effectively to Generation U,
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JW Dicks, Esq. & Nick Nanton, Esq. are best-selling authors that consult for businesses from Start-Up to \$4 Billion in annual revenue, on how to build their business through Personality Driven Marketing, Personal Brand Positioning, Guaranteed Media, and Mining Hidden Business Assets. They offer free articles, white papers, and case studies at their website. Jack and Nick have been featured in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Newsweek, Inc. Magazine, FastCompany.com, CNN.com and on NBC, CBS, ABC and FOX affiliates across the country.



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