Tribal Wisdom and Marketing Strategy: Teaching Materials

Teaching Notes by Grace Ann Rosile 8/9/13

Watch the short film “Tribal Wisdom and Marketing Strategy.” Dr. Bruce Huhmann discusses gifting as a marketing strategy, relationship marketing, and creating buyer trust (instead of buyer beware) with disclosure and honesty. Huhmann cites business examples including Domino’s Pizza, Google, Facebook, YouTube, and Procter & Gamble. Huhmann also briefly explains the Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative at the New Mexico State University College of Business.

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Time: 10-15 minutes
Materials: None
Physical Setting: Space suited to large or small group discussions.
Group Size: No limit; however, recommended small groups of 3-5 persons with large group discussion as wrap-up.

Discussion Questions:
1. Have you, or has someone in your group, been the recipient of “free gifts” from a for-profit company? What was the impact of that gift on your attitude towards that company?
2. What is the best gift you ever received? What made it the best?
3. When do you feel positively towards those who give gifts to you? When do you feel negatively towards gift-givers? Why?
   What “rules” or “principles” does this suggest that you should follow when giving a gift?
4. What, if any, is the difference between gift-giving and a bribe? Are bribes OK in some cultures? Are they OK for Americans in other cultures where bribes are considered necessary to do business?
5. Think of a person or group to whom you might give a gift this week.

ACTIVITY: Case Example of Tom’s Shoes
Time: 20-40 minutes, depending on whether internet research is done before or during class.
Materials: Internet research results, and the questions below.
Physical Setting: Classroom
Group Size: Any size; large groups may be broken into smaller ones with a large-group ending discussion.

Preparation: 10 minutes
Reading/research: Before class, begin by researching Tom’s Shoes on the internet at www.toms.com and elsewhere. Consider especially its strategy of giving away shoes. (Option: Use 10 minutes in class for on-line research.)

Discussion Questions: 20-30 minutes

Question#1
Is Tom’s Shoes’ strategy of giving away shoes helping its company? How/Why? What evidence do you have of success?

Question #2
In what ways might this strategy of Tom’s Shoes be considered “gifting”?

Question #3
Would this strategy be feasible for other companies? Suggest at least one similar example, in which a company links a charitable contribution with sales of their product/service. Explain how this example might be similar to, and different from, Tom’s.
ACTIVITY: Teams Propose Strategies for Giving, “Gifting,” and Marketing
Time: 20 minutes
Materials: None, unless presentations become formal with PowerPoint, etc.
Physical Setting: Space suited to 3-5 person discussion groups, plus a group presentation space.
Group Size: Any size.

Part A: 10 minutes
In groups of 3-5, choose a company and a product that you think would benefit from an approach similar to Tom’s Shoes. Outline a strategy, providing details of the giving-away idea, as well as the expected results.

Part B: 10 minutes
Each group presents their idea as a marketing proposal to top management. The rest of the class acts as top management, asking questions to evaluate the proposal. You may take a vote to see if the proposal would be “accepted.”

ACTIVITY: Group Discussion on Relationship Marketing
Time: 20-25 minutes
Materials: None
Physical setting: Suited to 3-5 person discussion groups.
Group Size: Any size; however, allow more time for Part B for larger groups.

Break into groups of 3-5 persons.

Part A: Individual Portion (2 minutes)
1. Think of a purchase with which you were dissatisfied. Write a brief description of this.
2. What, if anything, did you do about your dissatisfaction?
3. What, if anything, did the company do about your dissatisfaction?
4. Describe your present relationship with the company and product after this experience.

Part B: Sharing (3-5 minutes)
Each group member briefly presents their experience to the whole group.

Part C: The group chooses one person’s example to answer the following (5 minutes):
1. Was the customer’s feedback solicited about their satisfaction with the purchase?
2. If not solicited, did the customer seek to offer feedback or make a complaint?
3. If feedback was not solicited nor offered by the customer, what should the company do? Provide a detailed description of how to solicit customer satisfaction feedback in the particular instance of this example, with this particular product.
4. What were the effects of customer dissatisfaction on the relationship of the Customer to the company and to the product? List at least 3 words/phrases.

Part D: Whole Group (10-15 minutes for 3-4 groups)
(Note: if the group is very large, allow more time here, or only sample some sub-group reports.)

Each sub-group summarizes their discussion to the large group (1-2 minutes).
For each sub-group presentation, make a list of the best and worst practices regarding building better customer relationships after episodes of customer dissatisfaction.