

## Whitepaper: The Most Common Viral Campaign Mistakes

The myth of “viral” feels like a brass ring everyone reaches for, but few can touch. Really, what you want to create as a brand manager or creative professional is the best possible environment for campaign efforts to go viral. This is where so many of yesterday’s processes are failing today’s needs for success. From our experience, here are the five most frequent mistakes brands make in creating campaigns that invite sharing between friends and across networks:

### Mistake #1: Overplanning

People see it all the time in sports when a team is behind: Lots of strikeouts while everyone is swinging for the fences. In digital campaigns, the viral goal is so lofty that it seems to drive entire teams to hit for power: trying to come up with the big idea that covers every possible use scenario and irrational liability.

The reality is that many of the most successful viral campaigns are simple, solitary ideas. The business benefits are two-fold:

- 1) If the campaign doesn’t work, you haven’t built a mountain of billable hours to try and beat.
- 2) You maintain available budget to rework the campaign and take advantage of outcomes. happen on time and on budget.

The Whopper Sacrifice campaign is a great example of what happens when you keep it simple, and keep some planning time in your back pocket as the campaign unfolds.

Whopper Sacrifice took two dominant Facebook concepts: wanting to get rid of people you never really

wanted to friend, but not having a good excuse to dump them, and playing on the idea that more friends equates to being a better Facebooker. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist, just good insight into how users feel, and how a brand can help.

By most accounts the initial campaign was a success: 23,000 people used the service, meaning almost a quarter-million coupons served to people that took action to gain them. A deeper look into the numbers reveals that between users, sacrificed friends, and friends’ news feeds, Burger King earned about 26,000,000 impressions.

That was only half of the campaign. The second half came as the Burger King application was sacrificed by Facebook’s Terms of Service. If Burger King (and CP&B) had spent all their time working on up-front strategy, the campaign would have been quietly canned. But by keeping the initial strategy simple and actionable, the respective teams had time to respond and continue promoting the campaign as though it had a new dimension: outlaw.



Keeping it simple

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Burger King was able to leverage the decision into many more impressions by people interested in knowing what happened. Even though the application was killed, the fan page continues to live on, providing continued interaction. At the time this article was written, the most recent post was created by a fan only 15 hours prior (or 15 turns o' the hourglass if your Facebook is translated into Pirate).

## Design Patterns: stop reinventing the wheel

A tremendous time-sink for brands in the widget and rich-media space with teams new to the environment is figuring out how to design for interaction. Even building a component as simple as a static image slideshow will quickly show you how many design decisions need to be made: what controls need to be shown? How fast should the autoplay advance pictures? How large should the pictures be? How will users know how to quickly, visually return to the main menu?

With three years and hundreds of rich media viral applications under our belt, the Sprout design team curates a deep design pattern library: all the visual elements and user-experience controls, refined by best practices, and ready for inclusion where needed.

This war chest not only ends a myriad of meetings based on minutia: design patterns free your team to spend time refining how the brand is presented in the space instead of having to reconsider and go through all the mistakes of the past.

Sprout design patterns truly save a tremendous amount of man-hours while allowing you to create much more engaging applications in a fraction of the time.

## Mistake #2: No optimization from metrics

This mistake ties into the first mistake in allotting the appropriate resources throughout the campaign. Online efforts aren't print. They are living, breathing, and malleable. You're not shoving off from port never to

### WHOPPER® Sacrifice 🚩

Plank Cap'n's Log Discussions Rantin's

The lowdown on WHOPPER® Sacrifice

Facebook® has disabled WHOPPER® Sacrifice after your love for the WHOPPER® to be stronger than 233,906 friendships.

return. This sounds elementary, and yet it always amazes us how many campaigns don't take advantage of the fact that it is online.

Use the power of how changeable your campaigns are to do just that: change them to increase engagement. For everything it is (and isn't) Google Analytics Tracking for Adobe Flash has a great funnel visualization and tracking to show you exactly where people are abandoning ship.

Use these metrics to tweak the campaign as the results come in. If the campaign goal is to get people to share, and they aren't sharing at the rate you expected, make a change to your call to action on day two and see how it goes. If you see that the interstitial is where people drop off, get rid of it! Staying flexible with resources and taking action on the metrics can be the difference between a viral campaign that catches fire or goes cold. Make sure you have the resources and technology to continue adjusting based on the behavior of the people you're trying to please.

Brands that use Sprout to create their viral campaigns enjoy two valuable layers of metrics to glean valuable intelligence on user behavior quickly. First is Sprout's own proprietary analytics engine. In the individual Sprout metrics interface, brand management can gain granular views on user actions like individual clicks over time.

A second layer is Sprout's tight integration with the aforementioned Google Analytics. Here, the conversion funnel is visualized for immediate perspective on the most common interaction paths, providing you with the insight needed to make changes that help viral applications continue to grow.

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### Mistake #3: No investment in seeding campaigns

Another strange disconnect is the lack of coordination between display buys and viral engagement campaigns. While companies launch rich media applications in social networks, their display is over on portals trying to get hits for a Microsite or coupon.

Use your budget to combine forces where there are paid insertions to be had, and display to be fueled, to seed the base for your Rich Application. Many of the seeding points in these networks target people who have already qualified themselves by installing and using applications just like yours in the past.

Seeding isn't cheating: it's giving the audience best suited to use and spread your application virally direct exposure to your campaign, at a CPM that will most likely fit within your budget.

As with any online initiative, you can't forget the golden rule: that people will spend more time on every other Web property and promotion besides yours. Seeding helps to put your campaign in front of the right people at the onset of the campaign, so your brand dollars aren't spent twisting in the wind of a vast competitive landscape.

Sprout makes seeding easy and effective with a paid distribution network reaching more than 70 million unique users (ComScore, January 2009) to assure that your application gets a substantial base to gain the attention it needs to meet your reach goals.

### Mistake #4: Not Enough Social Media Strategy

Sure, you have a great strategic team working with your brand to help plan campaigns. Yet, it's also likely that none of them have Beer Pong installed on their iPhone (two million downloads) or used the "What Color is Your Aura?" Facebook application (Growing at a 555% rate according to AllFacebookApps.)

These are just two reasons why it helps to develop strategy with companies and consultants that are specialists in social applications and audiences. What may seem ridiculous to you and your team because of your habits and lifestyle is sound, winning strategy to those who understand the markets and audiences actually using the network for which you want to create content.

This may seem hard to do, with everyone and their mother professing expertise in social media. But one simple question will separate the chaff from the wheat: What is your track record with clients?

Tapping these experienced resources to help define your strategy in the platforms you need for viral adoption can easily be the difference between a budget well spent and one sent down the drain. Spend a little time upfront to scour your contacts and check out popular applications to get a foothold on what will work for your brand.

Keep in mind that strategy may not seem to make a whole lot of sense in the same way a traditional Web or print campaign would. In social, your brand is sponsoring content that helps people express themselves within the context of their peer group. Sometimes, that can be directly aligned with the brand messaging; other times, it can take the form of "What's Your Stripper Name," last summer's Facebook hit among women 18-34.

Okay, so maybe that example was a bit extreme. The bigger point is that there are companies who have experience creating successful viral, social campaigns; and it's not to the detriment of your team to bring those people in early during your planning process. Quite the opposite, it will be a tremendous learning experience for everyone involved in strategy going forward.

In some environments, like movies, the brand management knows that they need to tap resources like Sprout to deliver complete strategic solutions, and fast. Our work for Universal Studios Fast and Furious is a great example of how experience in creating rich application for younger audience creates tangible results.

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## Mistake #5 Not Enough Real Time Campaigns

With the state of Rich Media composition and creation tools available, brands have more ability than ever to capture mindshare on large-scale trending events on behalf of their audience.

Following on the idea of facilitating experiences rather than forcing behavior around purely product, let's take a recent phenomenon as an example:

### Susan Boyle

Of course you're familiar with the songstress who came out of nowhere to capture the attention of the world on YouTube from the stage of Britain's Got Talent. Millions of hits later, just as many articles have been written about how no one has been able to monetize this worldwide fascination. Even a month later, her name continues to appear in Twitter's trending topics as one of the most-typed phrases.

Of course you're thinking, "What does Susan Boyle have to do with my brand?"

That would be fine in the old economy. But look at all the places where millions of people are satisfying their curiosity about the topic: Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, news sites. Guess what? They all have free RSS feeds.

Using this simple, widely available technology, along with quick rich media tools, the brand that dedicates a single business day to aggregating these public domain content into a rich application that keeps people up to date on the latest Susan Boyle info is bound to capture interest, sharing, and lots of time spent checking in on her progress through that branded presence. It's the same concept that Britain's Got Talent is using to monetize their product placement during their show.

All you've done is put the technology at your brand's disposal to give an incredibly wide audience more convenient access to the information that they've already shown a deep interest in. By sponsoring this application, you are associating the brand with the needs of the audience in the place and time that works best for them. Isn't that what marketing is all about?

## Go With the Flow

Today's viral hits are more than mere flashes in the pan. What allows viral content to spread is a foundation of resource and budget allotment for brand teams to stay on top of trends, the needs of their audience, and the real time media creation and measurement tools.

In today's economy, the biggest mistake a brand can make is to not continue trying small ideas within this environment, watch how users interact with that concept, and then continue to fund rapid iterative development and seeding to help these campaigns grow quickly into easily shared, highly engaging applications.

The brands that continue to stick with old methods of strategizing and funding for the big idea that will save everyone will continue to watch more viral hits come and go... Along with the audience that used to pay attention to what they had to say.

Take a moment to speak with us at Sprout today. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how cost-effective and viral your rich media campaigns can be. Find out more at <http://sproutinc.com>