Generating Word of Mouth

"Let's give them something to talk about."

-Bonnie Raitt

The Best Form of Advertising

No matter who you ask, all marketers will agree that **Word of Mouth (WOM)** is the best form of advertising around. Nothing is as powerful as a recommendation from a friend or family member. Even WOM from complete strangers rank higher than traditional advertising for being more trustworthy and reliable and effective at getting people to buy.

But how do you generate that WOM?

Roy H. Williams, aka The Wizard of Ads, says there are three ways to consistently get WOM. I agree with all three and will add two more to the list. The five ways to get WOM are:

- **Over-the-Top Design**
- **Over-the-Top Customer Service**
- **Over-the-Top Generosity**
- **Sharing Secrets**
- **Unbelievable Advertising**

This publication will discuss all five and show you how you can generate more WOM in your business.

Over-the-Top Design

Have you ever been to Times Square in Manhattan? There is so much over-the-top design, that it assaults the senses. One of my favorite examples is hidden within a store.

Enter the **Toys R Us** in Times Square and you'll see a three-story tall Ferris Wheel right inside the building! Yeah, that is something you don't see every day, and when you do see it, you'll tell all your friends about it.

Another great example of over-the-top design is a store in Estes Park, Colorado called **Estes Ark**. Guess what they sell? Yes, animals, stuffed animals (two by two). People drive the snaking road up the mountain just to see this wonderful store. Then they tell their friends.

Even **Apple Stores** received a lot of WOM when they first opened up. Every retailer in America scoffed at them saying, *"You can't have a retail store without cash registers."* Apparently you can. Apple Stores have the highest sales per square foot of any retail chain out there, more than twice the second place **Tiffany's** (according to RetailSails).

Sometimes over-the-top design doesn't have to be so big and splashy and expensive. Sometimes it is in the things you do to decorate your store.

Generating Word of Mouth

Pufferbellies Toy Store in Staunton, VA is known for their fantastic window displays. Every year they have a huge event to unveil their Christmas window. Customers line the sidewalks and pile into the streets for the big unveil. Then they take pictures and share them with their friends.

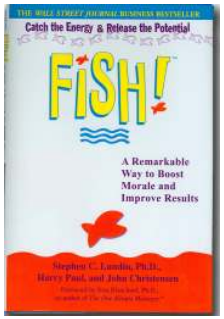
Even something as simple as a front door that stands only four feet tall for the little shoppers can be enough to get people to talk. This door at **Hopscotch Toys** in McMinnville, OR has kids excited before they even enter.

What can you do with the design of your establishment that will get people to talk?

Over-the-Top Customer Service

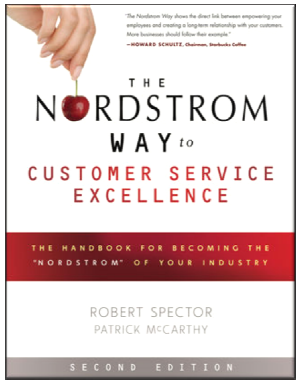
When the fish start flying, the people start clapping and the cash registers start singing.

Of course, I'm talking about **Pike Place Fish Market**, the legendary fish market highlighted in the book ***Fish***. The philosophy behind the market is based on four principles:



- **Play**
- **Make Their Day**
- **Be Present**
- **Choose Your Attitude**

Those four principles, spelled out in the book, and proven every day in the market are why thousands of businesses big and small believe they are the pinnacle of Customer Service. They do put on a show, and not only do the paying customers talk about the experience, so does everyone else who just happens to be walking by.



You cannot discuss over-the-top customer service without discussing **Nordstrom's**, the king of customer service. Their philosophy is quite simple…

Find out what the customer wants and then do that.

Do that enough and the customers will talk about you. People will write books about you.

There is a deli in Ann Arbor, Michigan that was featured in Jim Collins' book ***Good to Great*** called **Zingerman's Deli**. The deli has grown into multiple channels of business including their own B2B training program called ZingTrain.

What makes their customer service over-the-top is how they empower their staff to own the problems and then measure, measure, measure the results.

"What gets measured and rewarded, improves"
-Roy H. Williams

Great Customer Service no longer cuts it. Give a customer great customer service and she'll say thank you. Transaction over. You gave her something. She gave you something in return.

To get her to talk, you have to do something over-the-top. Something worth talking about. Give them enough to talk about and maybe the next book on customer service will be about you!

Over-the-Top Generosity

Let's say a new restaurant opens in town. Fancy dining. You and some friends save up your money for a night on the town. The six of you sit down to eat and the meal is wonderful. But while you're sitting, it is the desserts that truly intrigue you. Mouth-watering desserts are flying by on all sides. Your friends grab the dessert menu and start to drool just by the descriptions. The prices are a little steep, but you settle on three for the table to share.

Just then your server shows up and says, *"You all have been a wonderful table tonight. I've enjoyed serving you and would like to buy you all your own dessert. What would you like?"*

Not only will you be talking about that meal for months to come, the next time someone asks where you would like to eat, you know what your answer will be.

For a little flour and sugar, they bought some serious WOM.

Have you ever taken your watch to the jeweler to get the battery changed? The jeweler takes your watch into the back room while you look at all the shiny objects in the glass cases. A few minutes later the jeweler returns with your watch ticking away nicely.

"How much?"

"It's on the house."

Yeah, you're going to talk about that. For the cost of the battery the jeweler got you to talk about the business and also to spend idle time staring at the merchandise. That is a win-win if ever there was one.

The key to over-the-top generosity is that ***it must never be advertised.*** Just do it. Just give from your heart and trust that the customers will talk about you.

Sharing Secrets

"Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."
-Benjamin Franklin

The one problem with secrets is that they are so much fun to share. So use that to your advantage. Tell little "secrets" about your business or the products you sell. Share fun and interesting tidbits and stories—*the ones only the insiders in your industry might know*—with your favorite customers.

First, you'll make them feel like insiders. Second, they'll have something to tell their friends and family. A well-spoken "secret" can travel virally around your community in no time at all.

Secrets work equally well with men and women—even though they communicate differently!

Men speak vertically. Did what I say make you think higher of me or lower of me? Communication for men is like climbing a ladder. You are either moving up or moving down. That is why we won't stop and ask for directions. To ask for directions is to admit you don't know, which is to take a step down the ladder.

Generating Word of Mouth

Ah, but a secret is a chance for a man to share something others don't know and move back up a rung.

Women speak horizontally. Did what I say bring me in closer or push me away? That is why they are so quick to ask for directions. Asking for help draws women into someone else's inner circle, into their web. Sharing secrets does the same.

Tell stories about your store. Tell stories about your vendors. Tell little tidbits that feel like insider information and watch your customers share this with their friends.

Facebook has a Share button. Post things on your Facebook page that are **Shareworthy*** and watch them spread.

Unbelievable Advertising

I wrote a radio ad about an experience that was happening in the store. I purposefully left a few details out to see if I could generate some interest from listeners.

Here is the ad…

> *I couldn't believe it. They were taking customers into the men's bathroom. Yes, my staff was taking men and women, young and old into our men's bathroom. And the customers were coming out laughing and giggling, oh yeah, and buying, too. I guess when you find a product that cool, you just have to show it off however and wherever you can. (laugh) The men's bathroom, gotta love it. Toy House in downtown Jackson. We're here to make you smile.*

The first day the ad ran, the deejays started talking about it.

The second day of the ad the deejays on the other stations in the building were talking about—stations on which the ad did not run! By day three the local television stations were talking about it, too! Even my wife was asked at the gas station.

"What is going on in the men's bathroom?"

The ad ran in August 2008. That Christmas people were still talking about it. In fact, a customer brought it up in May 2013—almost five years after the ad ran!

If you have the guts to run an ad like that, you can generate WOM through your ads.

At the end of the day, if you want your customers to talk about you, you have to give them something to talk about.

***Shareworthy** is a term coined by my friend **Tim Miles**. Check out what he is teaching about making your business better at **www.TheDailyBlur.com.**

Thank you to **Roy H. Williams** for the over-the-tops and for encouraging me to write the kind of ads that get people in the store.

Nicknamed the Wizard of Ads by an early client, Roy H. Williams and his staff have often been the unseen, pivotal force in amazing come-from-behind victories in the worlds of business, politics, and finance.

Williams teaches creative thinking, strategic planning and human persuasion at Wizard Academy that is attended by executives from many of the world's largest advertising agencies, professors from leading universities, broadcasters, journalists and small-business CEOs from around the world.

His first book, The Wizard of Ads, was voted Business Book of the Year in 1998 and his second book, Secret Formulas of the Wizard of Ads, became The Wall Street Journal's No. 1 Business Book in America in 1999 as well as a New York Times bestseller. The third and last book in the Wizard trilogy, Magical Worlds of the Wizard of Ads, also received the honor of being a bestseller on The Wall Street Journal list. Each of the books has been translated for international distribution in China, Brazil, Korea and Israel. His other books include Accidental Magic and Free the Beagle.

A lifelong student of the human race, Williams is forever seeking to answer the question, What makes people do the things they do? And the answers that he is discovering along the way provide a wealth of practical knowledge and a constant source of entertainment for his students and friends on five continents.

Williams lives in the Middle of Nowhere, Texas, with his wife, Pennie.