

A templative tale from
Mischief Marketing

Mischievous Man in the Moon

[excerpted from Chapter 12 (print edition) ...]

👍 **Mischievous Presentation Tactic: Use a surprise attack.**

The next thing we learn from this story has to do with the element of surprise.

Wanna know one of the best things you can do in any situation? Surprise people. Everybody loves a surprise. One way to surprise people is by doing the opposite of what they expect (as we've noted). Another way is to set up a low expectation, then deliver a high-quality offering.

In this tale, we see that Barbra first set up a low expectation in the minds of her auditioners. They had already noticed her (she'd stood out because she was so uncool) and they had already concluded that she didn't have much talent. They were very wrong. And so, when they finally heard her sing, they were very surprised.

Some years ago, comedian Andy Kaufman used a similar mischief marketing tactic. Kaufman eventually became one of the stars of the hit TV series *Taxi*. But at the beginning of his career, when he was unknown, he used to do a very unusual act.

He'd come out on stage looking extremely shy and nervous. Speaking in a peculiar accent (which later became the character Latke's accent), he told some bad jokes. Then he did some even worse "impressions." The whole skit was painful to watch. If you were in the audience or viewing it on TV, you laughed — sure you laughed — but only because you didn't know what else to do.

Then Kaufman would announce that he was going to do his impression of “dee Elvis Presley.” Naturally, you laughed again, expecting his “Elvis” to be as bad as everything else he’d done so far. At that point, Kaufman would turn away from the camera, adjust the collar on his costume, and start shaking his leg.

When he finally turned around, you (along with everybody else in the audience) were — to put it simply — stunned.

You suddenly saw standing before you a man with an astonishing physical and behavioral resemblance to Elvis Presley. Kaufman’s impression was flawless, riveting, and filled with vitality. No mere mockery of Elvis, it was instead a powerful, heartfelt homage to The King.

The effect was electrifying.



In the constantly evolving and increasingly important field of business presentation theory, this principle is well known.

Business presentation experts teach us never to put the best stuff first when we meet with a client or prospect to market a product or idea. Instead, they teach us to:

- (1) put the good (but not the best) material first;
- (2) follow it with most — but not all — of the best stuff;
- (3) move on to some more good material;
- (4) close with the remainder of the best material;
- (5) top the presentation off with the best stuff.

This orchestrated approach can make the difference between a fine presentation and a deeply powerful one.

~ Idea Joggers ~

In what ways can you deliberately lower the expectations of your prospects before you surprise them?

What's the weakest part of your offering or presentation? What's the strongest?
What's in between?

When do you suppose you might not want to present your best material? Are there circumstances under which you might ask for a commitment from your prospect before you give away the store?

Mischief Marketing in Film — *Mrs. Doubtfire*

In the 1993 film *Mrs. Doubtfire*, Robin Williams plays Daniel, a father who finds himself suddenly divorced, and without custody of his children. The court grants him visitation rights, of course, but seeing his kids once a week isn't enough for Daniel. So he resorts to a mischievous ruse. He pretends to be an old Scottish nanny and housekeeper named Mrs. Doubtfire.

In one of the funniest scenes in the film, Daniel's ex-wife, Miranda, has just placed an ad in the paper calling for a nanny. But what she doesn't know is that Daniel has surreptitiously intercepted her ad and altered it so that any real respondents to it will actually wind up calling a wrong number.

Then he himself places a series of calls to Miranda — using different voices and playing different characters who are supposedly applying for the nanny job. Daniel, by the way, is an actor who specializes in dubbing cartoon character voices.

Each character he presents to Miranda on the phone is worse than the previous one, and it is hilariously obvious after a few calls that none of them are suited to act as a nanny for anyone except maybe the demonic child in *The Omen*, or Pat Buchanan. Miranda starts worrying about finding a good applicant.

So finally, when Daniel calls as the supposedly qualified Mrs. Doubtfire, the contrast Miranda perceives between this latest applicant and all the previous losers is so stark that she fairly leaps at the chance to hire the “old Scottish lady.”

This illustrates the application of at least two Mischief Marketing tactics:

Adopting an alter ego in a case where your own identity may lack credibility.

Setting up a sharp contrast in your presentation that makes your offering look all the more attractive for being better than what your prospect has seen, or has been conditioned by experience — or maybe by you — to expect.

[... Chapter 12 (print edition) continues at this point ...]

Know anybody struggling to get started on a shoestring budget?

Why not help them get started?

Tell them about *Mischief Marketing!*