

A templative tale from  
**Mischief Marketing**

## **Mischievous Ben Franklin**

*[ excerpted from Chapter 1 (print edition) ... ]*

- ... A rebellious teenager wants to express in the media his deeply held convictions about religious hypocrisy, women's rights, male chauvinism, and a host of other topics, many of them infuriating to certain people who set themselves up as the guardians of moral virtue.

Luckily, he has access to an important Boston newspaper. Unluckily, the paper is run by his brother, James — who wouldn't dream of publishing anything written by the teen.

So the boy uses a mischievous strategy to market his ideas. He slips under James's door a well-written article that seems to come from a highly articulate, independent young feminist named Silence Dogood.

The tactic works, and James eventually ends up publishing, not just that first piece, but thirteen subsequent — and very popular — works authored (it enrages him to discover later!) not by Silence Dogood, but his own 17-year-old brother.

Eventually, one of these brilliant works contributes to the establishment of the First Amendment, protecting freedom of the press and of religion.

That mischievous teenager's name? **Benjamin Franklin.**



These are just selected examples, of course.

Would you like to know how the multimillionaire founder of a high-tech business was once so broke he had to get his friends to scurry around a rented office so the company would look busy? We'll tell you the whole engaging (and funny) story in a later chapter.

Then there's **Mother Teresa of Calcutta**. Would you like to know how she turned a simple airline lunch into perhaps thousands of dollars for the poor (and valuable publicity for her cause) just by strategically asking a few peculiar questions?

That, too, is within the scope of *Mischief Marketing*, because ***mischief marketing is as much about the marketing of ideas and values as it is about money and careers.***

We'll also showcase tales about Fortune 500 business leaders — Bill Gates, Ted Turner, Ben & Jerry — who have used (and still use) mischievous strategies to grow and nurture their companies.

Many of the anecdotes you'll see in these pages will act as templates. In other words, they'll illustrate by example how **you** can adapt the strategy embodied in many of these tales to fit your own situation and individual needs; how you can tailor the tales and modify the strategies to fit your own business and personal (or social) goals .

For instance, it might not be your style to break into a movie studio. That's understandable. But there are *similar* things you can do to accomplish what the Spielberg “templative tale” is essentially about: evoking an aura of credibility.

On the Internet, for example, you could craft a website that is as impressive as any produced by a major corporation, and such a website can do for you what the mischievously makeshift office at Universal Studios did for Steven.

Another example? Take the **Streisand story**. Is that a prescription to act like a klutz in front of people you want to impress? Not at all. Klutziness may be incidentally — but is not *essentially* — what the tale is about.

The Streisand story is essentially about this: How to **sequence** your presentation mischievously and creatively, so that your audience's expectations are lowered. (It is not until you're well into *Jaws* that you get even a glimpse of the shark, remember?)

In other words, this deliberate orchestration of expectations is what paves the way for you to shock your prospects later with the unexpected excellence of what follows. That's what Streisand's story is *essentially* about.

The point is: this is not just a book of fascinating stories about kooky things famous people did to get started.

This is a book of essential *techniques* and effective *strategies* that you can apply to your marketing, even if you're "marketing" not a product or service but just a wholesome value to your kids — like the value of education, say, or the value of free speech in a democracy, or the value (as in Mother T's case) of helping the poor.

I have to tell you one more thing.

Because some of the tactics and concepts are controversial, it is also a book that will require you — assuming you really want to understand and use mischief marketing — to **read between the lines**.

I'm sorry to be so cryptic, but it's true. If you read this book *carefully*, you'll learn much more than you expected to learn about many things — things that may (or may not) have anything to do with marketing as we know it.

But never mind that right now.

Enjoy!

### **Definition of Mischief Marketing**

Sometimes it helps to give a formal, dictionary-style definition of any new field of study like mischief marketing. And sometimes it doesn't help at all, but succeeds only in making an author look like a fatuous jerk.

I think I'll take a chance and go with a dictionary-type definition. Here it is:

**Noun. Pronunciation:** 'mis-ch&f marketing **Etymology:** 14<sup>th</sup> century. Middle English *meschief*, from Old French, from *mes-* + *chief* (head, end) + marketing.

1. A type of marketing that uses highly unorthodox, often humorous, and sometimes barely legal strategies for reaching precisely targeted prospects.

2. The title of the first book to collect a significant amount of information about such unorthodox marketing practices in one place, to document it, and to outline a program for designing and conducting one's own mischief marketing campaigns, by a fatuous 21<sup>st</sup> century author.

### Some Hand-Picked Facts about Mischief Marketing

- Mischief Marketing is not only about how to market products and services. It is equally about **how to promote *concepts and values*** (like racial and gender equality, or equal economic opportunity for all) **in the marketplace of ideas.**
- Mischief marketing is similar to guerrilla marketing in some ways, but it is really designed for the **guerrilla's guerrilla.**
- The Latin name for the gorilla is in fact *Gorilla gorilla*, but that has nothing to do with anything, and is a completely stupid, puerile observation in this context.
- As you can see, many famous (and not so famous) people have used mischief marketing to jump start their careers. They just don't talk about it much to the general public, for perhaps obvious reasons.
- Mischief marketing is not usually about marketing to masses of people (although it can be). It's usually about marketing to specific VLPs — Very Leveraged Persons. Of course, such VLPs may *themselves* have influence over mass markets — and to the extent that they do, you could say mischief marketing is *indirectly* about reaching mass markets. But it is not primarily about that. Instead, it is primarily about reaching leveraged individuals or relatively small, leveraged groups.
- In mischief marketing, a “small, leveraged group” could have anywhere from 5 to 540 members, or more. **Congress, for example, is a relatively small, highly leveraged group.**
- Mischief marketing to members of Congress is sometimes called “lobbying.”

- Mischief marketing is both as old as the hills and brand-spanking new.
  - ***Old as the hills*** because mischievous strategies have been used for centuries — especially whenever the gap between the haves and the have-nots has been too big to bridge by normal means.
  - ***Brand-spanking new*** because, until recently, nobody isolated and defined mischief marketing as a distinct phenomenon.
- Other famous people who have used mischief marketing strategies to market ideas, products, or services include:
  - Ted Turner
  - U.S. President George Washington
  - Mae West
  - The Bee Gees
  - U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson
  - Physicist Alan Sokal
  - Will Rogers
  - Comedian Andy Kaufman
  - Hunter Thompson
  - Steve Jobs
  - Duke Ellington
  - Catholic Bishop Jacques Gaillot
  - Orson Welles
  - Random House founder Bennett Cerf
  - Andy Warhol
  - Mathematician Sophie Germain
  - Coco Chanel
  - Habitat for Humanity founder Millard Fuller
  - Dustin Hoffman
  - Elton John
  - Dr. Martin Luther King
  - P.T. Barnum

- Walt Whitman
- Winery founder Walter Taylor
- Estee Lauder
- U.S. President John F. Kennedy
- Jazz clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow
- Borland Founder Philippe Kahn
- Allen Ginsberg
- Oprah Winfrey
- Michaelangelo
- Howard Stern
- Harrison Ford
- Ice cream moguls Ben & Jerry

But wait a minute, you may be thinking. The definition given above includes something about “barely legal strategies.”

Well, what’s that about? **Is this stuff cheating? Is it trickery?** Does it have a note of chicanery? Is it a sin?

Let us consult a higher authority on this matter.

*Self-aggrandizement, of course, is a business as old as mankind itself. In the book of Judges, God told Gideon to ramp up only 300 soldiers — so long as they all blew rams' horns and carried torches. Scared the sandals off 135,000 Midianites.*

— Dan Morse

If any reader would like to argue the point with the Higher Authority to whom this passage refers — please be my guest. Just don’t come whining to me if you happen, one fine day, to hear the Voice That Has No Echo.

### **What Mischief Marketing is Not**

Almost every new idea is confusing at first. Well, let’s put it this way: almost every new idea — if it’s any *good* — is confusing at first.

This is because nearly every novel concept hovers close to *other* ideas — older ideas to which we're more accustomed. This proximity to related ideas makes it easy to get the new concept mixed up with the old ones.

It's like learning the alphabet. Remember when you first learned the alphabet? The letter 'd' looked a lot like the letter 'b' and 'p' looked like 'q' and so on. Many different letters so closely resembled each other visually that it took a while to tell them apart, didn't it? We had to learn that one letter may ....

*[... Chapter 1 (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!*