

A templative tale from  
**Mischief Marketing**

## **Mischievous Mother Teresa**

[... excerpted from Chapter 7 (print edition) ...]

### ***Raising Capital, Timing, Budgeting***

#### **Raising Capital**

Most mischief marketers aren't rich, so chances are you'll want to start thinking about how to raise capital for your business, including your marketing.

Here's a cool story about raising capital. It should get you thinking about creative ways of being frugal.

#### **Templative Tale: The Old Woman on the Plane**

On a plane bound for a poverty-stricken city in Mexico, the flight attendant prepares to serve lunch to an old woman and her traveling companion.

The old woman — a notoriously tough negotiator and seasoned international traveler — suddenly asks two questions: (1) how much is the food worth in cash? And (2) if she were to give up her lunch, would the airline donate the cash equivalent to charity?

Taken aback, the flight attendant consults the cockpit crew members. Who radio the ground crew folks. Who contact the food service people. Who call the purchasing agents. Who phone the corporate executives ... and on and on it goes for about twenty minutes, the leathery old woman's queries bouncing from one head-scratching employee to another, and around the world, and up and down thirty-five thousand feet of sky.

The answers finally come back: (1) the food is worth about one dollar US. And (2) yes, the airline would be happy to make the cash substitution.

So the old woman gives up her lunch and accepts the donation. Within minutes, everyone else on board follows suit.

When the plane lands, the old woman asks the crew what they plan to do with the untouched food. They plan to throw it out. So the old woman elbows her traveling companion and says, "Go back in there and get that food."

He does, and she promptly hands out a hundred airline lunches to the hungry people greeting her at the airport.  
That hard-driving old woman's name? **Mother Teresa of Calcutta.**

## Tailoring the Tale


What can we learn from this tale? Isn't this a story about charity contributions, or fundraising? How can it possibly apply to marketing?

Well, in the first place we can observe — once again — that Mischief Marketing is **not** just about marketing products or services. It is equally about marketing *ideas*. In this case, we see Mother Teresa “marketing” a very particular idea: how to help people who are less fortunate than we are.

*Sir Sigmund [Sternberg], the only Jewish Papal knight, believes fervently in the power of religion as a force for good .... For him, Mother Teresa has an extremely good product “and there is no point in having a good product if you don't advertise it and market it.”*

— Sebba, Anne. *Mother Teresa: Beyond the Image*.  
New York: Doubleday, 1997.


In the second place, we can observe that here is another example of how you can make use of limited resources.

 **Mischievous Sourcing Tactic (“Loaves and Fishes”): Take a small opportunity and turn it into a big one.**

We saw the *Make Lemonade* tactic in the Philippe Kahn tale. The *Loaves and Fishes* tactic is a variation on that, except that where *Make Lemonade* entails merely making it look as though you have a lot of resources in order to boost your credibility, *Loaves and Fishes* goes a step further and entails *actually* transforming limited resources into abundant ones.

With *Loaves and Fishes*, you take a small opportunity and leverage it. In this case, Mother T took some airline food and turned it into a dollar. That prompted other people to do the same. So the food became a dollar, and the dollar became about a few hundred dollars, all in a matter of minutes.

Over time, the telling and retelling of the story probably earned several thousand dollars, if not for Mother T directly, then at least for charitable causes in general. So we can say that, over the course of perhaps an hour, Mother T turned a small lunch into thousands of dollars.

 **Mischievous Sourcing Tactic (“*The Pasteur Tactic*”): Be prepared at every moment to take advantage of a chance marketing opportunity.**

Mischief marketing involves being constantly prepared, constantly ready to act on the spur of the moment. That way, you can instantly take advantage of lucky breaks and chance opportunities.

*Chance favors the prepared mind.*

— Louis Pasteur

In the story, notice that Mother T was prepared to work for her cause twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. She didn’t stop being prepared just because she happened to be on a plane.

Does this mean you have to work all the time at marketing your offering? Of course not! Working all the time is certainly not a good thing. It isn’t even effective. If you do nothing but work, you’ll burn out. And not only will your family and friends suffer, your work will, too.

No, this tale certainly does not suggest you should work all the time. But it does suggest you may want to be *prepared* at all times to work. And by work we mean what? Market, sell, or present your ideas, products, services — and yes, like Mother T, your deepest religious, spiritual, or social values. Your offering.

Here's a related tale about raising capital. You might now want to go quite this far, however.

### **Mother Teresa Holds Up Grocery Clerk**

Her quest to serve the poorest of the poor sometimes brought Mother Teresa close to breaking the law while conducting her mischievous, ah, marketing.

*Once, having bought \$800-worth of goods for the poor in a supermarket, she refused to move from the checkout until someone else in the queue paid for them. A fundraiser of Mother Teresa's virtuosity could not merely decline into the peaceful embrace of God she recommended for her patients; she had a duty to survive.*

— "Mother Teresa (Obituary)."  
The Economist 13 Sept. 1997. InfoTrac. Online. 16 January 1998.

### **Timing the Launch of Your Campaign**

When is the right time to launch a campaign? If you've planned it meticulously and all systems are go, how quickly should you act? If you're writing an introduction to the topic of timing, how soon should you stop asking idiotic questions and instead present a templative tale that gives you an insight into timing?

The following templative tale gives us an insight into timing.

*[... Chapter 7 (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!***