

A templative tale from
Mischief Marketing

Mischievous Mother T Again

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

... begin to sense how hard it is to separate these mischief marketing techniques from one another. They all work together.

Like synonyms with slightly different nuances, they have many things in common — and yet they're all a bit different.

Mischief Marketing Tactic: Doing the Opposite of What They Expect

You know, come to think of it, you could say that most mischief marketing techniques involve at least *some* element of doing the opposite of what people expect.

A Side of Maggots with Your Filet Mignon?

Mother Teresa often did the opposite of what people expected. The result was usually a powerful lesson, mischievously marketed.

In 1992, for example, she flew to New York to be presented with a \$100,000 award by the Knights of Columbus. At a white-tie banquet attended by 1,000 members of America's Catholic elite, Mother Teresa was accorded the kind of roaring adulation usually reserved for rock stars or the pope. Before the feast began, the diminutive nun chastened the throng by describing how it took her three hours to pick maggots from the body of an emaciated Calcutta derelict. Then, as was her custom, she left before eating because she felt it inappropriate to dine ostentatiously. An additional \$100,000 — equal to the cost of the banquet — was later presented to her.

— Satchell, Michael.

"Death comes to a living saint:

Mother Teresa's beatitude:

heaven is found by serving the lowliest."

U.S. News & World Report 15 Sept. 1997. InfoTrac. Online. 16 January 1998.

Mischief Marketing Tactic: Telling the Simple Truth

We mentioned this tactic briefly in our discussion of the Ten Commandments, but it really deserves a fuller treatment than we gave it there.

Silly as it may sound, the greatest of all mischief marketing tactics involves telling the simple truth. Why is the simple truth so powerful? Who knows. But it's got to be at least partly because it's unexpected.

Who expects you to tell the simple truth? Nobody. That's why it's so shocking and arresting to people when you do. In fact, telling the simple truth is actually a type of marketing shock tactic.

Any expression of simplicity or truth can be shocking.

The great baseball player Joe DiMaggio was almost a living symbol of simplicity. And that was shocking in its day. It would probably be shocking even today.

A no-frills, unassuming sports hero, DiMaggio never appeared on cheap TV game shows. He pitched products only once or twice. He gave interviews rarely. He never wrote a book, or hosted a talk show. He was a simple guy. You almost never heard about him when he wasn't playing.

So what was so shocking about that?

So ... when you were watching a game, and you hadn't seen DiMaggio recently (hadn't seen him talking to cartoon characters selling cheap phone services; hadn't seen him hawking cereal; hadn't seen him anywhere for months) and now, in due course, at this game, the moment came, finally, for him to step out onto the playing field — well, it became a memorable event just to watch the great baseball player stroll across the grass.

At that moment, you knew that something special, something unique, was happening. Joe DiMaggio, the great Joe DiMaggio was here. You got chills.

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

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