

A templative tale from
Mischief Marketing

Mischievous Netscape

[...]

Corporate Charlie: Okay. So now it sounds like you're talking about "marketing" yourself to a powerful spokesperson or endorser, is that right? Am I getting warmer with this whole micro-targeting concept?

Mischievous Marie: Yes, if by a spokesperson or endorser you mean a Very Leveraged Person or VLP — someone who can influence a larger market.

Corporate Charlie: Okay. That makes sense. But Marie, we already *know* how to get endorsers, or VLPs, or whatever you want to call them. We do it all the time. Why, we got Bill Shatner just last year. Bill Shatner! We can get anyone we want!

Mischievous Marie: Maybe. But not without paying them huge amounts of money.

Corporate Charlie: Well, how else are you going to snare "VLPs" without paying them huge amounts of money?

Mischievous Marie: Would you say the Attorney General is a very credible, Very Leveraged Person — a VLP? Perhaps more so than even Bill Shatner?

Inoffensive Ian: (*From under the table, flailing..*) Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!

Mischievous Marie: But what do you think you'd have to pay her to, as you say, "snare" her as an endorser for you?

Corporate Charlie: Well, you probably couldn't pay her any actual money — not outright, anyway. It would probably even be against the law.

Mischievous Marie: And yet there *is* a company that *mischievously* got Attorney General Janet Reno to act, in effect, as their spokesperson — and without having to pay her a nickel.

Corporate Charlie: Excuse me? What company was that?

Mischievous Marie: Netscape, of course. By persuading the Attorney General to take up the anti-Microsoft cause, rival Netscape — along with some other companies — effectively did an end run around Microsoft's marketing juggernaut, and ended up capturing far more brand awareness than they could have generated even if they'd had *twice* the advertising budget of Microsoft. In other words, they leveraged their contact with one person — or with just a handful of people at the Justice Department — into a contact with *millions* of regular folks.

Corporate Charlie: But didn't their suit have merit?

Mischievous Marie: Certainly, to some degree. I believe it even had lapels. But that's not the point, Charles. We're not discussing fashion, are we? The point is that — no matter what kind of merit the suit did or didn't have — it gave them lots of marketing mileage for very little money.

Corporate Charlie: Hmm. I see. And you say this was mischief marketing?

Mischievous Marie: Well, it certainly wasn't *conventional* marketing, Charles.

Corporate Charlie: The tone, Marie. Watch the tone.

Marcus Aurelius: When you are outraged by somebody's impudence, ask yourself at once, "Can the world exist without impudent people?" It cannot; so do not ask for impossibilities.*

Mischievous Marie: Right.

* Aurelius, Marcus. *Meditations*.

Inoffensive Ian: Now now, people. (*Takes a stuffed bunny and “kisses” Charlie and Marie with it.*) Make nice-nice. No arguing, remember?

[...]

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