

A templative tale from
Mischief Marketing

Mischievous Oprah

[... excerpted from Chapter 5 ...]

Profiling Your VLP

Conventional Research Techniques

In the research phase of your campaign, you find out as much as you can about your prospect so you can custom-tailor your efforts to that person or that tightly focused group.

The Power of Research

Mostly as labor of love, Oprah Winfrey did an extraordinary amount of research on *The Color Purple* before auditioning for a role in the film.

In fact, she virtually memorized the entire book. So by the time she got to read for Steven Spielberg — and even though she wasn't even a professional actress at the time — her understanding of the material was so deep that she got the part.


In mischief marketing, diligent research can produce powerful results.

In this case, it propelled Winfrey onto the national scene — and prepared the way for her ultimately illustrious career.

There are at least two kinds of research techniques you can use to help you learn about your VLPs, their businesses, and/or their interests and passions: conventional, and mischievous. This section is about conventional stuff.

Now, there are lots of things you can do using conventional approaches, and all kinds of books have been written about that. We'll review some of this material in a moment.

But you'll save yourself a lot of time and energy if you remember this one basic tactic for conducting conventional research:

 **Mischief Marketing Research Tactic: GET A LIBRARIAN TO HELP
YOU FIND OUT WHATEVER YOU NEED TO KNOW.**

That's right — get a librarian to help you profile your prospect.

Ah, librarians. Those quiet, humble people — the people with the often thick, funny glasses who guard over the public treasures of knowledge. What do you think about them? C'mon, tell the truth. Don't you secretly think they're just wimps who couldn't get a job working in that enormous pissing contest we call corporate America?

Well, if you did think that, you'd be wrong. Very wrong.

Librarians, at least 60% of them, are among the most amazing “knowledge detectives” you are ever likely to encounter in your life. You wouldn't know it to look at them, but these people are truly hunters — hunters of data.

Great hunters, equal in tracking skill to any tribal leader in any jungle, librarians can ferret out just about any info-quarry imaginable. Picture them half-naked, with lithe bodies and painted faces, spearing pages out of books left and right — because that's what they'd look like if they weren't wearing their wimp camouflage.

Luckily for you, however, most people don't know this about librarians. They fall for the wimp camouflage, and so end up wasting a lot of time hunting down information on their own. Why do this? Why go running around wondering where you can get information about your VLP, when you can simply ask a librarian to help you?

But whether you get a librarian to help you or you conduct the research on your own, here are some of the questions you should be able to answer about your prospect:

Personal Matters

What are their hobbies and outside interests?

How many kids do they have? How old are the kids?

What is their spouse like?

What is your VLPs ethnic background? What sort of a family do they come from?

What customs prevail in that ethnic group? What kind of jokes? What modes of expression?

What part of the country do they come from? What are the customs and mannerisms there?

What's their favorite food?

Do they favor a certain lingo? How do they talk? How do they write?

Business Matters

How is your VLP's business doing?

What are its revenues this year? What were they last year?

What about profitability? What about margins?

How many people does the business employ?

How do employees feel about the work atmosphere there?

What do financial analysts have to say about the business?

Who are your prospect's competitors?

What do *their* financials look like?

You can find information like this in sources like the following:

Hoovers

Wall Street Journal Briefing Books

Contemporary Biography

Contemporary Authors (if your VLP has written any books)

Who's Who (if they're likely to show up there)

InfoTrac (for newspaper and magazine articles)

Internet sources like:

Search engines

Usenet groups (investor groups, etc)

Searchable databases

Lexis-Nexus (for just about everything imaginable — IF you can get an account with a school or law firm)

Genealogical info. From grandpa, they may have inherited or otherwise picked up a love of ragtime, or of gardening. Evocative of childhood.

Books on investigating people. Follow the instructions.

Again, for more information on this kind of research, visit MischiefMarketing.com.

Mischievous Info-Gathering: Birth Order Theory

Now we come to the mischievous profiling techniques.

[... Chapter 5 continues at this point ...]

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