

A templative tale from
Mischief Marketing

Mischievous Steven Spielberg

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

... With that vital first step behind us, let's discuss some nuts and bolts about how to create credibility.

*If you don't stop with these billions of cutesy quotes,
I'm going to push you right out the window.*

— Author's Inner Demon

We'll start with the Spielberg story you saw at the beginning of the book, take the story apart, and see what we can learn from it.

By the way, we call this kind of story a “templative tale” because (1) it is worth reflecting upon or *contemplating*; and (2) it can act as a *template* or model for developing your own mischief marketing strategies.

Yeah, it's a neologism, templative, but what do want me to do about it now? The book's all printed and bound. I can't change it now. I didn't know *you* when I wrote it. Leave me alone. I just want to be left alone. I carry a screen door around with me so I can talk to people through it. Go away.

Where was I? Oh yes. I remember now. Steven's templative tale. I'll reproduce the full story here, so you don't have to keep flipping pages.

The Universal Squatter

A prospective filmmaker sneaks onto the lot of Universal Studios and sets himself up in an empty office on the premises (“I ... became a squatter”). He even buys some plastic name titles and uses them to mount his name in the building directory. The security guards greet him every morning. They think he belongs there. (He certainly acts like he belongs there.)

Eventually, his mischief marketing pays off. He gets studio executives to view his first films and, impressed, they grant him his first directing break. From there, he goes on to become the most successful director in the history of the film industry.

The prospective, 17-year-old filmmaker's name? **Steven Spielberg.**

Tailoring the Tale

Now, you may read this account and think something like, “Well, *I’m* certainly not going to break into a movie studio, and then try to look like I belong there. This story has nothing to do with me or with *my* business!”

But think again.

Is this really just a story about breaking into a movie studio? Is it just a story about setting up a bogus office?

Or isn’t it really about a strategy that shows us how to look like we already belong “there” — wherever “there” is for you or me?

What’s *essential* to the story is what we need to explore, so we can figure out how we can glean something powerful and useful from it. So what can we pick up from contemplating and adapting this story?

👍 **Mischief Marketing Credibility Tactic (“Do Unto Others”): To get acknowledgment, give acknowledgment.**

In the first place, the story tells us that Steven was friendly to the security guards at the movie studio. And although it doesn’t say so in the story above, he also befriended an onsite librarian who got him the temporary pass that admitted Steven to Universal’s inner sanctum (correct: he didn’t really “break in” every day).

In other words, Spielberg was hospitable to people who normally don't get acknowledged or recognized very often themselves. In his effort to get acknowledged by others, Steven acknowledged others.

So what's the essence here? If you want to be acknowledged for your work, or your talents, start acknowledging other people; not only other people around your prospect, but everywhere. Practice! And don't wait until you get famous. Start now.

~ Idea Jogger ~

Let's say you're trying to get an appointment with the CEO of a large company, but it's nearly impossible.

Your research discloses, however, that her husband is very active in the field of education. You also learn that, because he's usually overshadowed by his more famous spouse, he rarely gets acknowledged for his hard work.

What can you do?

Here are some possibilities to jog your mischievous imagination:

Write a carefully crafted letter to the spouse about how much you admire his work.

If you don't genuinely admire his work, do NOT do this.

The word *sincere* once meant "without wax." This gives us a clue to its true meaning. To be sincere is to be plain and simple.

If possible, strike up a friendship based upon your letter.

Later, at an appropriate time, maybe bring up the subject of how hard it is to see his spouse. Without your even asking, he will probably offer to introduce you to her. He may even help her see the value of your offering.

And if not ... well, you'll have made a new and interesting friend. (Remember the Knight Fork from Chapter 4!) You might even discover that your new friend is far more engaging or trustworthy than the person you originally wanted to meet.

Here's another idea about how to acknowledge people around your prospect (and everywhere else). Again, it's just a suggestion, something to help spark your own creative imagination.

Keeping in mind, for example, that Elton John became a janitor in order to get access to a recording studio, start with a list of people *around* your prospect who work hard but don't get much attention.

Such a list might include:

Janitors (who might or might not end up becoming rock stars)

Secretaries, assistants

Mailroom personnel

Receptionists

Younger brothers or sisters (especially in a family-owned business)

Members of the technical crew (on a TV show, say)

Junior writers or editors

Fallen TV evangelists


~ Now ask yourself ~

How can you acknowledge these people? What can you find out about them? What are they interested in? What are their goals and aspirations? How can you help them fulfill their dreams and get the acknowledgment they deserve?

[Warnings/Gotchas:]

One more thing about being sincere. People will see right through dishonesty, and they will conclude (correctly) that you're just kissing up to them to get to the boss.

If you don't believe this, try being dishonest sometime, and see where it gets you. Of course, if you're a politician, you can ignore these remarks. (Just kidding.)

 **Mischievous Credibility Tactic (“*Smile When You Say That*”): If you do something gutsy to get recognition, do it with humor.**

The templative tale also shows us, of course, that what Steven did was bold and gutsy. That goes without saying. What he did, however, was also humorous.

In other words, Steven didn't break into the movie studio and start a fire. He didn't send pipe bombs in the mail like the Unabomber (who, by the way, admitted to killing those people because he wanted to get his ideas published!)


No. Instead, Steven set up an office. He did something constructive. And it was something that didn't hurt anybody, or take anything away from anybody else.

By the way, notice also that at the very least, even if his plan had failed, Steven would always have had a great story to tell his future prospects and friends.

Remember!

In general, even when a well-designed mischief marketing strategy doesn't achieve the targeted result directly, you can still take whatever result it *does* achieve and use it to leverage some *other* result or strategy later on — either in that particular campaign, or in some other, completely different campaign or project. This is the Knight Fork tactic.

When you start orchestrating your own mischief marketing campaign, do it the way Steven Spielberg did it. Do it in a way that won't hurt or embarrass anyone. And do it with humor.

 **Mischievous Credibility Tactic (“*Get a Clue about Class*”): Carry out your mischief marketing with style and grace.**

The story tells us that Steven also put his name up in the directory. In other words, he carried out his project elegantly, gracefully — you might almost say artistically.

He didn't *have* to do it that way. He could have just holed up in an office and waited around. But he didn't. Instead, the story reveals (if you know how to read between the lines) that Spielberg lavished a lot of care and personal attention on "his" office.

In your own mischief marketing campaigns, be sure to pour a lot of heart into what you do. Don't be sloppy or superficial. Treat all your marketing activities — the totality of the presentation of your offering — as a labor of love.

 **Mischievous Credibility Tactic: Be excellent.**

The story doesn't directly tell us this in so many words, but we already know one essential thing that's implied by this whole discussion: that Steven's offering — the films he eventually got to showcase for the movie executives — were excellent.

If you forget this part, if you forget to make your actual offering excellent, your whole campaign won't be worth much. Worse than that, it will backfire on you.

This points to the First Commandment: *Thou shalt not implement a mischief marketing strategy unless thou canst look upon thy work and say, yea, It is good; verily, I like it.*

If your offering isn't all that good, if you didn't give it 100 percent, if it doesn't really please you, use a more conventional strategy instead, one that's less likely to backfire. Take out a newspaper ad, or a radio spot.

[Warnings/Gotchas:] There are some extremely powerful techniques in this book. But as with all things powerful, they're also potentially dangerous. If your offering itself isn't very good, techniques like these will work *against* you rather than for you.

If you haven't given your offering your best effort, use a conventional marketing strategy. But if you have lavished love and care on your offering, and you *know* you have, then go right ahead and use a mischief marketing technique. Strut your stuff.

Our next story is also about the challenge of creating credibility. This tale comes in two parts. The first part is here. The second part is in the section on the Vulcan Tactic.

[... Chapter N (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!*