

A CONVINCING & CONVERT REPORT

# THE 6-STEP PROCESS FOR CREATING WORD OF MOUTH WITH TALK TRIGGERS

A GUIDE FOR BRANDS

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**Here's a problem:** nobody talks about boring brands. When was the last time you mentioned to a friend: "oh, hey, did I tell you about this one exceedingly average experience I had with a company recently?"

In other words, same is lame. Simply doing things different can create enough of an experience that it compels word-of-mouth. But over the years we've somehow come to believe that word-of-mouth either just happens magically or that it needs to be prodded along with stunts and gimmicks.

People have the power now in ways that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. This is why the time for talk triggers has never been better - or more necessary. Businesses' ability to unilaterally dictate consumer attitudes and subsequent purchases and loyalties is fraying like the hem of a cheap dress.

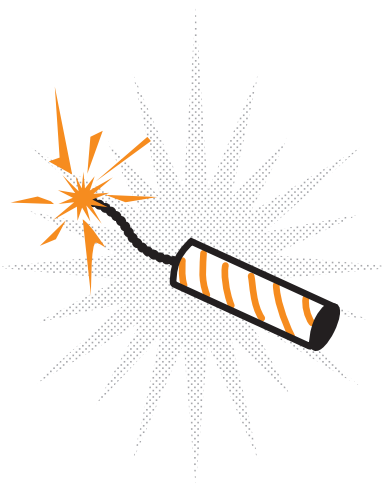
The best organizations are running ahead of this shift, purposefully crafting differentiators that get customers to tell authentic, visceral,

trusted stories about the business and its products or services; stories that create new customers through referrals and recommendations.

Studies have shown that nearly 20 percent of all purchases are a result of word-of-mouth. And yet, few companies have an actual strategy for creating the right environment for sustained word-of-mouth. That could be your company, or (helpfully) your competitors. We're here with this guide to help you develop talk triggers: strategic, operational differentiators that compel word-of-mouth.

You can get a copy of the book *Talk Triggers* to give you the full perspective. But if you want to get started now, this 6-step process is what you'll need to know to map out and begin testing ideas.

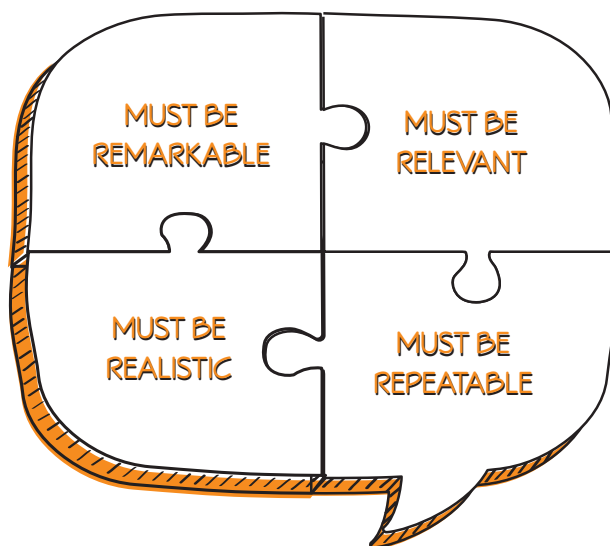
Before we do that, you need to know the four key requirements for a talk trigger. These differentiate a talk trigger from gimmicks, stunts and slogans that while beneficial are not always stories worth sharing.



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# 4 KEY REQUIREMENTS OF A TALK TRIGGER

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## 1 MUST BE REMARKABLE

If it's not literally worth remarking on, it's not a talk trigger. Lower prices are rarely worth remarking on. Stories like this often begin with phrases like "you'll never believe..." or "I was looking for a widget the other day and discovered the craziest thing." You must stand out.

## 2 MUST BE RELEVANT

Doing something just to get noticed isn't necessarily a talk trigger, either. Changing the color of your packaging to lime green might be remarkable, but is it relevant in any way to your company or your customers?

## 3 MUST BE REASONABLE

You're looking for "The Goldilocks Zone": a talk trigger that's remarkable enough to be a conversation catalyst, but reasonable enough to be trusted. In an actual conversation, if someone hearing about your talk trigger says, "that's amazing" you're on the right track. If they say "no way, that can't be" you may have crossed the threshold to unreasonableness and doubt.

When you overpromise--or at least when consumers perceive you to be overpromising—it not only depresses participation in the promotion or campaign at hand, but it also creates a longer-term spillover effect that diminishes brand trust into the future.

## 4 MUST BE REPEATABLE

This one's easy: is your talk trigger available to every customer, every time? If it's something that has terms, conditions, qualifying criteria or is reserved for influencers only (in the hopes THEY'LL talk about it), it's not a talk trigger. It might be a great influencer program. But talk triggers share this fourth trait in common.

**Ready to create a Talk Trigger for your organization?**

# 6 STEPS TO CREATING TALK TRIGGERS



## 1 GATHER INTERNAL INSIGHTS

The first step in creating effective word of mouth in your organization is to unlock everything that your business already knows about your customers, what they want, and how they use your products and services. It's internal anthropology, essentially.

But one of the challenges in talk trigger creation – and in word of mouth programs through the years – is that it's not really "owned" by a particular department. In reality, everybody owns word of mouth, because it takes all corners of the organization (whether the business is small or large) to deliver on the differentiator every time.

Word of mouth doesn't often fit nicely on your organization chart. Is it the owner's responsibility? Marketing? Operations? Sales? Customer service? Operations? The answer is yes. All of the above must be involved, and more.

You need to bring together a collection of insights that you can use to frame ideas. In small organizations, you might be the sole source of that knowledge. In larger organizations, it's generally a combination of three functions: Marketing/PR, Sales and Operations, and Customer Service. We call that the Triangle of Awesome because it's exposed to every element of your customer's journey.

You want to look in this first step for data around competitive positioning and messaging, sales insights (especially related to win/loss insights), and customer service issues. Each area can uncover operational intelligence that becomes the fodder for a great talk trigger.

## 2 GET CLOSE TO YOUR CUSTOMER

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Finding the right market fit for a product or idea is tough. You cannot possibly know how your customer will interact with your product. Even if you write 993 scenarios you'll encounter a 994th quickly. Customers are quick to outsmart you or find shortcuts that you hadn't envisioned. It is impossible to know everything about a customer from market research, annual surveys and call center logs.

So unsurprisingly, it can be difficult to create talk trigger ideas that will surprise a customer enough to share the story with their friends and family from the comfort of a conference room. What doesn't surface in most surveys are the things a customer actually needs. Sure, they can rank what they want on a scale from 1

to 10 – more speed, lower prices, faster processors or more sandwich topping variety – but rarely do they tell you what they really need.

### Find ways to answer questions like these:

- ➔ How do our customers experience our product?
- ➔ Why do our customers refer us today?
- ➔ What do our customers say about our brand, unaided?
- ➔ What do our customers say about our competitors or partners, unaided?
- ➔ Where in the product experience is the right time for us to introduce a talk trigger?

## 3 CREATE CANDIDATE TALK TRIGGERS

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Sure, you could just come up with a fun talk trigger idea and give it a whirl. But working with intent is always better than working with instinct alone. Plenty of well-meaning, possibly even great ideas have faltered at the starting line because they didn't have the right context or fit.

Answer the questions below personally, as an actual customer. We've written them that way to help you frame it in your mind. Put yourself in their shoes. Perhaps one you've met or talked with, or even yourself as you went through your own buyer's journey.

These questions unlock the value you created in the first two steps of creating a talk trigger.

- ➔ *When I buy or use this product/service I'm...*
- ➔ *What I don't expect from this product...*
- ➔ *What I'm talking about in my life right now...*
- ➔ *What I want is...*
- ➔ *What I really want is...*

**Found your idea?** Great! Test and measure it in the next step.

## 4 TEST AND MEASURE

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You cannot just decide on a viable talk trigger in your planning process, roll it out, and wait to claim victory. Because what if it doesn't work? What if it isn't remarkable enough to create conversation? You simply **MUST** test and measure your candidate talk trigger first, to make sure that it will have the desired effect on your customers.

We look at this as two mindsets: the first is a testing mindset. You need to determine if your talk trigger

idea has what it takes to survive long-term. In our research we discovered that if your becomes present in 10 percent of customer conversations during your test "sprint" phase, it has potential to be a long-term talk trigger.

From a measurement perspective – thinking long-term – your talk trigger will need to sustain presence in at least 25 percent of conversations to be viable.

## 5 EXPAND AND TURN ON

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If you developed a winning idea that demonstrated it has the momentum necessary to be a long-term talk trigger, how do you activate it? Even if your customers

LOVE it, if your colleagues and employees are not equally smitten you'll struggle to give it a permanent home. You'll face hurdles both internally and externally.

Activating and your talk trigger with these stakeholders is vital to it being seen as a strategic, operational differentiator rather than a gimmick. We think of these stakeholders in a framework we call SEE: Stakeholders, Employees and Enterprise. Stakeholders (at least in our context) are generally those outside your organization. They could be strategic partners, investors, suppliers, vendors, board members or even other businesses in your community.

Why might external stakeholders care about your talk trigger? Because if customers are interested in it, they'll be interested in it, too. And the next time they

hear someone share your talk trigger they can speak up and say, "hey I know, isn't that cool?"

Looking internally, the Employees and Enterprise element of the SEE framework are important to your talk trigger moving across the business and truly becoming operational. If you've landed on an idea that requires activation with your franchise locations, getting those franchisees (and their employees) on board is vital to its success. We consider this both an employee and an enterprise challenge.

Once you've established a good activation fit, your final step is to amplify your talk trigger.

## 6 AMPLIFY YOUR TRIGGER

Your marketing mix is the starting point for amplifying your talk trigger. You want to look for opportunities to share the talk trigger element of the customer experience in other media environments including:

- ➔ Advertising
- ➔ Social media
- ➔ Customer service responses
- ➔ Email campaigns
- ➔ Website

Amplification of your talk trigger does not stop there. You have opportunities to encourage employees to share the story with their friends and family. And, in some cases, you might even get a once-in-a-career chance to make your talk trigger an icon for your company.

Ever been to a Krispy Kreme when the red light was on? You will never look at a donut the same way again. All freestanding Krispy Kreme donut locations

have a neon sign outside that says "HOT NOW" when the donuts are being made on the world's tastiest assembly line. This very visual cue tells passers-by that the time for donuts has drawn nigh, and an unplanned stop will yield pillowy, delicious rewards.

That's the pinnacle of talk trigger amplification: it becomes part of the product. At Krispy Kreme, amplification of the trigger (fresh, hot donuts!) is so important, the company also created a dedicated app to alert donut seekers to the nearest warm morsel.

It's also the most advanced and complicated to execute, operationally. Can you get to this stage? Yes, of course you can. That's a longer term mission and not something you'll have the data, inertia or clarity to create straight out of the gate. Take smaller steps en route and you'll discover you've built something durable along the way to ideas the size and scope of Krispy Kreme.

## CREATE YOUR NEXT TALK TRIGGER

That's our 6-step process. It's outlined in deeper detail in our book, of course, but it gives you the context you need to get started on the process in your own company.

We'd love to hear from you and learn about your experience!

Drop Jay a line – [jay@convinceandconvert.com](mailto:jay@convinceandconvert.com).

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## ABOUT CONVINCING & CONVERT CONSULTING

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Convince & Convert Consulting, led by Jay Baer, is an experienced, highly focused analysis and advisory firm that creates effective, best-in-class word of mouth and digital marketing strategies for the world's most interesting organizations. Your audience expects more from you than ever. And what is required to be remarkable continues to escalate. Are you certain you are meeting that demand today? Do you know how to get there specifically, and in what sequence of steps? We do. For more information on our comprehensive, research-backed strategic plans for word of mouth marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing and messaging, and/or website and online reputation, please set up a no cost consultation call with a Convince & Convert analyst at [ConvinceAndConvert.com/contact](http://ConvinceAndConvert.com/contact).



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