

Employing Guerrilla Marketing To Energize Promotional Activities

By Christopher Priest

Guerrilla marketing has been around for a long time now. We've all seen flash mobs and giant melting ice cream cones appear overnight. We know about these campaigns mainly because of social media, and because they work. While other industries have excelled at unconventional campaigns so much that it's become part of normal operating procedure, the A/E/C industries have never really gotten on board.

This is unfortunate. We market the built environment. This is where guerrilla marketing dwells; where the most potential exists. Why haven't we pulled off any incredible, over-the-top marketing schemes?

Guerrilla marketing is all about being original and creative—doing something so different that it catches people off guard and they remember it. This type of marketing translates into easy publicity. It's easy to get the media's attention when you transform every bench in the city into a giant candy bar or drop hundreds of teddy bears all over a neighborhood.

It's also perfect for the social media age. People love to watch videos and share memes. For an industry that struggles with social media (it's difficult to get people excited about a really cool HVAC system

or a condo complex), guerrilla marketing offers a chance to stand out and generate more compelling content.

So, how do we utilize this effective marketing strategy to enliven our promotional activities?

The easy answer is we figure out what our goal is and then we get creative about how to achieve it. Do we want to catch the attention of a new client? Are we trying to promote a successful project? Do we want to convey what an incredible company we are? We can use guerrilla marketing to achieve all these objectives.

Ambient Marketing

In ambient marketing, you utilize your environment to promote a product or service. Say you want to promote a successful road project. With ambient marketing, perhaps you get city permission to use spray chalk to add graffiti that makes light of the hassle of construction (cars being swallowed by cracked pavement). Or, perhaps you want to impress a client with your vision for a new development. You could set up easels throughout the site with well-crafted images of what you envision the project will look like at that spot. This way, the client can see in real time what the project will look like when it is complete.

Experience-Based Marketing

Experience-based marketing immerses the person into a situation. For those of us in A/E/C, this is another easy opportunity—we create experiences. To promote your company and convey what an innovative, creative place it is, you could create a pop-up a gallery of your work at an empty storefront, or use virtual reality goggles to show people your vision for a project as they walk a site. This would enable your client to see into the future and be immersed in the experience you've constructed on their behalf.

Buzz Marketing

Buzz marketing is a clever way of pitching services to a client in an unexpected way and building word-of-mouth. To announce your presence at a conference, you could work with the host and hotel to do something unique, like affixing non-damaging stickers to every mirror in every bathroom, so when people wash their hands, they see your messaging. Or, at a golf tournament, you could, with permission, post signs on the course promoting the company.

Ambush Marketing

It sounds menacing, but done right, ambush marketing can make someone's day. This is because it relies on surprise



STORY BEHIND THE PICTURE | This custom staircase is a key focal point, as well as a strong visual element, working to build a compelling story about the project through images.

Tommy Hilfiger, Fifth Ave., New York, NY. CallisonRTKL.
©CallisonRTKL / Chris Eden, edenphotography.us.

and over-the-top antics to blow people away. Flash mobs are a perfect example. For A/E/C, this could mean surprising the 100th employee on her first day with a truly over-the-top celebration live on social media. Or, it could be sending a food truck to a potential client and handing out marketing materials with every purchase to thank them for work and continue the relationship. The ideas are endless.

Regardless of what kind of guerrilla marketing you employ, it's essential to support and promote it with social media. To be successful, you need a solid social media base. Long before the first idea is white boarded out, you need to build your online audience.

Of course, you need to be careful with guerrilla marketing as well. Very few marketing professionals will ever forget when the cartoon Aqua Teen Hunger Force started a bomb scare in Boston after they installed LED boards that looked a lot like detonators. You don't want to scare or cause panic, or be remembered for failing. You want to be remembered for pulling something truly imaginative off.

Guerrilla marketing is a tool we should all have in our promotional arsenal. Our clients have become savvy to pretty much all marketing tricks and tools. Guerrilla marketing is unique; it's unexpected; and it's memorable. It's also entertaining and informative at the same time. It makes your firm look leading edge, and even more important, authentic. This is how you differentiate. It's also a lot of fun. That's what marketing is supposed to be, and we should all have more of it. ■