

# When it comes to marketing, you should try playing pinball

By  Sylvia Schutte

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"Wherever I click, tune, drive or page, there's an ad being rammed down my throat!"



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This was the view of a product manager at a recent client meeting I had and, in essence, I agree. There is a lot of noise in the market at the moment. With consumers being constantly bombarded, is it causing them to tire of marketing? The conversation swung to pinball marketing and the explanation around it got heads nodding in agreement.

There is a traditional way of doing marketing – it's likened to going bowling. The bowling ball is your marketing channel and your audience are the pins. You throw the ball as hard and straight as you can, in the hope that it will hit your target. But the purchasing journey isn't a straight line anymore and neither should your marketing be. Marketing today is actually more like a game of pinball.

For the pinball metaphor, the machine is our current environment, the balls are marketing instruments and the audience are spinners, bumpers and flipper bats that propel the ball away on contact. Compared to bowling, where the "pins" had no power to make an impact, the "audience" here can actively take part – redirecting the ball or causing it to speed up, slow down or even stop.

We have to go where our markets are (email, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and create relevant content, experiences and platforms, where they can engage with us.

Here are three ways to play pinball marketing:

## 1. Be an active player

As a marketer you can no longer simply roll a bowling ball and wait for it to hit your target, you must actively take part. Test multiple channels, run multiple campaigns and measure your campaigns to see how your audiences are responding to your content. It's essential to see what works and learn from your successes and failures.

## 2. Keep up with the pace

In the same way that pinball is played at high speed, you have to keep on your toes and continually monitor the vast multimedia content produced by consumers, and you must take action as a result of it. But your job doesn't end after you've uploaded a new social media post or issued a new press release – you need to carefully follow its course, measure its impact and then identify any trend or crisis.

## 3. Be ready to act

If you don't move fast enough in pinball – you lose – and it's the same with marketing. Monitor your audience and be ready to respond to them. There is a world full of consumers who have access to social media platforms, where they can share their negative experiences about a company's goods or services, and these comments can quickly escalate into a crisis that threatens the brand. Be fast but think before you act. Be strategic and ensure that you integrate brand management with individual customer management.

In this chaotic, interactive world we live in, your marketing needs to move from bowling to pinball. Not only will this help you recognise the increasing power of the consumer and embrace the co-creation of brand stories, but you will also see a deeper engagement with your market. When you see the value of a multi-channel campaign and start understanding how it all complements each other, you will start to reach that top score!

## ABOUT SYLVIA SCHUTTE

Sylvia Schutte is the MD of Stratitude, a full-service marketing agency that provides strategic and creative solutions focussed on making an impact on their clients' brands and their bottomlines.

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