



EXTREME MARKETING

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TIMELESS MARKETING LESSONS

AS TRUE NOW AS THEY EVER WERE

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EO DC

It was 1974, and no one thought twice when my mother let her 8-year-old son deliver doughnuts door to door. Every Saturday before dawn, the Krispy Kreme truck delivered a pallet of fresh-boxed doughnuts to our front yard. That first morning, I packed my wagon with doughnuts and walked next door. Mrs. Hettenhouser explained that she didn't want all that sugar in her house but gave me a dime to buy myself a doughnut. Then I went to my best friend Donny's house. No one answered, so I knocked louder. Donny loved doughnuts. Before I made it to the corner, I learned my first lesson— don't bother with houses that don't have any lights on.

A few hours later, I learned the next piece. Doughnuts don't sell well in the afternoon. My doughnuts sold easily in the first couple of hours after people turned their lights on. During the next few weeks, I figured out that if I could make it to a house before they ate breakfast, a lot more people would buy.

My Uncle Denny put big baskets on the back of my bike. I had to move fast. I started learning who would buy every week. First thing when the truck came, I'd ride to all of those houses and leave a box of doughnuts inside their screened doors. I'd come back in the afternoon for my money.

A few minutes later, I'd ride my bike through the same neighborhoods and watch for houses with lights on. Those were my hot prospects. Then, as the morning got later and even the hippies had finished breakfast, I'd ditch my bike and bring my little brother David along. David really helped sales. He was so cute.

Today, I'm a direct marketing consultant. And the lessons I learned with my Krispy Kreme doughnuts help my clients net a lot more money.



After his mother made him quit his doughnut route, Dennis Hoffman became a serial — and sometimes parallel — entrepreneur. He is currently the President of CashBox, a database marketing firm specializing in non-profit fundraising, and owns parts of several other businesses in the direct marketing industry. Dennis is a seven-year member of EO DC and can be reached via email at DennisH@CashBox360.com.

1 Sell to current customers.

My doughnuts would have been stale by Sunday morning, so I never tried reselling the next day. I'm sure that if I had, my best prospects would have been the same people who bought the day before. It's never too soon to resell to current clients. And it's almost impossible to sell to them too often.

2 Don't give customers the chance to say no.

Once I knew who was going to buy every week, I delivered the doughnuts without asking. Just about everyone I delivered to paid for the doughnuts I dropped off. The few boxes of doughnuts I wasted on people who were out of town or on diets were more than paid for by my steady sales.

3 The first sale is always the hardest.

That's why I brought my brother along. Packaging matters. And when you sell a service, your humanity is your packaging. Share details of your life with your customers. If you're selling a product, the packaging is just as important (if not more important) than what you're selling. Use what you have. Make sure your customers and employees know what makes you and your product unique.

4 Deliver what you promise.

I wouldn't be at all shocked if my mother still has boxes of doughnuts in the back of her freezer. Because there was a Saturday morning 32 years ago when snow was piled on the ground and the truck came late. And even once the truck came, I didn't move very quickly. I ended the day with a lot of extra doughnuts. Even worse, some of my regular customers cancelled their "subscriptions" when I showed up at their doors after lunch. They were nice about it, but I gave them an opening to say no. ☹