

Creativity, Trends and What's Hot

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Understanding trends and “what's hot” can help you become a better marketer. It can help you earn more money in your field or your area of interest. That's because there's a lot of mystique about what makes something trendy and desirable. Investigating this mystique is a smart move for boosting your own creativity.

Trend marketing has always been important. Businesses have always paid attention to what people want and which changes are on the horizon. Businesses that don't pay attention to trends tend to quickly fail. As a successful businessperson, you need to keep constant watch on what's popular so you can innovate ahead of the curve.

That's because businesses can't do the same things all the time. What's popular one year may not be popular the next year. Just look at how rapidly things changed over the past decade or even five years in the online marketing space.

Nowadays, having a Facebook and Twitter account is just as important as having an e-mail list. But, there are still some businesses that haven't bothered to get online at all. I hate to say it, but they are most likely going to fail at this point. They've gone the way of the dinosaurs.

There is a magnificent creative energy surrounding hot items and trends. Think about it—there's something just really exciting about knowing that everyone desires something at the same time. It's not that there's anything inherently magic about these items or trends. But something happens where forces align and energy swirls around them and puts them at the forefront of popular mind space.

Do you remember the Tickle Me Elmo craze of the 1990s? I'm sure you do—those little \$30 toys were selling for \$400 or even \$1000 on eBay by the time Christmas rolled around. Why was the demand so high? It's not that it was the greatest toy ever made. It's not even that it was the only Elmo toy ever made—there were dozens of other options on the shelves... But everyone wanted *that one*.

Think about what went into making that toy. As smart and successful as they are, inventors Ron Dubren, Greg Hyman, and Tyco had no idea that the Tickle Me Elmo would take off that way. It was actually first presented as a monkey before it became Tickle Me Elmo.

So, what was it that made it so hot? Why were people able to earn more than 10 times the retail price selling it on street corners in the city? I have no idea, but studying this kind of phenomenon is great fodder for creating and innovating products and services of your own.

This makes me think of my own first major marketing win. It was the Christmas the Xbox 360s came on the market. Everyone wanted them—it was all over the news and the regular stores were sold out of the consoles.

There I was, desperate to build a business online, not really knowing much about video games myself, but deciding to follow that trend anyway. I took a big risk and spent a lot of money upfront by promoting that item. I didn't even immediately know how well my offer was converting.

Thankfully, I ended up with a major payday because of the energy surrounding that product. Everyone wanted it, and I had a link that led them to it. My link was in the right place at the right time and the payoff was huge.

Think about what's been popular with kids, or even adults, for the Christmas season and beyond lately. Also, think back to what's been hot in your market in particular in the past several years.

Make a list of the items you want to investigate. Then, find archived newspaper articles, blog posts, and manufacturer's descriptions about them. Take notes on whether these items were in stock at the peak of their popularity, and whether they are in stock now. If you're thinking of an intangible item, consider which ideas were spawned from that one idea or topic.

It is a very powerful process to investigate the reasons why something has become particularly popular. This reverse-engineering process helps you come up with creative, inspired ideas of your own.

I mentioned earlier that there's an energy that surrounds trends and hot items. There are no easy answers as to why some things become popular and other things don't. If we knew the power behind it, we could make anything a bestseller.

But...we can't—why is that? This is yet another question to consider as you strive to brainstorm reasons why trends exist. Find news stories, blog posts, social media posts, forum commentary, and anything else you can get your hands on, as it relates to the popular items or topics you're investigating.

Analyzing trends in this way will help you use your discoveries in your own products, in your marketing, and as part of your creative technique. Creativity means connecting ideas, which means connecting information and people. That's why creativity is so very closely related to trend marketing.

Think about the power behind a product that sets itself apart in the marketplace versus the sameness of so many other products out there. When a product is hot, it means a great number of people are on the same page. There is so much creative energy and power there that you would do well to tap into. Try to understand it, even on a basic level, to apply to your own business and marketing.

How Do You Figure out what's Hot?

The exact trends, topics, and items you investigate depend greatly on your line of work. Here is a list you can use to start your investigation. Add to it as you explore, depending on your area of focus.

- ✓ Amazon bestseller lists
- ✓ What's hot on Twitter
- ✓ Popular Facebook pages and groups
- ✓ What Oprah and Dr. Oz are talking about
- ✓ Trends.Google.com
- ✓ Popular items among teens and kids
- ✓ The hottest topics on related niche forums
- ✓ Topics that regularly appear on niche blog posts

Find the trends and hot topics you'll focus on, analyze the power behind them, and then apply your findings to your own creative process.

Do this on a regular basis—at least every few months or so. Successful marketers are always on top of the trends and strive to get ahead of them.

Out with the Old, in with the New

As new as trends are, they are not the future. These trends and hot items already exist. Creativity is about creating things that do not yet exist. That's why you not only need to investigate what's current; you need to predict the future. In fact, you can't just predict the future; you should create things that shape the future.

That's right, as one of the world's newly-minted most creative minds, *you* are going to shape the future. What you create will be part of the trends other businesspeople try to investigate and emulate.

That can be a scary thought, and you may not feel you're up to the task, but I assure you that you are. In analyzing trends, you're looking at what

works now. This will help you form connections that will show you what will work in the future. Creativity is about shaping and sharing the world's future. So, it's out with the old, in with the new...you have to be part of the "new."



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