



Curiosity Marketing

What Is It?

To describe curiosity marketing, I'm going to use three simple words, but in order to decipher them, you need to follow these instructions:

10st word, line 7, page 27

3rd word, line 8, page 76

11th word, line 21, page 149

Did you figure it out? Curiosity marketing is about using the element of mystery to get people interested in hearing or seeing what you have for them. It is about *making someone look*. If I tell you not to push a button, the first thing you will do is push it. That's human nature, and is just one example of our natural curiosity. We just want to see what happens, and this turns out to be an irresistible impulse.

You may be thinking that using curiosity in marketing could easily become dishonest and inauthentic. That's true. But curiosity marketing is not about intentionally misleading someone or making false promises. The marketing has to *actually* pay off. It is about using the natural human emotion of curiosity to encourage people to engage with your brand or product in a memorable way.

Why Does It Work?

- **Unique.** It uses a natural human emotion that most find irresistible.
- **Authentic.** It demonstrates that you are willing to communicate in a personal, noncorporate way.
- **Talkable.** It creates an interest that people who are engaged will tell others about.

WHEN SHOULD YOU USE IT?

Green Light: When It Works	Red Light: When to Avoid It
<p>It builds awareness for a product or service that relatively few people understand, and/or encourages potential customers to try the product. It is also good for creating intrigue and anticipation about a product or service that has become commonplace.</p>	<p>It can backfire if it ends up creating a barrier between customers and information that they are seeking. You need to be careful in your quest to use curiosity so that you don't sacrifice usability and simplicity.</p>

Who's Doing It?

1. **PostSecret.** One of the most popular blogs online today is a site that rarely gets the credit it deserves—hidden among blogs dominated by business, politics, or consumer electronics. Since 2005, Frank Warren has been publishing PostSecret, a blog on which he posts homemade postcards that people have sent him containing secrets that they have never shared with anyone else. Visiting the site for the first time will awaken your curiosity, because you cannot help but be drawn into reading the postcards. It is a voyeuristic experience that is so deeply real and personal that it is hard not to spend hours on the site. PostSecret has inspired a vibrant community as well. In bookstores

around the world, the latest PostSecret book, *A Lifetime of Secrets*, often has people putting their own secret postcards into the pages of an unpurchased book for someone else to discover and send in to the site.

2. **iPod Shuffle.** When the first iPod Shuffle came out, all the marketing messages pointed to the power of “randomness” as the underlying principle behind why people would like the product. In a world where you can overly script just about everything, wouldn’t it be nice to not know what song is going to play next? Randomness drives curiosity and curiosity drives engagement. The iPod Shuffle had a built-in curiosity that helped sell it to a group of consumers who wanted to load their own songs into it, but be surprised by which ones played and in what order. As their marketing claimed, “Random is the new order.”

Curiosity Marketing, Step by Step

1. **Assess the situation.** Curiosity doesn’t work in a simple question-answer situation, where a customer is looking for something in particular, either a product or some type of information. In these situations, you need to give them an answer that satisfies their query, without distracting them. For any other situation, there can be a place for curiosity.
2. **Find the true curiosity.** The toughest part of using curiosity is understanding that it is not usually tied to a product feature or attribute. You may think that a customer would be curious about how you manufacture your product or about some other element that is interesting to you and your employees, but most don’t care. True curiosity is a more basic play on human emotion. It is wanting to know what happens next because your inter-

est has been piqued. Resist the urge to focus on a product benefit and find the true curiosity first.

3. **Create the curiosity.** There are three main methods you can use to create the curiosity.
 - *Hidden Payoff.* This is the idea of a quest, which the customer has to go on in order to realize the hidden payoff.
 - *Randomizer.* This involves presenting content completely at random to keep interest as people stay engaged just to see what will come next.
 - *Forbidden Secret.* Everyone wants to know the thing that they are not supposed to know. The more forbidden, the better.
4. **Help it travel.** Using curiosity in marketing is inherently talkable, because it is different. A key part of your thinking once you create the curiosity is finding ways to help it travel. This may mean encouraging people to do so, or providing specific tools and features (either online or offline) to help them do it.
5. **Measure the right elements.** Curiosity, like many of the other techniques presented in this section, is not meant to be a conversion tool, but rather should be used for engagement. Consequently, measuring a sales spike or related data will not be a good metric for success. Instead, you need to focus on elements like viral discussions seeded, pass-along, or length of engagement.