



## Marketing Messages

### MARY CHARLESON

#### *Backlash over big business giving rise to renegade and everyman brands*

Meet the renegade and the everyman. The renegade is a challenger. He does things differently. Frequently seen as the underdog initially, he can often grow to become quite powerful. Never one to shy away from a dust-up, he is at his best when matched with a challenger, knowing he has identified an underserved populist niche.

The everyman is synonymous with the common masses. He is likeable, fun loving and down to earth. Although he started out small, and may have grown to considerable stature, an air of modesty prevails. The everyman wears a ball cap and drinks coffee with his buddies. The renegade figures out how to serve them coffee in a new and revolutionary way.

The renegade and the everyman are brand positions that hold much promise these days. Why? Recent outrage over CEO's petitioning for bailouts and investment companies accepting bonuses in the wake of mismanagement has made for a belligerent consumer sentiment toward big business. Being seen as common folk has never been more popular. And if you can play David, while filling a market niche, and take a run at a Goliath style company, who may have lost that common touch, all the better in the eye of today's consumer.

Renegades are on the rise, and in many categories. Education had the University of Waterloo back in the 1980s, when they revolutionized universities with their co-op work/study program. Ivey league institutions scoffed at the time, but no longer. Waterloo based Research in Motion, the designer of BlackBerry, was a prodigy of this approach. Locally University Canada West offers BCom and MBA students smaller classes, the ability to finish faster, and save a significant amount of money. Dismissed initially by bigger institutions, they are filling a growing niche. Westjet's biggest feat, besides streamlining an incredibly efficient cost model, was the fact that they WERE NOT Air Canada. A likeable renegade is hard to resist. Mr.Lube revolutionized the car care market. By keying in on everything that the dealer experience was not, they showed that fast, efficient, inexpensive and convenient service was possible. And locally based credit union Vancity effectively challenged the traditional position of banks, by profit sharing with their customers and supporting community ventures. However their renegade spirit may have been tarnished of late with the decision to raise line of credit rates, seen by many to be non-Vancity like, which was later retracted after media and member uproar. Likewise the decision to part with the insurance arm of the company, and to now serve members through the Co-operators, an Ontario based company, was seen as a big-bank-like move, not typical of the renegade they thought they knew. A renegade can be a hard position to maintain with company growth or market force changes.

Everyman brands now have the power to connect more than ever before. The challenge for everyman brands is to maintain the position as they grow. Easily achieved in business infancy, it can be hard to maintain a common touch with growth. Tim Hortons is an everyman brand. Offering a basic consumable in big cities and small towns across the country, they ARE NOT Starbucks, a decidedly urban brand, and proud of it. They support their local communities, offer a meeting place for people to connect, and they are with Canadians in hand as they go about everyday activities such as taking kids to soccer or hockey practice.

Motel 6 is another everyman brand. With their awe-shucks radio ad narrator, Tom Bodett, charming audiences with humorous commentary, down-home fiddle music in the background, and a final gesture, "We'll leave the light on for you," they have effectively shown that Joe Average can have some luxury without too much flash, and save money. In fact, they're a bit of an everyman AND a renegade wrapped into one.

Although it would be foolish to abandon a current marketing position for the latest flavour of the month, you should consider how elements of the everyman or renegade spirit can be incorporated in your efforts. Brands who are not aligned in some way with these values right now will struggle.

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