

General or Specific?

About:

NextStage Evolution studies communication, including how a Word of Mouth message goes Viral and spreads through society.

How it works:

Let's say you have a message that you want to get into the largest population possible in the least amount of time. This sort of message might be a specific big-sale at your store, a new night in your bar or nightclub or a new menu in your restaurant.

Do you want a general or specific message to get the word out quickly?

A way to make sure this static target audience propagates the message is to make the message general in nature. A generalized message is one that appeals to a large audience.

For example, "For the best off-roading, make sure you're riding on TR62-30 15s." Not only do I not know what that message means, I don't know many people who would respond to it. It's highly specific and not a good viral message for wide dispersal because it will only be propagated by a highly specific audience. Within that audience it might be a killer, but you really need to make sure you target that audience and that audience alone if you want that message to spread.

However, "For the best ride in all kinds of weather, see the tire experts at XYZ tire" is a highly generalized message that will reach me, reach the person who wants TR62-30 15s, just about anybody who drives a car, SUV or small truck.

The moral is that a highly generalized, non-specific message will propagate faster and further than a highly specific, highly targeted message within a large population." So craft your message wisely.

So how do I use this information in my advertising?

Advertise using general messages that have a broad appeal. For example, "\$1 off Kirin bottled beers" does not have the appeal that "\$1 off all imported beers" has. "Stay three nights, get the fourth night free" does not have the appeal that "20% off your stay" has. What if I can only stay three nights? That message has no appeal or use to me.

Your Mark's List sales rep can help you craft a message that appeals to as many people as possible.

About the author: Joseph Carrabis is CRO and founder of NextStage Evolution and NextStage Global and founder of KnowledgeNH and NH Business Development Network. Read full bio. He was recently selected as a senior research fellow and board advisor for the Society for New Communications Research.