

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights

October 26, 2012



Topic: “Global Marketing and Branding in the 21st Century” featuring Wendy Clark, SVP, Integrated Marketing Communications and Capabilities, The Coca-Cola Company

Wendy Clark, SVP of Integrated Marketing Communications and Capabilities at The Coca-Cola Company shared both marketing, leadership, and personal lessons in her presentation to the Turknett Women in Leadership group.

Wendy began the morning with a challenge: leaders need to manage the present and invent the future. This is especially pertinent at Coke, which has asserted a massive growth objective – to double 124 years’ worth of revenue by 2020!

In an ever-changing landscape of marketing in which the internet has led to more content than we can imagine, it is impossible to have one-on-one consumer engagement anymore. Content spreads horizontally and vertically in real time. It is also created regardless of whether marketing professionals wake up and go to work or not. She further explained that Coke’s target market is teenagers, who often feel like failures when their media content does not receive as many likes and shares they expect. As a result, to reach teens, marketers need to help them reach their expectations regarding “likes” and “shares.” Thus, Coca-Cola has implemented a new marketing strategy – “Liquid and Linked”. That is, Coke does not want to just do ‘more’ marketing content, but rather, ‘more good’ marketing content. Coke wants to create stories that people will share and that will spread through social networks.

Wendy went on to share with us several examples of how Coca-Cola is following this new “Liquid and Linked” marketing strategy.

Coke sponsored the 2012 London Olympics, but they were concerned that teens would be uninterested in the Olympics. In order to attract their attention through social media, Coca-Cola partnered with DJ Mark Ronson to make an anthem for the *Sound of Sports*. This turned out to be better than Coke imagined, and resulted in not just an anthem, but also a documentary. [Click here](#) to watch a short video clip of the *Sound of Sports*.

Coca-Cola is targeting smart phone users, in particular the teenage generation, through apps. Wendy shared the example of the Fanta voice transformer app. This app is widely popular among teens and has been deemed a success. [Click here](#) to view a short clip about the Fanta voice transformer app.

Facebook is another outlet through which Coke is trying to reach teens. Coke currently has 53 million Facebook fans and gains another million every 15-20 days. At this point, Coke is one degree away from reaching everyone there is to reach on Facebook.

Wendy says Coke must embrace this new sales force – that is, consumers who will share their experiences via social media.

Jess Paul, a loyal consumer of Coke, created a video ad for Coke and posted it on her YouTube account, which soon the video went viral. After learning about the Jess Paul, Coca-Cola had to decide how to respond to the video. In response to this, Coke added the video to their Open Happiness website, which then increased the views on their channel. Wendy commented that sometimes fans can tell the story of Coke better than Coca-Cola can!

Finally, the *Hug Me* machine that was placed at a University in Singapore caused a stir on Facebook and Twitter, as well as more traditional media outlets, like television news programs. [Click here](#) to see the video.

These are just a few of Coke's recent marketing initiatives. From each of these, Wendy shared a few key learning points:

- 1.) **Be Shareworthy** – People want relationships with the human side of companies, not just the corporate.
- 2.) **Think Big, Start Small, Scale Fast!** – Fail, learn, then scale.
- 3.) **Listen** – Customers will voice complaints and kudos on social media. Be sure to use your ears and eyes in the proportion that they were given to you!
- 4.) **Do Not Accept the Status Quo** – It is too convenient to say 'no'. 'No's' are just yeses waiting to happen! Be relentless.
- 5.) **Play Well** – Put your brand at the center and success will follow. Don't let your personal ego get in the way.

Q&A:

- **How do you create success from failure if failure is not an option?**
This process starts with leaders and a culture change. Leaders need to celebrate people that are brave enough to take risks.
- **What is the process for listening to customers?**
You have to answer **all** questions on Twitter and social media. Decide how and when to engage. For example, Coke posted a picture on social media that looked like a pink Coke can and someone outside the company took it to mean that Coke was making a Breast Cancer Awareness can. Coke had to decide how to react to this customer.
- **What is your disaster plan for social media?**
The 'truth' is irrelevant. Everyone has their own individually held truths. A failure in quality looks very different today than it did 50 years ago. It can go viral on social media in a short period of time, so quality is held to higher standards than ever.

- **Tell us about your biggest and/or best mistake and what did you learn from it.**
 The biggest jumps in my career come when I take risks. I have to continually ensure that I practice what I preach. When working at Bellsouth, I could not come to terms with a decision made by the CEO concerning the launch of a new ad, so I had to quit my job. I could not be associated with something I did not believe in. I also talked myself out of the job with Coke at first, but ended up making the jump from AT&T to Coke and it stretched me even more! Every decision I make is not perfect, but it all goes back to listening. I have strong beliefs, but lightly held.
- **How do you balance life and work?**
 I don't believe balance is a goal – I try for integration. With three children, I integrate my life and try to be where I need to be when I need to be there. I make sure to focus and be present in whatever it is that I am doing.
- **How do you engage customers?**
 Our strategy for engaging customers is by doing 'more good'. We are working on better and more compelling storytelling. Our employees are our most authentic storytellers.
- **How do you view the role of sponsors and mentors?**
 All of my sponsors have been men! Be sure to lift as you climb by pulling up the women beneath you. And remember that nothing beats hard work – success is not luck. Sponsors will see your work and passion and want to sponsor you. Take the initiative to ask them if they will sponsor you in order to get to the next level. Allow them to say 'no' if they cannot make a solid commitment.
- **How do you justify the investment of Facebook to others?**
 We actually conducted a study looking at Facebook fans and non-Facebook fans. Fans drink twice as much Coca-Cola as non-fans and purchase ten times as much!
- **How do you help your leadership team get up to speed on social media?**
 Coke actually locked employees out of Facebook at work until two years ago. The current Coke CEO is curious about social media. It takes others to educate leadership and meet them where they are if they want to know more. Make sure you are in a safe place to educate and explain. Leaders need to feel free to ask questions.
- **What advice would you give for a new brand?**
 Assess your landscape – what is your niche? Get it right and don't negotiate. Invest behind it. Make it authentically true and listen to those you are marketing to! Listen deeply and serve your niche.