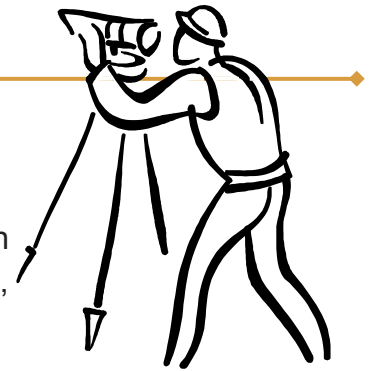


# Through The Transit<sup>SM</sup>

*Free ideas and exercises from Marketing Hawks*



Welcome to this month's issue of **Through the Transit**. Each month we focus on one side of the Transit Marketing lens: Brand, Package or People. This month's focus is:

**P-E-O-P-L-E**

## June's Insight

Spot the Mavens.

A Maven is a kind of "consumer super-helper". Gladwell describes this group of individuals who make it their pastime to discover where to get the best deal in town. Mavens don't sell this information; they simply accumulate it and then pass it on freely to others. If you reflect a bit, you can probably think of somebody in your life who is like this.

If a maven thinks that your company may be of benefit to her friends, then you've got a referral source that's second to none. Unfortunately, you can't just go look these people up in the yellow pages under "Maven". Your company will have to implement other methods to aid these helpers in better understanding how your company can provide value to their friends.

Frontline customer service or sales staff will most likely be the employees that interact with a maven. Signs the person they are dealing with is a maven might include:

- Person asking many detailed questions.
- Person not just reading the fine print on a brochure but marking it up with questions of their own.

Instruct your employees to steer the maven to you or a senior salesperson immediately. If more experienced staff aren't available, teach staff to get her phone number and ask her permission to let you phone her later. This may sound extreme, but these opportunities don't walk through our door every day. Here's a chance to out-do your competition and be seen as a company that takes care of legitimate inquiries.



But, tread lightly. Don't be seen as a pushy salesperson. Better to answer questions honestly and find out just what benefit she is searching for. Remember, mavens seek value. Find the appropriate niche where your company really can supply a maven and her friends with value and you'll have a referral source that is profitable.

Sign up for your free email copy at [www.marketinghawks.com](http://www.marketinghawks.com)

© 2004 Marketing Hawks

## **Establish Contact**

---

A critical element in coaxing mavens to keep you on their short-list of companies worthwhile to do business with is to keep in contact with them. Don't send them junk emails; if they don't sign up for your newsletter, don't put them on your newsletter mailing list. Treat them with respect. They are really looking for value.

When your customer service or sales staff spot a maven, it's imperative to keep in contact with that person. Letting a maven walk away without making a favorable impression is like letting fifty sales walk out the door. Don't do it.

This month's exercise is simple: modify the form on the next page to fit your company's needs. Involve your staff in this; solicit their input. Integrating staff into the creation of the form causes staff to ponder the types of questions mavens ask and how to spot these people. Teach staff that mavens and tire-kickers may sound similar. It's almost impossible to know in advance which individual will actively tell their friends that your place is a great place to do business and can give them value.

A maven may seem like a tire-kicker; you might get a few false alarms. But once you start dialoguing with this type of individual, you'll find they are intelligent and if they perceive you really give your customers a good deal then you should be able to win them over.

Remember, the best thing is to put the maven in contact with the owner or a senior sales person; but if you can't do that, then at a minimum please give them this form and encourage them to fill it out. Or, if they wish, let them fill it out right at the store.

You might even supply an envelope addressed back to your store, with the return postage already paid. We suggest you not skimp on costs here and use a postcard for this survey. Some people don't like their personal information going out in the postal mail for everybody to see.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## **Establish Contact** - continued

### (Your Company Name) Contact Form

We contact our customers via email with our monthly newsletter and with occasional special offers on \_\_\_\_\_ or other interesting news.

We only contact customers with permission. We don't share your name with anybody else. You can tell us to stop sending you emails at anytime and we will.

You'll usually receive two (2) emails a month from us.

Sign up is free.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I'd like to receive your monthly newsletter

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I'd like to receive other news and offers

I'm especially interested in news on:

---

---

---

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

If you'd like, please tell us a little about your shopping at our store.

How often do you stop by?

\_\_\_\_\_ once a day

\_\_\_\_\_ two to four times a week

\_\_\_\_\_ once a week

\_\_\_\_\_ a couple times a month

\_\_\_\_\_ other

***Thanks and we look forward to getting to know you better!***

*Sign up for your free email copy at [www.marketinghawks.com](http://www.marketinghawks.com)*

*© 2004 Marketing Hawks*

## **Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point***

*Boston: Bay Back Books, 2002*

This month we begin a three-part book review of *The Tipping Point*. We especially like Gladwell because he's a journalist, not a marketer. He brings an investigative perspective to his work. Gladwell presents his material in a way that blends practical example with interview and it's not based on his own experience as a corporate marketer. Very refreshing.

Wonder why some products or social behaviors catch on and others don't? Gladwell would tell us that some never reach a "tipping point"; they never reach a kind of critical mass where they suddenly take off and become popular.

Gladwell draws parallels between how epidemics behave in organisms and how human societies behave. This may sound a bit far out for the small business owner, but his insights have extreme practical value for the small business marketer who wants to influence customer and prospect behavior. Gladwell identifies three elements that cause a dramatic tipping point in the life of an epidemic: The Law of the Few, The Stickiness Factor and The Power of Context

**The Law of the Few** outlines three types of people that have an inordinate amount of influence in the creation of a trend. For us as small business owners, the lesson is clear: Focus attention on the groups that will give us the greatest benefits. The three types are:

- Connectors
- Mavens
- Salespeople

Connectors are people who know a great many people. They may be ten times or more influential than the average person because of the number of people they contact and pass information to.

Unlike Connectors, Mavens may not know as many contacts, but their contacts listen closely to the maven because the maven is a known source of beneficial information. Pages 59 to 69 are required reading if you wish to learn how this small but extraordinarily influential group thinks. These ten pages are well worth your time.

Salesmen are important in carrying a message, but for most small businessmen unless they work for you there isn't much you can do with this group. However, since most small business owners are part salespeople, you might want to read what he says about this group and how the master salesperson interacts with people.

Next month we explore some fascinating ways marketers can help their message have more staying power as we review what Gladwell says about Stickiness.