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## [MarketingSherpa's Viral Marketing Hall of Fame 2008: Top 10 Campaigns & Results Data](#)

**SUMMARY:** If you're in need of some viral marketing inspiration, look no further. Here are this year's inductees into MarketingSherpa's Viral Marketing Hall of Fame..

The top entries in our fourth annual contest ranged from expensive to frugal, complex to simple. Victors include General Mills, Columbia Sportswear, VIBE Media and VeriSign. See how the campaigns worked, what they looked like and how well they performed. Viral marketing may be easier today with the help of social media, but that only made competition for MarketingSherpa's 2008 Viral Marketing Hall of Fame that much harder. The 10 best campaigns profiled here are truly the cream of the crop from the scores of entries evaluated by Sherpa staff.

These top 10 campaigns leveraged peer-to-peer pass-along to achieve amazing results in a range of demographics and audiences – hip-hop music fans, hardcore gamers, breast cancer survivors and activists, philanthropists, Portuguese soccer fans and more. Some campaigns mixed big budgets, great strategy and wide exposure. Others created entertaining content and watched it sail.

Our winners include large brands, such as General Mills, Northwestern Mutual Insurance and Columbia Sportswear; edgy entertainment companies, such as VIBE Media Group and video games developer THQ; and smaller firms, such as Pazazz, a Canadian printing company, and Sporting Portugal, a soccer ticket vendor. They all bring something unique to the table, with servings of practical and creative advice for everyone.

While judging this year's competition, we noticed many common threads running throughout the campaigns. Here are the top three:

-> Rise of social media

Most of this year's candidates sent videos to YouTube, created Facebook pages or organized communities on MySpace -- or all of the above. These sites are free to use and add seemingly unlimited viral potential to any campaign. That means free additional exposure from powerful peer-to-peer networks. Marketers are hearing the social media message loud and clear.

-> Peer-to-peer sharing is critical

There were two distinct groups in this year's entries: fantastically thought-out campaigns and wacky content. Either way, success hinged on peer-to-peer sharing. As our winners

illustrate, both strategies can work if enough effort is put into the right places.

Clever marketers created funny videos or text documents, posted them to a few social media sites and people shared like mad -- ka-boom! Other marketers left less at risk. They created contests, microsites, full-assault ad campaigns and got on every Web 2.0 medium reachable.

-> All hail mighty content

You've heard the adage -- we're not even going to say it -- but all it took for some campaigns to go wildly viral was great content. Not every content-based entry made it to Sherpa's winners' circle, but there were enough to denote a trend. Most of the content being passed around was funny or sarcastic -- even if it was a bit risky for PR. But being truly funny requires risks. Some of these marketers went out on a limb to grab the ripest fruit.

So, without further introduction, here are MarketingSherpa's Viral Marketing Hall of Fame inductees for 2008:

### **VIBE Media Group**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** This VIBE contest drove young and hip viewers to an urban music and culture website. Participants in an online rap music contest created and submitted videos to be voted on by the VIBE community. They received MySpace widgets to share their videos with friends and drive voters to <http://www.vibe.com> where they could interact, view and vote on more entries. VIBE saw an 800% ROI on their efforts and captured 60,000 new registered members.

### **General Mills' Pink for the Cure**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Bolstering the battle against breast cancer, General Mills launched this campaign to spread hopeful stories of those touched by the disease. An elaborate MySpace page was created and partnerships were formed with celebrities and a network of breast cancer survivors and activists. Visitors could share their stories, comment and download badges and backgrounds for their own pages. The campaign reached more than 2.7 million people, gained thousands of MySpace friends and received great feedback from participants.

### **Sporting Portugal**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Sporting Portugal created a website that let users submit their name and telephone number to become part of an interactive ad. A video showing a well-known soccer coach stressing out in a locker room ended with a phone call to the submitted number with the coach encouraging the visitor to come to the stadium because "the team needs you." The idea attracted plenty of blog coverage and more than 610,000 people to the site in two weeks. The all-time record for season ticket sales was shattered on the first day of the season.

### **Pazazz's Printing's Alive**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Pazazz's edgy video shows that viral success is possible without breaking the bank. Pazazz wanted to convey its love for printing by making people laugh, and this 3-1/2-minute video does just that on a shoestring budget. Seeding consisted of an email to Pazazz's house list, a YouTube video, links on Facebook and LinkedIn and press releases to industry publications. The video has received 133,000 views and more than 20 requests for a high-resolution copy to show at conferences and corporate events, plus a speaking gig for the CEO at major conference.

### **Columbia Sportswear's Tested Tough**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Columbia Sportswear built its brand in this campaign by asking customers to test just how tough the outdoor-wear firm's products are. Customers were invited via email, display ads and contest websites to brutalize Columbia's products, tell the tale and send photos and videos of the action. Visitors to the contest site could view, vote and comment on entries. Columbia received more than 3,000 entries. The projected response rate was surpassed by more than 33%.

### **VeriSign's Liberty Fillmore, the Cart Whisperer**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Ask any etailer: abandoned shopping carts are a challenge. And nobody cares more about that challenge than Liberty Fillmore the Cart Whisperer. Internet infrastructure provider VeriSign created a series of fun videos featuring the fictitious Liberty Fillmore, who teaches that website shopping cart abandonment is preventable. The campaign included submissions to YouTube, a MySpace page, a Facebook page and a website for Fillmore's poetry, videos and contest. The videos delivered a heap of blog coverage and more than three million views on YouTube.

### **THQ's Frontlines: Fuel of War**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Looking to promote a new video game, THQ launched this campaign using a microsite, contest and social media. Participants' chances to win increased with the number of friends they recruited to enter. PPC promotion mixed with some "shoe leather" work at a gaming conference helped to bring this campaign 70% more registered contestants than hoped for.

### **StyleFeeder**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Social networks are fertile ground for viral seeds. Facebook users, for instance, love applications and are quick to share them with friends. StyleFeeder had this in mind when it created a product suggestion app for Facebook to expand its user base. Less than a year after launch, the app passed the milestone of 1 million installations.

## **Northwestern Mutual Insurance's Letyourworriesgo.com**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** This Northwestern Mutual Insurance campaign encouraged microsite visitors to “let it go.” Visitors to the interactive page could select concerns, such as financial troubles or illness, and dispose of them via catapult, rocket, submarine or hot air balloon. The microsite leveraged a tell-a-friend feature and could be shared on social media sites, such as Digg and Del.icio.us. By the third month of the campaign, the site’s traffic was 213% higher than Northwestern Mutual’s total microsite traffic for 2007.

## **McKinney's Snowglobe Boy**

[Click here to see campaign details](#)

**MarketingSherpa Summary:** Sometimes elaborate tactics aren’t required to stimulate a viral response; all it takes is one great idea. Ad agency McKinney’s idea was to take holiday ecards to a new level by putting an employee inside a giant inflatable snow globe for four days and broadcasting it on a microsite 24 hours a day. Visitors could receive “season’s greetings” from Snowglobe Boy and chat with him. In a week, a small seed of a Facebook page, a YouTube video and about 1,000 emails to McKinney’s friends attracted about 50,000 unique visitors, network press coverage and lots of search traffic.

## **Useful links related to this article**

MarketingSherpa's Viral Marketing Hall of Fame 2007: Top 10 Efforts & Results Data to Inspire You: <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article.php?ident=29947>

Special Report: Viral Marketing 2007 - 15 Data Charts, Top Tactics & ROI  
<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article.php?ident=29941>

MarketingSherpa's Viral Marketing Hall of Fame 2006: Top 12 Campaigns You Should Swipe Ideas From  
<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article.php?ident=27305>

Viral Advertising Showcase 2005: Top 12 Campaigns & Results Data to Inspire You  
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