

6 Marketing Secrets from Santa Claus



Whether he meant to or not jolly old St. Nick created one of the most recognizable and beloved brands in the western world; one that children have adored and parents embraced for centuries. Santa Claus has endured wars, depressions, scrutiny (*is he real or not??*), imposters who tried to tarnish his image (ala The Grinch), and even opposition from certain religious groups.

So how the heck did he do it? How did Santa Claus build such a phenomenon, despite the obstacles and challenges the world threw at him? And what lessons can businesses owners learn from him for building our own brands?

I've identified some key things that Santa does to solidify his brand, create raving fans, build trust and grow his Christmas Empire! Here they are, along with the lessons we can learn from his success:

Marketing Lessons from Santa

1. Santa is painstakingly reliable. Most of us awoke every Christmas morning, year after year, to find a plate sprinkled with cookie crumbs, an empty milk glass, and a bounty of presents; all bearing witness to Santa's late night visit. Despite snow storms and freezing temperatures, or dad losing his job, moving to a new house, or fighting with our brothers too much, Santa never let us down. Santa is the epitome of reliability.

Business Lesson: How reliable is your business? Are you letting customers down? Like expectant children on Christmas mornings, our customers have high expectations and it's our job to deliver – or risk losing them. Make it a habit to ask customers if they've ever felt let down by your company, what areas you can improve upon, and what products or services they'd like you to offer. Being painstakingly reliable builds trust and people buy from companies they trust!

2. Santa surprises and delights us! Who doesn't think of Santa and smile? Why is that? It's because he always surprises and delights us! Whether it's flashing a jovial smile and belting out a jolly "Ho Ho Ho", delivering that Barbie doll we'd been obsessing over for months, or making a surprise appearance with a bag full of goodies at a holiday party, happiness and smiles follow Santa wherever he goes.

Business Lesson: Can you say the same about your brand? Does your business leave a lasting smile and happy thoughts? Do you surprise and delight? If not, study your competition and your industry, talk to people, and find out where others let customers down. Then do something that no one else in your industry does. Find that "something extra" to add to your product or service mix. Customers love the unexpected, so what can you do to leave a lasting impression?

3. Santa encourages us to write. Everyone knows Santa loves getting our letters – and even reads every single one of them! And what does he ask of us? Nothing but a list all the presents we want him to deliver on Christmas morning!

Business Lesson: Imagine if our customers felt comfortable enough to send us a list of their wants, needs, and desires. Don't you think that would help us understand and serve them better? What can you do to encourage your customers to stay in touch with you? Since we don't have our own North Pole address, I'd recommend things like suggestion boxes (on, or offline!), surveys, and, service follow up calls.

4. Santa rewards good behavior. "Have you been naughty or nice?" Your answer could mean the difference between that diamond necklace you've been eyeing or a big ole lump of coal!

Business Lesson: Businesses can build their brands by rewarding "good" behavior too! Did a customer buy more than usual? Reward them with a discount or an extra freebie. Did a customer refer you or leave a raving Yelp review? Send a special present or gift certificate to say "thank you."

Rewarding good behavior not only shows the customer your appreciation, it encourages them to do it again!

5. Santa has elves and 8 reindeer- Santa wouldn't be Santa without his team. Do you think he'd be able to read all of our letters, be painstakingly reliable, or jolly and delightful if he didn't have a team to help him with all his Christmas responsibilities? Of course not, so then why do you expect to be able to take care of all of your business responsibilities by yourself?

Business Lesson: If you don't have the time to provide the level of service you want, surprise and delight customers – or market and build your business then it's time to get your own team of elves and reindeer! No one ever built an empire alone...not even Santa. Want to be insanely popular like Santa? Then it may be time to hire some help!

6. Santa is one-of-a-kind! Santa has an image like no one else: long gray beard, velvety red suit, and shiny black boots. Santa has a catch phrase, "Ho, Ho, Ho". Santa knows his target market are children. Santa also knows these three things set him apart from the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, and moms and dad – and he used that to build the Santa brand to be the unmistakable symbol it is today!

Business Lesson: Take a look at your business, what can you do to make your business stand out from the crowd? Do you have a unique image? A symbolic uniform? A bright red sleigh pulled by 8 tiny reindeer (Ok, a fleet of bright red trucks will do!)? A quirky catch phrase? Find your uniqueness and do something big to stand apart from the competition!

Summary:

The bottom line is this: Santa "gets" marketing – he built one of the most recognizable brands that ever existed by doing these 6 things. Sure, we may never be as popular as Santa but by following his example, we can certainly create our own little world of magic! Happy holidays! Ho, Ho, Ho!!!