

Chipotle Mexican Grill's advertising and publicity Campaign

A new approach to cull valuable customer input to increase both customer acquisition and retention that is gaining popularity is something called crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing is plugging into the collective intelligence of the public to complete business-related tasks that a company would normally perform itself or outsource to a third-party provider (Alsever, 2007). This relative "free" benefit is only a small part of crowdsourcing's appeal as it enables marketers to expand the size of their talent pool while gaining deeper insight into what customers truly want (Alsever, 2007).

What has made such feedback so readily accessible has been the rise of user-generated media such as blogs, Wikipedia, MySpace, and YouTube. Soliciting customer input is not a new concept but today's technology makes it possible for companies to enlist ever-increasing numbers of people to perform ever-more complex and creative tasks at a reduced cost in capital and time. These tasks range from user designed ad campaigns and the testing of new product ideas. In return, participants usually require some level of recognition, a sense of community, or sometimes a small financial incentive (Alsever, 2007).

An excellent example for the potential for crowdsourcing is Chipotle Mexican Grill. Having never made a TV commercial, Chipotle sponsored a contest that invited college students to produce ads from their own imagination. Chipotle provided several basic tag lines and graphics but the students did the rest (Alsever, 2007). "We didn't want to give a lot of direction," says Chipotle advertising manager Ryan Murrin, "We wanted to see what they would come up with." (Alsever, 2007). Thanks to MySpace and YouTube, the 60 contest ads netted 17.3 million views in only three weeks and one, dubbed "Dady," garnered more than 8 million views (Alsever, 2007). The winners ended up sharing \$50,000 in prize money but this was a very small price to pay as Chipotle received the equivalent of millions of dollars worth of free advertising and publicity (Alsever, 2007).

Companies can learn from this example, and use new forms of collaboration to leverage valuable customer participation which increases creativity and productivity while also minimizing time, labor and research expenses.

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