

## **Nachos, Super Bowl and Wine?**

### ***The power (or seduction) of referral marketing***

By Bob Thilmont

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We all have heard of referral marketing. However how often have you tried to understand the impact it has on you and your business. I want to share with you an unsolicited third party referral marketing experience that happened to me the day before the Super Bowl. I had plans to go to a friend's house to watch the game. I was listening to NPR (National Public Radio) on Saturday morning while driving between errands. One of the interviews was about choosing the right wine for a Super Bowl party. In particular, what wines went with nachos and what wine went with buffalo wings. I knew there would be chips and nachos along with buffalo wings and I also knew I wanted a good wine to enjoy. When I heard the interview I made a quick detour to one of the largest bottle shops in Fort Collins. As I looked through the isles for a Chilean Carmenera for the buffalo wings and a Spanish Paso A Paso Verdejo for the nachos, I discovered a young couple in the same isle looking for the same wines. We struck up a conversation and they too had made a detour to the bottle shop after hearing the same interview. Once I had my wines and was checking out, I noticed the lady in front of me with the same wines. Once again, I asked her did she listen to the NPR interview. Jokingly she said yea! The amazing thing about this story was within 15 minutes of hearing the interview three different parties made unscheduled stops at this bottle shop to purchase these wines. Multiply this across the country and you can see it was a very good day for Carmeneres and Paso A Paso Verdejos!

Now contrast this with the actual Super Bowl ads. I cannot think of any of these advertisements that had an impact on me. Why is this? For one thing traditional advertising is geared to building brand awareness. Referral marketing is different. Most people do not ask for referrals unless they are about to make a purchase or hire an employee. They have been thinking of anticipated action and they are looking for confirmation that this is the right decision. Secondly, third party referrals usually are independent. That is, they have no direct financial or personal involvement in the product being referred. We consider them to be objective.

Building a strong referral network can be an inexpensive yet effective strategy in this current economy. In addition to the traditional word of mouth referrals, the internet



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offers several communities to build your referral networks. Communities such as LinkedIn, Facebook and now Twitter can provide you with a powerful network.

By the way, the wines were excellent! I am interested if any of you heard the same interview and purchased these wines too. Drop me a line. Until next time!

Bob

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