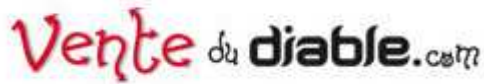


Case study :

Vente-du-diable.Com

Presentation :

Vente-du-diable.com is a french e-commerce website created by the company Ckado.fr in November 2006. The analysis of



this e-commerce site is very interesting for studying the creation process of a community and its impact on the business. In the case of Vente-du-diable.com a community has been created around the site and it has helped a lot in increasing the sales and keeping the audience. Last but not least, as it will be explained later, the community was created by telling a story to the customers, by entertaining them and this was the main success factor of the community creation process

The company :

Created in 2002, Ckado.fr (formerly pckado.com) has specialized itself on the e-commerce market, more particularly in the sale of second choice high-tech products at the lowest price. Since many years, the company has developed a strong experience in the sale of repackaged computer hardware of big brands.

Ckado.fr proposes essentially products of big marks brands thanks to agreements with manufacturers for their destocked, end-of-line, or exposition material.

Vente-du-diable.com is a "Private Sales" Website. It means that only people that have access to the website are able to buy products. And you need to know someone to get an access, a so-called "Godfather". The business principle is simple but very effective : big brands have the possibility there to sell their end of line stocks, via a closed distribution network, without waiting that their distributors sell their own stock. They are so able to obtain a second business way for products still proposed in the normal distribution network that enables very interesting discounts for the buyer. This new solution proposed to the manufacturers allows them to sell products set without cannibalizing their distribution network with low margin but with a sure ROI.

Problematic :

There are in France plenty of websites that have the business of “Private sales”, starting from the leader www.vente-privee.com. So, for a new player arriving on the market, it is really difficult to find a place and attract customers. That is for this reason that Vente-du-diable.com had to find new ways of doing business, but also new ways of communicating. etc... Originality and innovation were the key.

The first element that has helped to make the success of Vente-du-diable.com has been to choose a niche market that was not already covered by a competitor. Corresponding to the experience developed by Ckado.fr, it has been logically decided that the sales would concentrate (in a first time) on one type of products : second choice high tech products.

Secondly, in order to grow fast, to acquire the customers (to create a database with qualified registered people) and to be known on the market as “THE” website for high tech private sales, it was not enough to propose very attractive prices for desired products. Vente-du-diable.com has decided to tell a story to the people, to entertain them. In other words Vente-du-diable.com has decided to be fun and to propose to customers to have fun with them. This fun attitude would become the key of the communication strategy.

The Community creation:

Everything started with the creation of the name “Vente-du-diable.com” in September 2006. It was



not planned to choose such a name but the fact is that all classical names were registered. So Mr Contrepois, one of the two directors, decided to enlarge the domain name research area. He found “Vente-du-diable.com”, literally translated “Devil-Sale”.

Once the name was chosen, the idea was born that it could be interesting to give to the entire website a design and an atmosphere around the devil. The idea was not to create a gothic atmosphere but more something funny and that’s why the “diablotin” or “small devil” was created. He would become the visual identity of the site and be in some terms the “boss” of the website. He’s the one that is giving the message to customers, or better he’s the one that “discuss” with people.

From this state, a brainstorming has been realized within the team to see what could be done in order to create an environment and tell a story to the visitors. Telling a story is something interesting in the principle but much more complicated in the reality. Time after time, and step by step, different “actions” were taken in order to build the story around the “diablotin”. The following part will present some of the main actions or examples found.

Actions :

Before going in detail into the different actions that have helped to create the story or to develop the environment around Vente-du-diable.com, it is necessary to understand the general approach.

The company has decided that everything, in the “life of the website” would become an opportunity to have fun and every element or action concerning Vente-du-diable.com would be part of the story. Everything was not planned but when something new appeared, an idea had to be found to integrate this new element within the story.

What was essential is that the entire communication, the entire website was in correspondance with the story. It had to stay in Vente-du-diable.com employees’ mind that each time they speak, each time they write something, it is in the position of the “diablotin”. This situation will lead to one of the main important conclusion : when you decide to tell a story to customers, to create an environment, you cannot do it by halves.

The « Confessionnal »

The principle of private sales is that only registered people can have access to the sales. However, it is clear that it is in the interest of the seller to acquire new clients. The solution found was to open a “confessional” where people will talk about one of their “sin” and if they are creative enough they will get an access to the sales.

This solution was very innovative in comparison with competitors that were just asking for an email or for a formular to fill in. Almost 2000 people have answered to the confessional in 4 months and 75% of them got an access to the website.

In order to be honest with the community, only people providing good sins were accepted and to prove it, best sins were published on the weblog (see further). The confessional was in this way a very interesting and funny method to get content for the blog.

Thanks to the confessional, people had fun from the beginning of their discovery of the website. The confessional was also a good way to show people not yet registered how fun it is to belong to Vente-du-diable.com. And of course it was very useful for getting new customers...

Le confessionnal
Vous n'avez pas de parrain, vous voulez entrer en enfer... et profitez des offres à des prix démoniaques !
Attention ! Les portes de l'enfer sont impénétrables...

Comme vous le savez Satan hait les petits anges ! Alors confessez à Satan vos péchés les plus inavouables !
Et puis... si vous réussissez à impressionner le haut comité des diabolins, vous pourrez accéder au monde satanique de Vente du diable

Le haut comité des diabolins se réunit une fois par semaine pour décider de l'entrée ou non de nouveaux membres.

CONFESSEZ VOUS !

Votre e-mail :
Votre nom :

Votre type de péché : L'avarice
 La coïté
 L'envie
 La gourmandise
 La luxure
 L'orgueil
 La paresse

Votre péché
(300 caractères minimum) :

Acceptez vous que votre péché soit publié de façon anonyme sur le Blog de vente-du-diable ?
 Oui
 Non

Comment avez-vous connu Vente du diable ?

les nouveaux diabolins
Tout comme leur parrain, les nouveaux diabolins bénéficient de conditions d'achat privilégiées sur vente-du-diable.com.
Accéder au club privé du malin, hâ, vidéo, accompagnement, adouci... et profitez des prix diaboliques appliqués à tous les articles !
Pour voir des exemples de péchés diaboliques validés par le conseil des diabolins, visitez le...

The « Blog du diabolotin »



As I've started to mention it in the preceding part, Vente-du-diable.com has created a blog to communicate with Vente-du-diable.com members but also new visitors (the blog has free access, contrary to the sales). Called "The Blog of the diabolotin", it is used to better interact with people among the community. Everything is written by "the diabolotin" who has a direct communication, a direct discussion with people who want it.

Nothing is freezed and thematics evolve with needs and willings of people but different categories are frequent :

- current and next sales
- best sins coming from the confessional
- "high tech advices"
- website situation and news
- polls (see next part)

And as soon as something could be relevant for the weblog, it would be published.

Another very important element of the blog is that each article, each comment that is written by the diabolotin, is with a special tone, with a special way of writing, of being funny that is special and unique to the Diabolotin.

Polls

Polls have been used two times up to now by Vente-du-diable.com in order to better address sales to people, to better know their willings and also to propose a website and sales more in correspondance with what people want.

What has been learned from that is that doing polls is very good but not enough. What is essential is to answer to them and to make changes corresponding with what people were asking for... Doing this ameliorates the environment created and the relation with the community is empowered because they see that're listen to them and they love it.

General Atmosphere

As it has been explained before, from the moment where Vente-du-diable.com decided to create an environment, they have also decided their whole communication strategy would “devil-like” and to use all possible elements appearing in the life of the website for increasing the story.

Here are some last examples that show how has been told the story :

- all newsletters present a message from the diablotin, have visuals from the hell (see pictures above) etc...

- when the logo changed, a story was created to explain to people the reason of this changes. It was not told that it was because the first one was too similar for an existing one but it was explained that the first logo was a baby diablotin in a time where Vente-du-diable.com was new but now that the site had some months, the diablotin has become a teen and the logo should evolve with this change...

- When a bug appeared or when something goes wrong, the diablotin explains that it's coming from angels in heaven that do not want to see Vente-du-diable.com, or it is because of the moon eclipse... It is not lying to customers because the truth is told (server problem) but it is make people laugh and stay in the “devil atmosphere”.

- Diefferent games have been organized to stimulate the community. Each time, a story was found to explain what was the purpose of the game, why people should participate. The message was of course coming from the diablotin.

- A challenge had been organized at the launching of the site, with a “teasing effect” to motivate people to have interest to the website. People were encouraged to propose slogans and the best one would become the official one of Vente-du-diable.com. Of course, the slogans proposed had to be found into the devil thematic.



PARTICIPEZ AU GRAND JEU CONCOURS
PARRAINAGE Vente du diable.com
A PARTIR DU **17 JANVIER A 15H00**
14 JOURS POUR RASSEMBLER TES DIABLOTTINS SUR LE SITE
>> GAGNEZ DES CADEAUX DEMONIAQUES
APPLE IPOOD NANO 4 GO
CANON DIGITAL LYUS 50
EPSON STYLUS R245
ACCES VIP
>> DETAILS DU JEU ET PARTICIPATION ICI <<
Vente du diable.com L'ENFER DES CONCURRENTS, LE PARADIS DES ACHETEURS !
rejoignez sur Le Blog de Satan

Vente du diable.com
L'ENFER DES CONCURRENTS, LE PARADIS DES ACHETEURS !
EPSON S'INVITE EN ENFER
A PARTIR DE CE VENDREDI 9 MARS 2007
JUSQU'À 45% DE REMISE
EPSON PERFECTION 2580
35% DE REMISE
EPSON STYLUS D78
35% DE REMISE

Conclusions

This Vente-du-diable.com example of how to create a community by telling a story can provide us with a lot of useful teachings.

First of all, it has to stay in mind that a community is not something static but is very dynamical. A community is always changing, is always evolving, that's why community creators have to become community managers after a short time. It is same thing for the story that has been told. News have to be found, new ways of having fun in the community, new surprises will help to keep people into the community. The purpose is to keep them into the community but also to transform community members into better brand advocates.

When people realize that they belong to a community, they will feel special and privileged. From this moment, they will really start to be brand advocates and talk around them about the brand. In the case of Vente-du-diable.com, as the sales are reserved to registered people, one could think that the community is automatically created but not. It is an error to think that creating a database is enough to build a community. That's one of the reasons why the solution of telling a story, as employed by Vente-du-diable.com, was a very powerful way to develop a community.

A very good test that helps to see if the community is there and if people have become advocates is when a problem is appearing, when something goes wrong. It was the case for Vente-du-diable.com when a problem appeared on a server. This had the consequence that a database was damaged and a group of people could not have access to the website anymore. During the time needed by the technical team to solve the problem, people were logically complaining by email, but also by commenting on the blog. The majority of them were just asking when the solution would be found, and when the access would be available again. They had no aggressivity or anger. Some of them were even giving some good words as "Good Luck", "Take care" or "I understand that it is hard"... But the main sign that showed that Vente-du-diable.com had the support of the community was when one person came and wrote a comment like that "Still blocked, I'll better go somewhere else". Another Person commented and stand up for Vente-du-diable.com by saying "What you're saying is stupid because problems can happen...". When customers are defending the brand, the website, it is an intangible proof that a real community has been created, with strong relations with members. The picture below shows a screen capture of these two comments.



Another conclusion found by Vente-du-diable.com is that members of the community will talk on the web about the site if they really feel engaged and that is very useful. They will spread the word : blogs, forums, comparators. In terms of communication, these word of mouth effects have really helped to develop the community. It was the same thing for journalists. They have loved the way Vente-du-diable.com has told a story and created an environment and it was a good point for influencing them to write articles about the website...

The biggest challenge for Vente-du-diable.com is now to be sure that they keep the environment and that are innovative enough to keep entertaining and interesting people !