

Viral Marketing or Viral Movement

Hotmail*	Christianity
Viral Marketing**	Viral Movement***
<p>That's what friends are for. Network-effects companies have to be great at signing up new customers. But truly great network-effects companies also know how to keep the customers they have. The way to do that is to create products that are so easy to understand and so compelling to use that people enlist their friends. "For products to shine, customers have to inherently want to share them with their friends," says Jurvetson. If people sign up their friends, a company doesn't just grow like hell, it tends to keep its customers too."</p>	<p>That's what your sphere of influence is for. The 1st century world was relational but not limited to one's friends. They signed up new converts through their network—sphere of influence—that included friends, family as well as colleagues in commerce and government. Because of digital technology, our sphere of influence is not just local but also global. It was an infectious movement because it transformed lives, institutions and entire communities by recognizing the neglected truth that Christ restored us to our originally intended relationship of being "one with the Father."</p>
<p>The freer it is, the faster it spreads. Sooner or later, business comes down to money. But with network-effects companies later is better. "If a service tries blatantly to monetize its subscriber base in every way imaginable, new users will be reluctant to spread the word," Jurvetson argues. "That's why, in the early days, many of these services are free—and light on revenue generation."</p>	<p>Since its free for ordinary folks, it spreads fast. Maybe the reason that Christ seemed to address the poor and disenfranchised is that they had nothing to lose and something to gain from this relationship. They could be "one with the Father" as promised in John 12-17 with all the power and authority that accompanied this relationship. It spread because people were empowered & transformed their world.</p>
<p>Cafés beat subways. The big difference between a café and a subway station is that people seek out reasons to spend time in the former—and try to pass through the latter as quickly as possible. One of the best indicators of an Internet site's value is customer loyalty. How long do people stay? How often do they return? "Are you a subway station, with banner ads flying by commuters who are just trying to get to their destination?" asks Jurvetson. "Or are you a café, where customers mingle and feel like they belong?"</p>	<p>Homes beat synagogues and cafes. The reason homes are better than either cafes, subways or churches is that people seek out places to stay and share their feelings and experiences rather than just passing through as quickly as possible. Some of the best indicators are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long do people stay? • Do they want to leave? • How often do they come back? • Are they loyal to one another? <p>Decentralized movements are more sustainable.</p>
<p>Size does matter. In a world of network-effects, the bigger you are, the harder it is for you to be dislodged. "By the time a virus spreads to the point of being an epidemic," says Jurvetson, "its growth curve relation to a new entrant is daunting." By the time Hotmail appeared on anyone's radar screen, it was adding a million customers a month. Not only were its efficiencies improving, in terms of server utilization and bandwidth pricing, but it was also grabbing the lion's share of business and financial partnerships.</p>	<p>Size ultimately matters. The size of any local group matters because they can become too large to sustain the intimacy that is required for transformation. However, size also matters in terms of becoming a global movement that actually transforms entire nations through strategic alliances. A large movement that is locally organized is difficult to destroy or cope with politically, e.g., the explosive growth of Christian house churches in China over the last fifty years.</p>
	<p>Leads to new sustainable institutions Early Christianity led to local body of believers and gatherings although institutional forms varied with the culture. It also led to other non-spiritual institutions that met the "unperceived needs" of people.</p>

*Hotmail was the first beneficiary of viral marketing in 1997. It had explosive and exponential growth in a matter of months.

****Viral Marketing** is a new Internet based marketing concept developed initially in 1997 by Steve Jurvetson based upon the success of Hotmail. The left side of the chart is taken from an article in Fast Company, September 1999 page 216.

***Followers of Christ created a **viral movement** that was sustainable over centuries. They met the above screening criteria and simultaneously gave their friends the content that led to power and authority to transform others. It was originally a lay movement.