

Crowdsourcing may be a marketing force from now on

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Whether it's display ads, video or a page on Facebook, marketers have been using the Internet to convince consumers to buy their products. And social media has been particularly attractive because marketers can



both prompt consumers to generate buzz about products and respond directly to consumer comments and questions. It's not a huge leap for marketers to increase their direct-to-consumer online connections and a growing trend – crowdsourcing – could be the next new, new thing.

An *Advertising Age* article recently highlighted how Unilever is running a contest to find new ideas for promoting a European snack called Peperami. And, on this side of the Atlantic, Houston-based, XtremeLashes used crowdsourcing to solicit potential names for its new product from 7,000 beauty professionals. The company president touted the success of the campaign not only because it generated a successful product name, FlexFusion Adhesive, but also because clients know about the product and are excited to purchase it once available.

An article in *Contemporary Management Research* notes the following areas in which companies are using crowdsourcing:

- Product Development
- Advertising & Promotion
- Marketing Research

The researchers posit that smaller firms and those looking to appeal to a younger audience may have particular success with user-created promotions that may remind viewers of what they see on MTV or YouTube. Researcher Paul Whitla points out that while crowdsourcing is largely used by smaller firms who find the strategy to be cost-effective, big companies are also using the strategy as a marketing tool. Of course, there are weaknesses to crowdsourcing and legal battles may loom over who owns ideas generated by campaigns. In the meantime, crowdsourcing looks like another way for marketers to reach their customers.

[Sources: Hall, Emma. "Don't Look Now, but the Crowd Might Just Steal Your Ad Account," *Advertising Age*, 9.14.09; Company release, XtremeLashes; Whitla, Paul. *Crowdsourcing and Its Application in Marketing Activities*, *Contemporary Management Research*, 3.2009]