

# 5 Invaluable Marketing Lessons Disney Movies Can Teach Us

**Author :** Mansi Dhorda

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Benjamin Franklin reputedly once said, *"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."* Certainly, those words can be applied to many sectors of life -- and business. But let's consider their value for one area in particular: movies, especially movies from The Walt **Disney** Co., which are pretty "involving," to say the least.

Just look at how *Finding Dory* has been killing the box office competition these past two weeks. Overall, **Disney's** global revenue hovers at [\\$52.47 billion](#), so it surely has a thing or two to teach us about how to make consumers bring out those wallets and pay, while actually being happy about it. Here are some of those lessons.

## 1. Entertainment sells.

There's no mystery to why **Disney** movies do so well; they're great stories. We humans crave stories. And when it comes to **marketing** those stories, **Disney** excels there, too: It's almost always a pleasure when ads can entertain us; as customers, we respond.

The titans of **advertising** have always known this, and over the years, many advertisements have proven to be memorable, due basically to their entertainment factor (sex in **advertising** is another reminder of the effectiveness of "entertainment" in **marketing**, albeit a somber one, and in a very different context).

**Disney**, at its heart, is an entertainer. It sells stories, superheroes, action, drama and more (not to mention CDs, DVDs and **branded** merchandise).

Meanwhile, the **marketing** that most other companies deploy just, well, stinks. There's little entertainment in many of the ads you see. There's not even a tinge of personality there. Traditional ads have always been boring. And, now, we have online ads that are no good, either, [if you ask writer Derek Thomson of The Atlantic](#).

Consider the **marketing** of the big online platforms: Yahoo didn't know what it could do with the large audience it had. Twitter still struggles to make sense of the ever-growing user base.

Facebook is catching up with **advertising** revenue. And **Google** the behemoth still hasn't been shoved off its throne. Most **advertising**, in general, just doesn't work. Why? There's nothing interesting about facial creams and protein shakes unless you make it so.

But there *are* exceptions, where "entertainment" does creep in. Just ask the creative minds behind [The Dollar Shave Club](#).

## 2. Long live memories.

**Disney** excels because its movies relate to you on a personal level. If nothing else, each of these movies leaves you with its characters forever etched in your memory. Mickey Mouse all these years later is still an icon, and a great example of what **Disney** did with a cartoon character. In fact, the very concept of using sports mascots was in all probability directly borrowed from **Disney's** mastery of characters that relate to you on a personal level.

Marketers can also do well with mascots, when they do it right. Tell me if you don't find Mailchimp's "Chimp" cute enough to remember the **brand**! And Mailchimp isn't anywhere close to the success of a **Disney** character.

## 3. Goal alignment and strategy are important.

If you'll forgive the use of a management word like "strategy," **Disney's** movies have a lot going on "backstage." There's leadership excellence, cohesive planning and a culture that's hard for you to miss. At **Disney's** theme parks, customers are "guests," and jobs are "roles." Employees are "cast members," and everything they do shows you a method in the chaos.

At **Disney Studios** and **Pixar**, everyone works hard to produce movies that enthrall, captivate, entertain and mesmerize. It all seems like magic but there's sheer labor behind every pixel that moves.

At **Disney**, everyone speaks one language. Each person has a role. The company still employs a top-down approach that grants almost unlimited freedom to the team. Together, they take risks. They come up with ideas that sometimes go against the accepted flow (**Marvel's** Dead Pool, anyone?).

**Marketing** demands integration into every other business function. For most businesses, however, **marketing** is just a function. It's an afterthought -- which comes only after operations, legal, compliance, and human resources have figured in.

## 4. Disney movies are fun.

In fun, there's value. **Disney** movies take you off to another world, give you a dose of the unreal in real time and make sure that you stay glued to your seats. Action, drama, emotion, animation, **digital** effects and sound effects are employed; **Disney** even produces 3D versions of movies to keep you engaged.

The stories, by themselves, are gripping tales of heroes and villains, of good versus the evil and even of occasional deep self-questioning. There's a lot that happens in a **Disney** movie.

As such, the movie trailers, post-movie **marketing**, posters, **branded** paraphernalia and all other **marketing** tools that happen before and after a **Disney** movie are further rounds of action and drama. Then, there's YouTube and the TV entertainment shows spitting out behind-the-scenes footage, interviews of cast and crew and "how we did it" features.

Businesses on the other hand do **marketing** the way they do accounting. Standard. Protocol-based. Stiff tone. No heart. No soul.

While not all industries of course can take the liberty of "being fun," there are ways to develop engaging **marketing** plans -- using both traditional and **digital marketing** activities -- to make **marketing** stand out. There's nothing that requires a business to be boring, except lack of imagination.

## Disney prioritizes imagination.

Even the most boring of industries can find ways to make their content **marketing** and **social** presence stand out. Write like you speak! Be specific! Let your sense of humor show! Tell your story visually! As [Corey Wainwright of Hubspot pointed out](#), "I believe that **marketing** is made boring. [But] Really, there's nothing boring about making a billion dollars come inbound."

Boring **brands**, then, are a cop-out. Because, everything is an opportunity. Considering that **Disney** has pulled off years of customers patronizing the same characters such as Mickey Mouse, that cute little guy with the big ears should have been boring too. But he wasn't.

**Disney** simply doesn't know "boring." Nor does **Apple's** iPhone. **Land Rover's** boxy **design** doesn't fail to sell, either. And **BMW's** mini should have been in a forgotten garage by now. But that hasn't happened, right? Even decades later, we still love **Disney** because we love imagination.

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