

# Culpa Marketing - It Works!

One of the most powerful things out there is an apology that is heartfelt. That is what JCPenney, a chain of American department stores, seems to be hoping, as they have released a new ad campaign in May. The ad says: "We heard you, now we would like to see you." JCPenney promises their clients that they will start to listen more to them and apologize for some recent changes.



JCPenney is taking a different approach than that of Apple, which says essentially "We will tell you what you want", which has been the strategy used by their former CEO Ron Johnson - he had been a longtime executive at Apple. One might ask oneself, will this strategy of departure from the rebranding of the past year work for "JCP"?

JCPenney might demonstrate that this strategy can work, if modern history is any guide. Everybody seems to love a story about a fallen hero. There are hundreds of films with this theme out there each year. The ultimate cliché in Hollywood seems to be the scene of the "fallen hero" who walks alone through the rain before the problem fades away. The same seems to happen in the business arena.

Culpa Marketing is a strategy that rebuilds trust in a company by using mistakes strategically. It uses blunders to build a more authentic, direct and human way of communication with their customers. It offers a way to solve a problem and deliver an apology that is heartfelt.



Photo by JetBlue Captain Ian Duncan

These are two more examples on how Culpa Marketing works:

JetBlue responded quickly to a PR issue using a pilot who happened to have a "medical situation" on a flight. The employee released information right away, without hiding a single fact and this communication was very real. The crisis did not escalate thanks to this disposition to be real all the time. JetBlue also issued its own Bill of Passenger Rights, in response to a crisis caused by some stranded passengers back in the year 2007. Furthermore, the firm provided compensation retroactively for the passenger who suffered inconvenience due to this situation.

Domino's Pizza did the same by publicizing footage of a focus group where customers clearly complained about the tomato sauce of the pizza calling it "ketchup". They also said that the crust was a "cardboard". The firm touted a new pizza after recreating it from the ground up and used a new ad campaign. The profits of the firm have grown steadily since they did it four years ago.

Culpa Marketing is a new way of responding to crisis and a new marketing method - brands use it to admit what they did wrong publicly and proactively. Firms use huge advertising campaigns to tell the world what they have done wrong far and wide. They lay the foundation of Culpa Marketing by doing just that.

Large customer groups will reconsider going back to the brand, but this does not include the haters of the firm. Customers will be ready to trust the firm again... and this is what "JCP" hopes will happen.

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