

Anna Rafferty, Penguin Books **The changing role of the marketer – push versus pull marketing**

Anna Rafferty is Managing Director at Penguin Digital and, responsible for the digital marketing and publishing for Penguin Books in the UK, which means everything from eBooks and apps to the Penguin, Puffin and Penguin Classics brand websites, to digital innovations and partnerships like Spinebreakers.co.uk, penguindating.co.uk, blogapenguinclassic.co.uk and blogaholidayread.com. She has been at Penguin for seven years. Anna started work in 1999 as a copywriter at lastminute.com; stayed there for a few years, eventually becoming the Head of Customer Experience and was part of that growth from a one-room start-up through the IPO and PR explosion, to profitability. She left lastminute.com to join a digital creative strategy agency in a bizdev role but hated working on pitches and not being a brand owner. After two years, she had had enough of the agency world and left for the sleek and fragrant V&A Museum in South Kensington, happy to be a client again, working on her own projects. However, eight months after starting at the V&A, she spotted her dream job on the Penguin website and the rest is above.

This presentation was delivered by Anna's colleague Chris Croissant, as Anna was unable to attend through illness

Over the seven years that Anna has worked for Penguin books the way in which books are marketed and they connect with readers has changed.

There is a list of golden rules for Penguin's digital marketing, all focusing on engagement and therefore 'pull' rather than broadcast or 'push' marketing. These are constantly changing – due to technical or cultural trends – they flex and shift all the time and are tested regularly to make sure they are still relevant.

Rule one is about commitment and can be quite scary. As we no longer spend all of our time and money on campaigns that have an end, like a print or poster campaign or direct mailshots and instead, we create websites, engage in social media and speak to readers on Twitter or on Facebook, the team is encouraged to treat their pull marketing campaign like a baby. All of the work that we put into it planning and designing and developing and testing is long and sometimes painful, but I'm afraid that is pregnancy, the launch is the birth, and that's when the hard work starts – if you don't nurture and look after that campaign, that engagement, their baby, it will die, disappointing the readers, potentially damaging the brand and if that happens it would have been better never to have started. I believe there are two choices when you're planning a pull marketing campaign; either plan an elegant and transparent end to it – make sure it's clear to your readers, audience or whomever that on such and such a date, for whatever reason, like an exhibition ending, the 'live' engagement of the campaign will stop, and it will be archived – and make sure that you do archive it, or allow the fans to confine their engagement with one another with the clear understanding that you've left the party.

Or, commit to it for the foreseeable future, make sure you have enough content or information to feed it – if it's a blog, a podcast or a Twitter stream for instance, perhaps you should trial it internally for a few weeks first to make sure you have enough to say on an ongoing basis, and that whoever is doing it isn't just getting carried away in the heat of their initial enthusiasm and will get quickly fatigued by the constant demands of a hungry pull campaign.

It's also like a baby because it will keep you up at night, there will be unexpected crises and it will cost you more than you think. Make peace with that.

The second rule is to know what you want and define what success looks like before you even start planning. And the shape of success for a marketer has changed enormously in the last few years – are you looking at scale, or engagement? The new marketing, digital marketing, allows you to have both – it's very achievable to create campaigns in which you both speak to the passive massive – where awareness in vast numbers is the meaningful result, and, at the same time, make a deeper connection with just a few but those few will be very important.

For example, Penguin publishes about 150 books per month – there's an endless process of launch, launch, launch, as well as all of the backlist work we need to do with our classics and evergreen titles, plus long-term online brand management for our authors, and we just can't do huge or deep campaigns for all of these, so we have to pick the ones that will benefit the most from our time and money, focus on those and then think about what success looks like.

At the moment we're running a campaign for one of our mega children's brands – Artemis Fowl. To celebrate the forthcoming release of the seventh Artemis adventure, we've launched a design competition – the task is for readers to design the first chapter of the new book as a graphic novel and the prize is that the winning entry will be decided by Eoin Colfer, the author, turned into a digital sampler and become part of the official campaign of the book.

The amount of entries that we're getting is modest – a few hundred, but more to the point a) the competition itself is being advertised on design blogs, fan networks, reading sites and so on – general awareness of the fact that there's a new book coming, b) as the mechanic requires that entrants have to turn the first chapter into the comic – we have released the first chapter – really, the whole competition is an alibi to do some story sampling, and the chapter is being read by thousands of potential book buyers, not just budding designers. And c) all submitted entries are going into an online gallery for the public to shortlist (before Eoin makes his final choice) which of course means that the participants are all doing their own user-generated marketing to drum up votes for their art, further spreading news of our upcoming book and d) when the competition does come to a close, we'll have a unique new asset with which to promote the book, and a set of already engaged readers that we can reward with more Artemis Fowl information, previews, invitations and so on, the plan being that they become our core advocates and do more and more of the work for us.



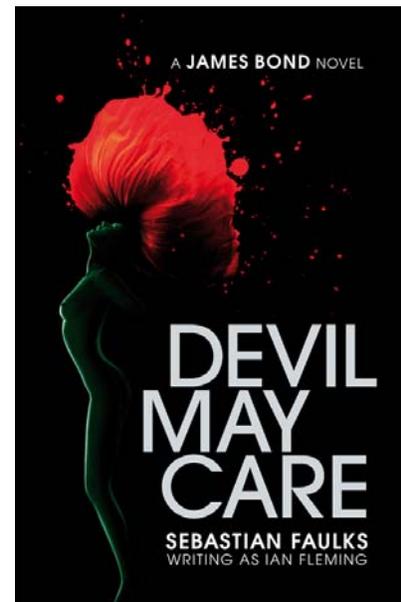
This isn't the first time we've run a campaign like this for Artemis and it's been so successful now that the website we launched the competition on, with the free preview chapter, isn't run by us but by a super-fan who is almost one of the marketing team now – we recognized him early on and have been rewarding him for his advocacy ever since.

Golden rule number 3 – you need to focus on the long ‘wow’ to get real value from your marketing. It’s actually easy to make somebody say ‘oh wow, that’s cool’ once, especially digitally, but I would argue that as pull marketing is all about engagement, the short wow is not enough and instead we need to focus on the long wow – sustained value and delight.

This isn’t always easy and is even harder when you work in an industry, as I do, where we frequently have to create an advance buzz about a product without giving any of its content away, either because it’s embargoed due to a print serial with a newspaper, or we simply won’t have it in time because the author has delivered late! And what if there is more than one target market for your book, exhibition, show, whatever? You need to create a long wow for all of them, even though they’re not interested in the same things ... It’s tough but you do what you can with what you have. A few years ago, I was in just this situation. Penguin were publishing *Devil May Care* – a James Bond novel, endorsed by the Fleming Estate and written by Sebastian Faulks.

The good news was just those things – major brands to play with, all with existing fan bases to reach out to and excite as a marketer. However, we also wanted to expand the market for this book to make sure that, for example, a younger readership, one that may not be aware that James Bond was ever a character in a novel, would be excited about this release. But we had to do this without ‘dumbing down’ the literary credentials of Sebastian Faulks (it was a hardback release after all) or annoying the core Bond/Fleming fan base. We also had to start the buzz about the book early, to get pre-orders, but without creating media fatigue that might jeopardise the actual publication date.

The other challenges were that I couldn’t a) overlap at all with the Bond films as the rights are held elsewhere and b) the book was heavily embargoed so I couldn’t use the plot or content from the book, I just had a titles and a fabulous image.



So for the Fleming fans, we built a beautiful website, visually striking and dynamic enough to elicit the short wow pretty easily, but it was also a hub of Bond knowledge as we aggregated the RSS feeds and twitter streams from all related sources to make this site genuinely useful and not just a broadcast brochure (while remaining very low maintenance). We let fans sign up to Bond alerts, be the first to buy the book and get special editions, talk about it and connect with each other.

And for the new potential readers – those who didn't know that they might like it, we launched a promotion with MySpace music – the same visual identity again but transformed in a new environment with a different flavour. We skinned a MySpace profile to look like *Devil May Care* jacket, created wallpapers for download, a countdown clock widget, a gallery of iconic artwork, started a behind-the-scenes blog with updates several times per week and publishing interviews, films, quizzes and so on – this wasn't literary, it was fun, trivia, low-attention-span Bond.

We also launched an X-factor style talent contest to discover the theme tune for the *Devil May Care* audio book. We put a call out for musicians to participate and send in their track, and the only creative rules we stipulated were that the winning track had to include one, or more, iconic audio samples available for download on the page. The winner would become the official theme tune for the *Devil May Care* audio book, CD and download, be released as a free track download on MySpace and iTunes and become part of the publicity for the book – a nice opportunity for an aspiring songwriter or band.

The competition ran for 50 days, and the entries were first shortlisted by an eclectic panel of experts, including Sebastian Faulks the author, Jazzie B the cult music producer (Soul II Soul) and Dominic Cook from MySpace. The five shortlisted tracks were then posted up for the community to vote on. The competition was covered in unexpected media like *NME*, *Drowned in Sound* and over regional radio, as well as the user-generated marketing that the shortlisted contenders created in their own networks and the Bond MySpace site / campaign developed its own identity – still authentic and consistent with the book, but adapted for the audience, environment and technology and an experiment away from the hero Bond site so that different readers never had to experience each others' vision of the same brand, but they all got their long wow.

The final rule, which I've already referenced again and again, is *be social*. Pull marketing requires a number of social changes on the part of the marketer, for example, be transparent – nobody wants to be friends with the person who hides in the shadows, why should they? They don't know you so why should they trust you? I firmly believe that there's a huge amount of value in stepping from the shadows and acknowledging that there are real people behind the words, behind the screen. On the Penguin Blog, the participants all post as themselves and sign their posts with their name and title – they

make it clear that this is their perspective rather than a homogenous and anonymous Penguin voice, and I think that the people make the company. The results of this have been great to behold and commercially satisfying, for example, one of our designers, Coralie Bickford-Smith (CBS), started blogging about her covers and the methodology she used to get to a final design. Readers of the blog were fascinated at seeing the behind the scenes process for book jacket design and Coralie started to get a cult blog following (and of course it didn't hurt that her jackets are beautiful and well conceived). The result is that she is now a superstar jacket designer and we are commissioning special CBS Classics, and shipping them to the USA to fulfil demand.

As well as this radical transparency, be prepared to let go of control, which brings its own reward of allowing other people to do the work. Like my Artemis and James Bond campaigns, there are people out there who will grab whatever you give them, who already believe that they are the true owners of your brand because they love it so much, don't seek to control or stifle this, don't prohibit unofficial Facebook pages or those using your branding, as long as they do it with love.

And, as well as being transparent and letting go of control, my final 'get social with pull marketing' tip is to create social spaces. There's a writer and cultural commentator called Doug Rushkoff who expounds the idea that contact is king and that content and context are merely princes – the gist of his argument is very simple and compelling, that all art, culture, entertainment, is consumed in order to give the consumer an alibi to have contact with someone else – Rushkoff states that we only listen to that music, watch that play, read that book so that we can tell others that we've done it and so connect with another person. I don't believe that this is the only reason that people engage with art and culture but it's certainly true that if we're creating content and not then creating social spaces in which the consumers/ audience/ recipients of that culture can't connect with one another, then we're not fulfilling a need.

I believe that is why my blogapenguinclassic campaign worked in the way it did. Our objective was to create some very cheap buzz around the classics with no money. The Classics – hugely important to us but books that have been around for tens if not hundreds if not thousands of years – it's hard to get the media interested in them or new readers to try them. We wanted to drum home the message that they're classics because they're just really good reads and if you tried them you just might like them. But we had no budget, well, we had about two thousand pounds, so whatever we did had to be massively efficient in promoting 1400 titles.

So we worked out what our assets were – the titles – rejoiced in the fact that they weren't embargoed, and decided to take a risk and let go of control. We recruited real-life readers to review The Penguin Classics list – we put calls out on reading blogs to ask for amateur book reviews to participate – they'd get a free book to read and keep and the payback would be that they then review the book on our blog – all reviews would be published with no censorship (they all received a password and login so that the site would connect their review to the correct jacket image and bibliographic data). All 1400 books went in under 24 hours (lesson no. 1 – people love something free, but we all knew that).

In order to keep the admin costs down, we sent out the 1400 books at random and the reviewer got no choice in the title they received. This, as it turns out, was a stroke of genius as it really polarised the reviews – some people absolutely hated the title they got, would never have chosen it if they saw it on the shelf and flamed it on the blog. Thankfully, some people really loved their book – would never have chosen it either but were very pleasantly surprised when they read it and then wrote reviews documenting that feeling of serendipity and in turn, inspiring others to try.

But what of the haters? Well, of course that can be and we really held our nerve, because the other element to this website was that, in the best tradition of blogs, comments were open. So other readers started reading those negative reviews and deciding to charge in and defend their favourite book. We stepped back (always know when you're not really wanted at a party) and watched with wonder at the furious passionate debates that our sometimes 2000 year old texts were inspiring – it was wonderful. We let go of control, handed over our crown jewels for the world to make of them what it would and while some of the world hated it, lots of it loved it, and most of all they were talking about it. For a spend of under £5000, and less than 10 minutes admin per week, we were getting 90,000 unique visitors per month, reading and talking about the Classics.

Of course, giving away the crown jewels is very scary but I think that if you are transparent and genuinely engage with your audience then you build up goodwill and hopefully, immunise yourself to too much vandalism and abuse. At the moment, we're running a small digital campaign in Flickr called speakingtothepast.com to celebrate Penguin's 75th birthday, in which we're encouraging readers to create their own Penguin jacket – we've given them the assets (some design templates) and the space in which to talk to one another and promote their work.

We're validating the space – it's authentic because we've created and put our brand and our stamp of approval on it and that it more desirable, but then, again, we're backing off and allowing the readers and designers to own it. And that's probably the biggest change in marketing of all – marketing used to be broadcasting and shouting your message as far as it could go, hoping to get somebody to listen to it, but with the new marketing, sometimes it's all about creating something, thinking about what people really want to engage with, giving them what they want whether it be space, content or connecting them with each other, or your talent, and then just shutting up.