

## **Jessie Hunt, Marketing Manager, British Museum**

### ***Word of mouth in a sociable media world***

Jessie Hunt is Marketing Manager at the British Museum – the UK's number one visitor attraction. She has managed a number of major campaigns, including the blockbuster exhibition *Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* which has been shortlisted for Best Marketing Campaign at the Museums and Heritage Awards. Her online teddy bear competition, part of the Grayson Perry campaign, which targeted early adopters went viral on social media, generating national press. Jessie has worked in communications at a range of independent and national arts organisations, including the Garden Museum, Horniman Museum, National Maritime Museum and Imperial War Museum.

In this seminar, Jessie talked about people talking about the arts. It explored a range of ways in which we can get people talking about our organisation – both online and offline.

#### **Word of mouth marketing**

I'm going to talk about the Grayson Perry exhibition, our most successful ever at the museum and the role that word of mouth played in that.

When I went to the AMA conference in Leeds in 2010 I was very much inspired by two of the speakers. They spoke about 'buzz' marketing and word of mouth and I took their ideas away with me and put them into the Grayson Perry exhibition.

First, I will give a broad overview of word-of-mouth marketing. So what is it? [Jessie asked delegates to turn to someone next to them that they hadn't met before and asked them to introduce themselves and tell them about the last time they recommended something – what triggered it, what they said, and how they said it. At the end she asked if anyone would like to share what they discussed ... ]

*Delegate: I was told about a YouTube clip that if you Google 'Mini National Anthem' you find a video of minis playing the national anthem by tooting their horns.*

How did you find out about it? [addressing originator of story].

*Delegate: I used to work for [inaudible] and it came through on Twitter feeds.*

And how did you tell people about it?

*Delegate: we Tweeted about it*

Word of mouth marketing is about getting people to speak positively about your organisation. It could be oral or written.

The basic elements include

- Educating people about product/service
- Identifying people most likely to share opinions
- Providing tools that make it easy to share
- Studying how, where and when opinions are being shared
- Listening and responding to supporters, detractors and neutrals

(womma.org)

Word of mouth is important because 67% of all consumer decisions are primarily influenced by word of mouth (McKinsey). We've certainly found this at the British Museum as it is the main source for the reason why people have decided to come to our exhibitions. It's powerful because it's unpaid and therefore credible.

The average person has

- 11-12 intimate contacts
- 150 social contacts
- 500 to 1,500 weak ties

I tried this out myself recently and found it rang true as I have about nine really good friends that I see a lot, 171 Facebook friends (I've just done a cull) and 430 Twitter followers.

Where is Word of Mouth happening? 90% of conversations are happening offline, which is what we are going to talk about today. What we also have is online conversations influencing offline conversations. 47% are influenced by website information but only 11% of sales actually happen online (Google arts and business). They are talking on the phone and at the box office – so there is human contact.

Trust is a key part of word of mouth. 90% of us trust our spouse (I don't know what happened to the other 10%!), 65% friends, 27% manufacturers, 14% advertisers and 8% celebrities. So, if you are thinking about celebrities as part of your word of mouth campaign maybe you need to think again.

There are various ways in which you can get people talking

- a) Buzz marketing
- b) Viral marketing
- c) Community marketing
- d) Influencer marketing
- e) Conversation creating
- f) Brand blogging
- g) Referral programmes

### (a) Buzz marketing

At the 2012 AMA Conference I heard Emmanuel Rosen, author of 'The Anatomy of Buzz', talk about generating buzz. He's incredibly inspiring - he talks about listening and measuring, finding really good stories, evoking emotional choices and giving people the tools to spread the word of mouth. Most importantly, he believes it is important to give people something to talk about.



### (b) Viral marketing

This is using marketing which can be passed along through people. The textbook example is 'willitblend' produced by Blendtec. They asked people to send in their suggestions of what they could put in a blender to see if it would blend. Someone suggested the iPhone so they blended one. It had 10 million views on YouTube and when they started the campaign in 2007 retail sales increased by 500%.



30% of people share a video when they've seen it on YouTube (Google arts and business presentation).

For something to work virally it needs creative material (something interesting), seeding (putting this material in the right place – whether using traditional print methods, press, social media etc) and then it needs to be tracked – so you need a way of tracking what is happening to this viral marketing – looking at statistics on YouTube and seeing where people are coming from.

### (c) Community marketing

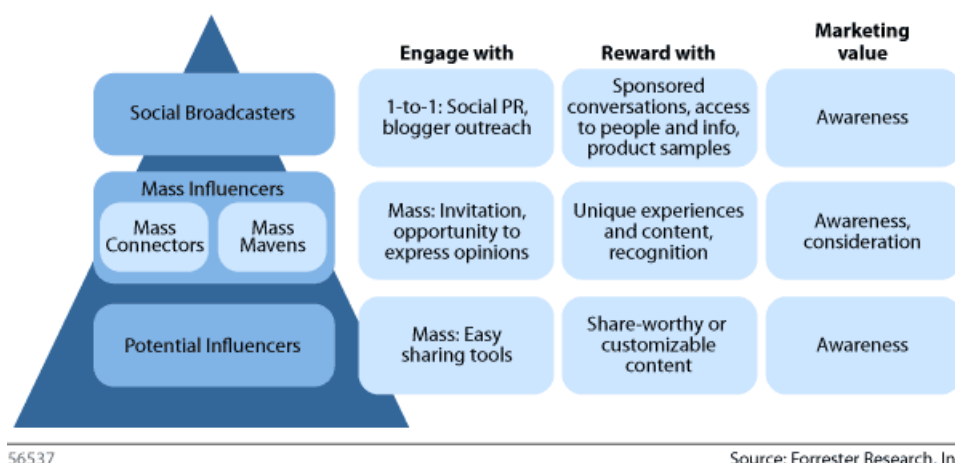
This is about forming or supporting niche communities that are likely to share interests about the brand. Creating forums or supporting networks where this might happen is important.

(d) Influencer marketing

This involves identifying key communities and opinion leaders who are likely to talk about products and can influence other people. Theorists have slightly different points of view here. Godin believes it is about seeding a niche audience = a ‘hive’ and using advocates to spread a virus = ‘sneezers’ whereas Balter and Butman say that *“Everybody talks about products and services, and they talk about them all the time. It’s not about mavens or bees or celebrities or people with specialist knowledge, it’s about everybody”*.

Talking to you this morning – it’s clear that we all like to talk – so we need to make sure we are giving people the chance to do this.

Forrester (Forrester.com) have a great resource on the web about the latest on social and online influence. They have the peer influence pyramid (below) which looks at the different roles each part of the pyramid may have.



The second person I was inspired by at the 2010 conference was Nicky Webb from Artichoke. They put on a large outdoor event called ‘The Sultan’s Elephant’ in 2006 in London. They worked with influencers and the press to keep the story secret and persuaded them to play along with the story as if it was really happening. So it started with journalists reporting as if the rocket had actually landed in Whitehall and encouraged people to come back the next day to see what was happening.

Crowds of people turned up and discovered that the rocket had a girl in it – a massive girl puppet and the story with the girl and a giant elephant was played out throughout London over the weekend. People loved it and it generated enormous crowds. It’s a great example of the way that people can be inspired by stories.

(e) Conversation creating

This is about Interesting or fun advertising, emails, catch phrases, entertainment or promotions designed to start word of mouth.

### (f) Brand blogging

By creating blogs and participating in the blogosphere, in the spirit of open, transparent communications, sharing information of value then you can encourage the blog community to talk about you

### (g) Referral programmes

Creating tools that enable satisfied customers to refer their friends, share information easily, opportunities for people to Tweet about you easily

### When word of mouth goes wrong

Nike had a campaign banned recently when Twitter decided it was not clear enough that the Tweets were coming from Nike rather than Wayne Rooney.



This is a note of caution – in your desire to be creative, make sure you don't break rules or do anything which might be dishonest.

A 'Twitter storm' is something else which you could face. I would recommend Rachel Coldicutt's blog about this on the AMA site ([www.a-m-a.co.uk/blog](http://www.a-m-a.co.uk/blog)) which provides guidelines about what to do in this situation.

1. Be human
2. Be responsive
3. Get a proper statement out
4. Be open and transparent
5. Learn
6. Be kind

So amongst our word of mouth listening tools are your ears! press cuttings, Google alerts (which will send you alerts every time your organisation or your work is mentioned), Tweetdeck, Tootsuite and Hitwise (which will provide lots of online data for you – but it is quite expensive).

### How I created buzz for Grayson Perry

The Grayson Perry exhibition was our biggest ever contemporary art show.

The British Museum is located in central London, it's free and it is the UK's most popular visitor attraction with over 6m visitors per year. It has a world collection of over 8m objects from the last 2m years including the oldest known human made object – a chopping tool made of stone.

It is also known for ancient Egyptian mummies, the Rosetta Stone and the Parthenon sculptures. In addition, there are special exhibitions, including contemporary art. The First Emperor, in 2007, was especially significant in putting The British Museum back

on the map for paid-for exhibitions with 850,000 visitors. We've also had exhibitions on Tutankhamen, Picasso and Leonardo da Vinci. We're still mainly known as a place of old objects though, rather than contemporary art. That is, until Grayson Perry came along!

Grayson Perry won the Turner Prize in 2003. He's most well known for his provocative ceramic vases but works in other media such as tapestry and sculpture. He's a cross-dresser with an alter-ego called Claire.

This is Alan Measles [right], Grayson's childhood teddy bear and the God of his imaginary world. He features in a lot of his work and has his own Twitter account and blog.

Like many other artists, Grayson has been influenced by The British Museum.

[Jessie played a video featuring Grayson Perry: available at [http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats\\_on/exhibitions/grayson\\_perry.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/grayson_perry.aspx)]



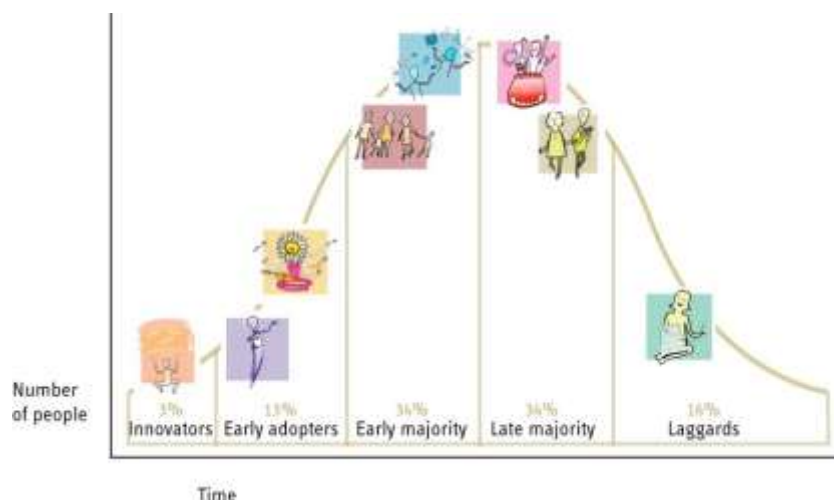
So, he curated the *'The tomb of the unknown craftsmen'* exhibition which took place during the second half of 2011 and the first part of 2012. The concept included work around themes such as pilgrimage and funny faces and visitors were invited to come on a journey through his imagination and to find the tomb at the centre of the exhibition – a cast iron ship made by Grayson Perry.

My challenge was to sell 60,000 tickets at £10 each, to encourage secondary spend and to position the museum as a venue for contemporary art and source of inspiration for artists and makers.

I knew from receiving the scope paper – the introductory document about the exhibition - that this could have a very different audience, possibly attracting innovators and early adopters. So I decided that I'd like to create a lot of buzz around the exhibition, getting people to think about the British Museum in a different way. It was also a great opportunity because Grayson was using many items of the museum collection in the exhibition so people were also being introduced to our work.

I was working with Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM), looking at segmentation of our audiences. They have been developing their 'culture segments' system and we wanted to use this in order to target certain segments.

This involved mapping the segments along a product life cycle curve like this.



The three segments at the beginning are 'stimulation', 'essence' and 'expression'.

*Stimulation* is a group of people who are involved in arts and culture. It's an important part of their lifestyle. They really like discovery, they're quite experimental and like contemporary art. They also like to be 'in the know' – the first people to find out about things and tell other people about it.

The *Essence* segment is discerning and spontaneous. Arts and culture is so important to them that they couldn't live without it. They tend to be well educated professionals and take an intellectual view of their arts and culture and in terms of marketing, they are highly proactive, looking at all the information sources but they are very independently minded and think that marketing is 'dumbing down' so they like to make up their own minds about things.

*Expression* audiences are receptive, confident, interested in community and like the opportunity to debate and discuss. For them it's more of a lifestyle focus – so they also like making things – like craftwork and jewellery. They really like recommendations, reviews and find marketing an important source. They like to know what other people are saying about things before making a decision.

The *Entertainment* segment, on the other hand, likes popular mainstream arts and in the video [of a representation of someone from this segment] the guy says he finds the British Museum really boring – that it has a nice roof but the objects are boring.

Quite a lot of research had already been done on this, but I decided to do some more in preparation for the exhibition, an online survey of 360 arts attenders, divided into 'culture segments', then focus groups with fifteen people from each of those three of the segments and finally a workshop with stakeholders and a brainstorm with Grayson.

I worked with people from across the organisation so that we also talked with the interpretation team for example.

In terms of awareness, *Stimulation* and *Essence*, along with *Release* had heard of Grayson. Overall 45% of people had heard of him – so he was not a household name, which was good for some people in the organisation to discover.

In terms of interest, this ranged from 63% of *Stimulation* segment to 0% of the *Entertainment* segment.

In terms of appeal of the exhibition title again, the *Stimulation*, *Essence* and *Expression* segments liked the title. Overall, fewer than 20% of all those surveyed were interested in coming along to the exhibition so we knew we would need to be targeted.

Through the focus groups we discovered that for the *Stimulation* segment:

- Highest awareness of Grayson Perry (75%)
- Most likely to pay £9-10
- New and experimental excites them
- Embrace controversial personality
- Interested in coming on Friday night
- Most likely to use social media

Therefore, the *Stimulation* marketing proposition was:

- 'Support their desire to be the first to try something new'
- Alert them early and focus on the new, experimental and quirky.
- Use their desire to share knowledge to make them ideal brand ambassadors

*Essence:*

- Had an intellectual approach
- Were familiar with the work
- Were interested in the curatorial angle
- Were keen to hear the voice
- Needed new and unexpected insights into Grayson's work, the collection and role of the Museum

So, the marketing proposition for them was:

- 'Flatter their independence and sophisticated tastes' as they are highly proactive in finding out what's on and are independently minded. Wary of marketing and prefer discovery over recommendation

*Expression:*

- Had either not heard of artist or see him as self-promoting and controversial
- Were interested in skilled craft from across the ages
- Liked being part of a community and the opportunity to debate
- Were price sensitive



So the marketing proposition for them was:

- ‘Tap into their desire to be part of something bigger’ as they like to know what they are letting themselves in for, they are receptive to reviews and recommendations and see marketing as useful

Some of this group was interested in the crafting of the vases so we were able to use this and then, because they liked debating the issues so they were good at converting others.



This vase is called ‘You are here’, created by Grayson Perry and one of the first things that people would see when they entered the exhibition. It had characters talking about why they were there.

*‘It’s on my A level syllabus, my tutor told me to come.’*

*‘My friend liked it’ ‘I like the poster’*

*‘There was such a buzz about it on Twitter’*

[Jessie then set the participants the task of matching statements with the three key segments she had described. The correct matching is shown below.]

<i>I came because I wanted to see it first and tell all my friends</i>	Stimulation
<i>I read a 5 star review in The Times newspaper</i>	Essence
<i>My friend said that I should come and see it</i>	Expression

### Marketing strategy

From all this information, I realised that I needed to

- Target each segment at different **campaign phases**
- Use differentiated **marketing messages** for each segment
- Across different **marketing channels**

The campaign phases began well before the exhibition started.

Exhibition open 6 Oct 2011 – 26 Feb 2012

1. May – Aug 2011 *Stimulation*
2. Sept – early Oct 2011 *Essence & Expression*
3. Oct – Dec 2011 *Expression*
4. Jan – Feb 2012 other segments
5. Mar 2012 evaluation and reporting

The marketing messages were informed by the focus groups. We asked everyone to say how they would sell the exhibition to a friend and they came up with:

1. Stimulation – This is an installation with new works by Grayson Perry
2. Essence – Grayson Perry curates this exhibition, with his works shown alongside objects by unknown craftsmen from the British Museum’s collection
3. Expression – This exhibition celebrates the work of unknown craftsmen throughout history from the British Museum’s collection

The marketing channels included:

- Advertising
- Print and distribution
- Partnerships
- Website
- Email
- Video
- Social media
- Blog

But I want to focus particularly on word of mouth, so to get us rolling, please tell the person next to you about your childhood teddy.

This is easier for some people than others.

We wanted to use the teddy bear theme in the exhibition but Grayson didn’t want to put Alan Measles on display so we came up with a slightly different approach – a stunt bear competition.



He wanted a teddy bear for the shrine at the back of the bike and had the idea of having a stunt double for Alan Measles. We thought this would make a great campaign and so we started a stunt bear competition to get people talking about the exhibition in a different way.

There was an online form that people could use to submit their bear. It was quite playful and fun – especially aimed at the Stimulation segment.

We split the campaign in two – as we recognised that not everyone would want to put their bears on display. So the first section was that people could enter their teddy



bears and then Grayson and Alan Measles shortlisted the bears and the public had the final choice, voting online. All the bears had profiles – and had some amazing stories to tell. We worked with the press office, there was some advertising on Facebook and Grayson did a video about it. There was cross-functionality of the votes so people could Tweet their votes if they wanted.

It got picked up in the press with The Evening Standard, The Observer, The Independent and many blogs covered it.

We had 300 bears enter, 2500 votes and 50,000 page views and the winning teddy bear was called Pinny. The campaign cost us £500.

Then when Grayson was filmed for *Imagine*, it was picked up by Harry Hill's *TV Burp* which ran a whole sketch on the stunt bear, so that was amazing.

### Conversation creation

Our events programme literature was created with the particular segments in mind. So for the Stimulation segment, we made a poster with all the events on the other side – we marketed it as a free poster – and Grayson drew something especially. I hoped that people would put it on the wall at work and we also created badges with Alan Measles on and handed them out at Freshers' Fairs.

We also worked with security to change the signs from 'turn your mobile off' to 'turn your mobile to silent' so that people could Tweet during the exhibition if they wanted to. And working with the shop we had special bags with Alan Measles' slogans.

In the restaurant we had Teddy Bears' picnic afternoon teas, such as marmite sandwiches which is a favourite of Grayson and Alan's, jelly teddy bears and motorbike cakes. This was actually featured on The Culture Show.

### Referral programmes

At the end of the exhibition there was a panel showing how they could join in and tell people about the exhibition by using the hashtag, QR codes and Foursquare. We could tell by looking at peoples' Tweets at what point they discovered the hashtag and started using it. There was a Foursquare offer of 10% off in the shop if they unlocked it – 2000 people unlocked it but only 10 people took up the offer.

### Influencer marketing

This was especially targeted at the Essence segment. There was a video showing a different side of Grayson about making things, doing things behind the scenes at the museum, which had over 200,000 views.

We also developed a blog series with our curators. Ian Jenkins, who is the curator of the Greek and Roman collections became great friends with Grayson and features on one his pots. A number of curators contributed to the blog and demonstrated a different side to the exhibition.

Press quotes were used early on and then later we used more of the audience blogs to match the different segments we were aiming to attract at different points.

The Expression segment that either hadn't heard of him or didn't like him were targeted in a slightly different way, emphasising debate and looking at the craft background.

I discovered that there was a huge community of people interested in craft, debating it on Twitter and in blogs. They would 'meet' every week on a particular day at 7pm and discuss it and so we thought we'd try and replicate this. #craftdebate had a series of three blog posts, the first one by The Crafts Council, the second with The Craftivist Collective, who are interested in political uses of craft, and the third was with Grayson Perry (which I didn't tell people about beforehand). Every blog post we asked people to join us on Twitter at lunchtime.

In terms of the figures, #craftdebate and The British Museum trended on Twitter. Lots of individuals and craft organisations took part in this debate.

### Results

Objective 1: Maximum attendance (60,000 target)

- 112,194 sold
- Extended for 1 week due to demand
- Every Friday night sold out
- All events reached capacity

Objective 2: Drive secondary spend

- Shop sales 500% up
- Large membership increase

Objective 3: Position the Museum as a venue for contemporary art and source of inspiration for artists and makers

- *It's great to have contemporary art shown here, it's overlooked as a venue for this type of work*
- *I wouldn't usually think of it as a place for modern art so it's a first and it works very well*
- *I think it's cooler now! More hip and down with the kids*

Overall

- 19,073 (17%) had never visited the Museum
- 84% aware of the exhibition before their visit (21% for our last contemporary exhibition)
- 26% heard about the exhibition through word of mouth – our highest source for all the different types of marketing we did
- 'Buzz' created for the Museum - word of mouth up 28% from 19% the previous year – there were a lot of people talking about the museum

## Segments

The Essence segment was the biggest audience overall.

Essence = 34%

Expression = 17%

Affirmation = 14%

Stimulation = 11%

(Affirmation was a segment which we hadn't particularly targeted)

It's interesting to look at it in phases. The Essence segment came in force to begin with, but then in Phase 2 it was a different sort of audience as Affirmation became the biggest segment and we even had 1% from Entertainment because there was such a buzz about the exhibition it became like a blockbuster.

Grayson Perry Late was very popular with the Stimulation segment.

All the segments were engaged but they're interested in different things.

In summary, key things to remember are

- Who are you going to target and at what stage?
- What do you want them to talk about?
- Would anyone tell a friend?

## Questions (from second seminar session)

Grainne Cook, Arts Council England: *Grayson Perry is obviously a brilliant artist to work with and I wonder how much you felt he influenced the success of your campaign in terms of being involved.*

JH: He was very much involved in everything. He was there as the curator of the exhibition every single week so he was there to talk to in the same way we would with any of our curators. It was great to have the artistic vision – he has incredible ideas and he understands marketing which was useful because that's not always the case with artists and curators. In terms of success – like the stories all came together from different people. Someone asked me yesterday about – who you ask in the organisation that has these creative ideas. It might not be the curator but there's always someone who has that sort of creative inspiration. For example, in another exhibition I worked with a project assistant who was brilliant at writing blog posts and coming up with imaginative ideas.

John Pinchbeck, The Really Useful Group: *when you showed the results of the segments – how did you determine which segment they came from?*

JH: the segments were determined as a result of the previous questions which they'd answered during the research. When they did the final survey the questions were added in again so that the segments could be matched.

Delegate: *did you feel you had to do all the research in to the segments in order to get buy-in from everyone to put a teddy bear on Grayson's bike?*

JH: We had good buy-in from the project team anyway, because it was such an inspiring project. Having research and some ideas before you go into those early meetings are useful. You don't have to have a sophisticated segmentation system. For example, you could download the Culture Segments (MHM) pdfs and you can get an idea of the different characters – that's how I started thinking about it. There is also the Arts Council England segmentation strategy which you could use. It's also worth doing your own research into what's happening in terms of the word of mouth and buzz angle on the web.

Kirsty Lodge, Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House: *Just about segments again. Did you know how many people were in these segments? Eg, was 'Stimulation' a small group? Did you base your decisions on effective use of numbers?*

JH: The segments were based on the general public. Stimulation was a fair proportion of the arts market and we knew what sort of proportions came to The British Museum too. However, it really depends on your exhibition and you could do some work around what you programme around the segment. This is something which we've taken from this – for example we've discovered a set of people that want to come on a Friday evening and we can now programme around them.

Jim Richardson, Sumo: *It's a really interesting case study. You've talked about what worked; was there anything that didn't work?*

JH: On Twitter with the craft debate, we had invited lots of people and then the site crashed and we were afraid that we might have lost people along the way. Otherwise, we did a piece of print that was a bit more general and not targeted and that didn't get a good response. It could have been targeted at another segment. Also, creatively it would have been interesting to have different sorts of creatives for each segment.

Amanda Shepherd, Blue Sail: *I know that the British Museum has high numbers of international visitors and this segmentation is based on UK visitors. So how did this work with the visitors – did you have a strategy for them?*

JH: About 70% of visitors to the British Museum are from overseas but in terms of the exhibitions, the audience tends to be from that London exhibitions market. We also had a large number of people coming from around the country and the word of mouth helped that. In terms of overseas we did some work around Paris Fashion Week and

Eurostar. When we did the original research we found that Grayson Perry wasn't really known abroad, except in Japan, so it wasn't something we concentrated on.

Delegate: *when you're trying to engineer something as abstract as word of mouth is there a danger that people might see through it as 'marketing'?*

JH: I think so and we considered that hard when looking at the Essence segment which could have been sceptical. If you have an exciting project, people like to talk about it and they genuinely want the tools to be able to do this.

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