



Lessons from Green & Black's

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of spending the afternoon in the company of Mark Palmer – Global Marketing Director for Green & Black's. He's been at the helm for some years now and has seen the company grow from the initial stages through to its current position as a market leader with a distinctive niche.

Mark was incredibly frank about all the ups and downs along the way, including stages during the company's development where the sheer pace of growth nearly shook it apart - where the demand outstripped the capacity both to manage resources and to bankroll the growth.

He shared, very eloquently, the mistakes he felt they had made and all the lessons he felt they had learned, the essence of the strategy they had developed and the elements he felt were prerequisite to success.

Come question time, I asked him this: How did he think the Green and Black's strategy might translate across to solo entrepreneurs? This was his answer:

There are four stages to this:

1. Understand your niche, your product or proposition.
2. Be clear about who it is that you want to buy from you. Target carefully - its laser precision marketing - not scattergun.
3. Find a way for people to discover and taste or sample it in some way. Gather feedback; get endorsements and positive comments - especially from individuals that are a match for your demographic.
4. Incorporate this feedback into your marketing. Don't spend large amounts on marketing until you are sure that all of the above elements are working. As soon as you know something is working - immediately scale up or increase your effort in that area.

Repeat this process with new ideas or products!

What Mark said absolutely endorses all the best lessons I've ever had in Marketing:

- Have a great product and allow people to taste it.
- Get endorsements - from celebrities - or your version of them!
- Allow people to sample your product in whatever way proves most effective.

- Be prepared to flex your message - essentially be ready to tell your story in slightly different ways for different audiences.
- Work out where your heartland is.
- Consolidate that so you can expand without losing existing customers.
- Create advocates who will help you spread the brand.
- Who are your customers now? What is it that they are buying into? How do you make your niche bigger? Who are the low hanging fruit? Who else is a bit like the people you already sell to?
- Don't sell at the same price to everyone. Have a range of things they can buy into (what might that be for you?) Think big chocolate bars, small bars, Easter eggs, make the product cheaper and stronger by increasing content and cutting down on packaging.
- Before spending a fortune on marketing, understand your values - your DNA, the things that people really love about what you do.
- Know what differentiates you.
- Perfect your product and presentation accordingly.
- Develop a distinctive point of view.
- How can people find and sample your product? – This is 'discovery' marketing.
- How might they have an adventure with or distinctive experience of what you provide?
- Marketing is about charging more for your product. What does that mean? It's not charging more for the sake of it – it's charging more because it is unique and distinctive and it resonates with people's higher sense of value.

Thanks Mark – it was an enlightening talk. And having tasted the chocolate (Yes – Green & Black's practice what they preach – we all got masses of chocolate) I have to say I'm a convert – and won't think twice about spending a little more on what is clearly a class experience.

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I'd like to thank the [Coaching Circle](#) for the opportunity to hear Mark speak.