

# Word of mouth packing a punch

*Simon Burton talks about telling others of 'interesting encounters'.*

**WHEN I'M NOT EVANGELISING** about exhibitions, my free time is mostly taken up drinking red wine, watching the Simpsons, cheering on Monsieur Wenger's Red and White Army, playing online poker and a few other activities not fit to mention in a family magazine such as *Exhibition Bulletin*. These are all good things and so I evangelise about them as well. Honestly if you haven't sampled the Simpsons, red wine, Arsenal and online poker you really don't know what you're missing. The stuff that's not fit to mention is pretty fine as well.

Recently I purchased a new item of cookware; the George Foreman Grill. I bought this on the recommendation of a friend and since purchasing mine I have recommended it on hundreds of occasions and bought several as presents. Honestly, it's brilliant. George certainly thinks so. He has sold 50 million of them in the US and a large part of that success is down to the most elusive quality in marketing. Word of mouth.

The challenge of word of mouth as a marketing concept is that it's difficult to know where to start. You



© Simon Burton

*"After an interesting encounter you go away and tell people, another way of saying 'word of mouth'. The place to have*

have to find a way of selling your product a few times so that its benefits can catch hold and word of mouth can come into effect. George is a shameless self publicist. Don't believe me? He has five sons each called George. His TV appearances, press interviews, and advertising are non-stop. You see, George knows that effective marketing supports word of mouth. In fact word of

mouth relies on successful marketing.

What, as ever, has this got to do with exhibitions? We are the ultimate word of mouth medium. In the words of the clever AEO ad, "Discovered it, handled it, bought it, felt it, learned it, tried it, heard it, touched it, tasted it, smelled it, noted it, understood it, squeezed it, liked it. I saw it at an exhibition".

At an exhibition! Whatever you call it; interaction, connection, engagement, the upshot is the same. After an interesting encounter you go away and tell people about it. Which I think is another way of saying word of mouth. And the best place to have interesting encounters is at an exhibition.

Send your comments to: [rduffy@mashmedia.net](mailto:rduffy@mashmedia.net)